Marikana miners strike for better wages, 2012

**Time period notes:** The campaign began on the 8th, the strike began on the 11th, and the massacre took place on the 16th. The strike continued after that, but much of the time was focused on negotiations.

8th August
2012

to: 18th September
2012

**Country:** South Africa

**Goals:**
An increase in salary from 4,000 Rand per month to 12,500 Rand per month.

**Methods**

**Methods in 1st segment:**
- 005. Declarations of indictment and intention
- 038. Marches
- 106. Industry strike

**Methods in 2nd segment:**
- 037. Singing
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 106. Industry strike

**Methods in 3rd segment:**
- 106. Industry strike

**Methods in 4th segment:**
- 106. Industry strike

**Methods in 5th segment:**
- 106. Industry strike

**Methods in 6th segment:**
- 038. Marches
- 106. Industry strike
Classifications

Classification:
Change
Cluster:
Economic Justice
Group characterization:

- Platinum miners

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:
Marikana miners who participated in full strike
Partners:
Miners’ wives, Marikana miners who participated in strike temporarily, local women
External allies:
Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

- Marikana miners who participated in full strike

Groups in 2nd Segment:

- Local women
- Marikana miners who participated in strike temporarily
- Marikana miners who participated in strike temporarily (Exit)
- miners’ wives

Groups in 3rd Segment:
Groups in 4th Segment:
Groups in 5th Segment:
Groups in 6th Segment:
Segment Length: 7 days

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:
Lonmin
Campaigner violence:
The protest focused on a nonviolent strike and miners were originally completely nonviolent. However, after they were shot at by NUM officials some miners began carrying weapons. This was supported by some of the leaders of the strike. Violence against police officers seems not to have been directed or supported by strike leaders, but two police officers and two security
forces were killed.

**Repressive Violence:**
Police frequently used tear gas and rubber bullets against the miners. Four miners were killed in separate incidents. On August 16th, police opened fire targeting miners and continued targeting miners as they ran away. 34 people were killed and 78 were wounded. National Union of Mineworkers officials also shot at striking miners, killing two.

**Success Outcome**

**Success in achieving specific demands/goals:**
2 points out of 6 points

**Survival:**
0.5 points out of 1 point

**Growth:**
2 points out of 3 points

Marikana platinum mine, near Rustenburg, South Africa, employed thousands of workers, composed mostly of migrants working for low wages. Lonmin, a British mining company, owned Marikana. The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) represented most of the workers at Marikana. NUM was one of the two largest unions in the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), an extremely powerful organization and a major player in South Africa’s ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC). However, divisions inside the ANC and a perception of the NUM as not representative of its workers had led to a decline in popularity within the union. The Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU), which was not a part of COSATU, was gaining popularity. In the Marikana mine, the AMCU demanded that rock drillers should earn 12,500 Rand a month (a little over $1,500) instead of their current salary of 4,000 Rand a month (approximately $500), leading to an increase in support for the AMCU.

On 8 August, 2012, rock drill operators met with NUM leaders to demand a salary increase. The miners almost entirely held membership in NUM, which had a close working relationship with Lonmin, and its leadership even received bonuses from Lonmin. NUM quickly rejected the miners’ demands. 9 August was a holiday, and rock drill operators met without union leadership. They agreed that since NUM would not represent them, they would present their demands to Lonmin without NUM support. Although AMCU’s positions contributed to miners’ support for wage increases, the AMCU never had any formal involvement in the protests.

On 10 August, workers gathered and marched to the Lonmin offices. Lonmin refused to meet with the miners and told the miners to meet with NUM officials. Workers stayed outside the offices for over an hour until a NUM leader arrived and told the workers they should stop protesting, and NUM would not support them. After this announcement, over 3,000 miners decided they would go on strike despite the union leadership’s opposition. Most of the striking miners worked as rock drill operators, but many did not.

On the morning of the 11 August, miners marched to the main offices of NUM and delivered a message saying that they would strike, insisting on a salary increase to 12,500 Rand a month for all miners. The march was entirely peaceful. As the miners neared the NUM offices, NUM leaders came out of the building with firearms and, without warning, began shooting. As the miners fled, two of them were killed.

The strike continued over the next few days. While the focus remained on a nonviolent strike, some miners reacted to the shooting of fellow miners by taking a more violent approach and began carrying weapons. Miners held another march to Lonmin offices on the 13 August, and two miners and two police officers were killed, though the circumstances are not clear. Four more miners and two security forces were killed between the 11 and 16 August.

On the afternoon of 16 August, miners gathered on a nearby hill and some local women joined them. Some protesters carried spears, machetes, and sticks, but many were unarmed. Five hundred police officers pushed the protesters towards a small area. The shape of the hill and the formation of the police left little room for the protesters, who was mostly surrounded. Protesters
sang together, and despite the armed members of the crowd, remained nonviolent at a distance of approximately 300 meters from the police officers. Police fired rubber bullets and tear gas. A protester fired a pistol at the police officers, but it is not clear whether that occurred before or after police opened live fire. Police officers continued to fire at protesters as they ran away, intentionally aiming at people rather than shooting to disperse protesters. Thirty-four miners were killed, and 78 were wounded, making it the deadliest use of force by South African police since 1960. Police arrested 270 people in the incident. The day after the shooting, some of the miners’ wives gathered to protest and sing. On Monday, 20 August, miners were scheduled to work, and Lonmin threatened dismissal for workers who did not show up. While only 3,000 had been striking before, most of Marikana’s 28,000 miners did not come to work. The miners, who were not originally striking, later returned to work, but the striking miners continued their action. The 270 detained miners were charged with murder under an apartheid-era law.

The South African Ministry of Labor began mediations on 28 August, and the miners continued to insist that their salaries be raised to 12,500 Rand a month. On 2 September, the charge of murder was ruled unlawful, and by 6 September, authorities released all the detainees. The South African President Jacob Zuma insisted that miners should return to work, but miners continued to strike past Lonmin’s deadline of 11 September. Police stopped marches on the 15 and 17 with teargas. On 18 September, the mediators reached an agreement. The miners would receive a 22% raise and a payment of 2,000 Rand. This was one of the best deals ever won by striking South African miners, but still fell well below their original demands. The miners returned to work on 20 September. However, the Marikana strike sparked a number of protests across South Africa in the coming months.

Research Notes

Influences:

The Marikana strike inspired a number of miners’ strikes and protests around South Africa in the following months. (2)

Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy:
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