

holes—dug out in patterns to most effectively and economically break up the rock—dynamite and fuses are inserted. Actual blasting takes place after the end of the shift when a limited number of men are in the mine. Later the “wash-boy” carefully hoses down the area to make sure all traces of explosives are swept away.

Universal Dialect

The driller and his assistant wipe their brows and talk to us before starting their next hole. They speak to our interpreter in *Fanakalo*, a “universal” dialect used in the mines so that all the workhands, including the Bantus, who come from 55 different tribes and speak 44 different languages, can converse with each other.

These miners shyly confess they are unable to tell us how old they are, but they do know they have been working in the mines for seven years. They work for 18 months at a time under contract, go home for 4 to 6 months, and return to the mines under a new contract. (The foreman adds that the average miner works seven or eight such contracts in his lifetime.) The miners tell us they are married, but their wives and children live hundreds of miles away in the tribal reserves. They belong to the Xhosa tribe which lives in the Transkei region in the southern Cape Province.

The team drills about 40 holes a day for an average daily wage of 6 shillings and 4 pence (88¢) per miner. Housing, food, and medical care are provided free by the mining company in a huge compound where the Native miners live next to the mine.

After the blasting, the shattered rock and dust are shoveled by mechanical loaders and laborers into 4-ton hoppers and taken on the rail line to ore bins from where it is hauled up for processing above ground.

In the vast underground community of 8000 workmen, many other jobs have to be done besides digging out the ore.

Workshops repair the locomotives and rolling stock of the railroad. Machine shops overhaul and maintain the hundreds of pieces of equipment. Engineers tend the pumping stations which remove millions of gallons of water a day to prevent flooding. Electric, phone, water, and air lines are constantly checked out by inspection crews.

Safety Measures

A few words about the cooling system. The deeper the mine, the hotter the temperature, of course. Two miles down in the earth, where much gold mining is being done in South Africa today, the natural temperature of the rock before ventilation is 115°. Giant fans and an air conditioning system circulate 700,000 cubic feet of air a minute to keep the strenuously-laboring diggers from suffering heat stroke in the sweltering stopes.

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We ride the bantam railway back to the shaft with a group of young students who work in the mines as part of their curriculum at the Government Mining School. Their preparation for a career in the gold mining industry includes performing most of the jobs, both underground and on the surface, while learning every phase of mining operations.

At the shaft a noisy crowd of miners are queuing up for the skip. It is lunch hour, and the hungry men are eager to be up in the fresh air and at their meal in the compound. Rumor has already reached a mile into the earth that fish, cornmeal porridge, and coffee are on the menu today.

Payroll System

The skip lumbers upward with its three levels jammed full of appetite-kindled toilers. Back in the daylight again the miners file past two checkpoints where “roll-call” is taken. First, a page is removed from each miner’s workbook serving as a voucher for a half-shift worked. Then each miner de-

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