EDITORIAL

This issue of the Review is focused largely on labour and trade unionism in West and South Africa. As in the bargaining situation facing organised labour elsewhere in the capitalist West, the best cards seem to be held by the employers. The recession beginning in the mid-seventies has created adverse labour market conditions for workers in many countries, but more potently at the level of ideology, has created a whole rash of new management doctrines — phrased in terms of 'rationalisation', 'international competitiveness', 'technical need' and the wonders of 'privatisation'. These onslaughts have confused labour's responses and allowed management to pursue cross-national industrial strategies under the guise of furthering the national interest. The interests of labour, by the same token, have been defined as unpatriotic and sectional.

These forms of encounter were strongly at work in the case of the vehicle assembly plant in Nigeria studied by Bangura. Initially, the strong reaction of the workers to threats of retrenchment and redundancy forced the management onto the defensive, with the workers apparently bringing the management to heel. However, this was a short-lived victory, as there is a genuine overcapacity in the industry (made worse by the new two-tier foreign exchange system) and the management were able to cow the labour force by threatening massive reductions in output. Small wonder that Bangura concludes that plant-wide struggles have to be transcended in favour of mass-based education, the forging of broad alliances among workers from various industries and the public service, and democratic links with other vital sectors of the society like the peasantry, the progressive intelligentsia and various sectors of the urban poor who have been seriously affected by the adjustment programme of the state and capital.

The need for the unions to reach out beyond their memberships and the work site and for labour to join in alliance with other forces in asserting and preserving democratic principles is an argument expanded beyond the Nigerian case to a much wider canvas and more ambitious thesis by von Freyhold. In assessing the role of workers' movements in societal transformation, she asserts that proletarian struggle has always been most successful when joined with other popular initiatives. This has been particularly so in Africa with its colonial history involving racial as well as class oppression. von Freyhold thus sees workers as a key element in a popular struggle to reduce the violence and power of the state, to force the ruling classes into a recognition of the inviolability of life and the right of people to defend their own means of survival. This struggle, moreover, is specifically against cultural and ecological takeover by uncaring transnational capital, the form of dependency most opposed by von Freyhold.
While von Freyhold draws on India as an example where there is at least public discussion of the need for the working class to relate to social movements based on other than class interests, her appeal is essentially at the level of the theoretical need for workers to go beyond their narrower claim on class loyalties in favour of a wider assertion to democratic power. It may be argued that just such a role is necessitated for the burgeoning labour movement in South Africa, where there is simply no way the struggle against capital can be insulated from the struggle against the state. Indeed, with large capital often presenting a more progressive face than the apartheid state, it may be that some forms of resistance are as much directed at state controls as at company policies. This has led, as Webster shows, to the re-emergence of 'alliance politics' or 'political unionism' alongside 'collective bargaining unionism'. This form of union politics seems to draw something from the 1950s when the South African Congress of Trade Unions sought to complement its industrial weakness (particularly regionally, in Natal) with its political support drawn from extra-working class forces. The linking of labour to community demands is a tendency that is violently opposed by the government — who see it as a covert means of reintroducing banned black political organisations — and by capital — who would prefer to confine their relationship to labour to the bargaining table.

Where there are so few representative organisations of black majority, the democratic role of labour in South Africa offers some hope to the dispossessed and some defence against arbitrary state power. At the same time, attempts by the state to control and subordinate unions in post-colonial and post-revolutionary situations suggest that the unions would be wise to approach their wider role in a cautious spirit. As Webster indicates, it is precisely on the question of how far priority should be placed on worker and workplace based issues as against broader political concerns that debate is currently focused. In practice there has been increasing involvement of unions in community based issues. And the weight of the argument has fallen on the side of a clear acknowledgement that workers' struggles inevitably incorporate a political dimension. But it is the position of the largest confederation of African trade unions that workers' organisation should stop far short of subordinating themselves to the decision making machinery of political organisations. Rather they should retain the independence to choose the political issues they will involve themselves in and the manner in which that involvement should be expressed. Workers' organisations are increasingly directly involved in the political struggle of South Africa and on this basis have become specific targets of the repressive state apparatus. But if allied with other elements of popular struggle, it remains the conviction of many that their autonomy should be strenuously preserved.

The increasing sophistication of the labour movement in coping with the variety of tasks that are now demanded of it is shown in the statement of the Executive Committee of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), which we reproduce in our Briefings section. This statement should be read in conjunction with an earlier COSATU document carried in ROAPE 35. Other briefings that relate to our principal theme include Sorab Sadri's search behind the veil drawn over Unilever's pension plan in Nigeria. As he shows, Nigerian workers had first to demystify before they could oppose a plan that was apparently, but only apparently, made in their interests. Another item is introduced by Brian Wood, of the Namibia Support Committee, who interviews Ben Ulenge, of the National Union of Namibian Workers. What we publish here is an extract of a much longer interview, in which
we concentrate on the personal and environmental factors that go into the making of an African working class leader.

The conservative US unions believe that they too should have a role in influencing the education of African trade unionists. They exert their influence through the African-American Labor Center (AALC), a body also supported by agencies and organisations even closer to the state department than the AFL-CIO. Though many African trade unionists will have encountered the AALC and perhaps participated in its specialised training workshops, Godfried's analysis is the first to give a continental-wide picture to the US's attempts to 'educate' African unionists to accept a definition of trade union activity which focuses strictly on economistic goals through collective bargaining techniques and views any political role for workers' organisations with extreme distaste. It is hardly surprising that in recent years the AALC has devoted particular attention to South Africa in an attempt to win the hearts and minds of African trade unionists, persuading them of the virtues of that particular brand of trade union activity characteristic of the United States. That labour organisations should be at the forefront of imperialistic overtures may well be unpalatable, yet as Godfried's account shows, this is a phenomenon which can and must not be overlooked.

Both the articles and the briefings on our substantive theme lead to one conclusion. These are difficult times for African labour movements. They are confronted by a massive reduction in their bargaining power as the reserve army of the unemployed grows larger and larger; the state is hostile — in South Africa, violently so; employers are using increasingly more impenetrable ideologies, strategies and tactics, while democratic forces are making more claims on the labour movement. In the face of these pressures, workers have responded with great courage, even heroism. But the virtues of working class solidarity and resistance, necessary and commendable as they are, have now to be supplemented by more complex forms of political action and association. The unions need friends in the social movements (feminist, ecological, cultural and democratic) just as these movements need working class support. The terms of the alliance, the protection of working class interests and the leadership and programmes of newly socially conscious labour movements still need elaboration, but the need for such a convergence of democratic and working class politics is inescapable.

Carolyn Baylies and Robin Cohen
The Recession and Workers’ Struggles in the Vehicle Assembly Plants: Steyr — Nigeria

Yusuf Bangura

Retrenchment in Nigerian vehicle assembly plants in consequence of economic recession has provoked an active response from the workforce. At Steyr-Nigeria in Bauchi, workers walked out in October 1985 in protest at the management’s intransigence in negotiations with union officials. Bangura charts their initial success and provides a lucid account of the reasons for their ultimate failure. His analysis of the Steyr-Nigeria dispute is explicitly situated within the broader context of policy and economic performance in the Nigerian economy as a whole. He considers the extent to which workers emerged as victims of policy essentially motivated by the interests of quick profits and production of luxury consumer goods for an emergent bourgeoisie. The irrationality of such policy as a means of enhancing Nigeria’s development, or even of catering to a market which might reasonably be expected to emerge, is detailed by the author. Bangura focuses on a single case, but his concern is not with the factors making for immediate industrial victory. It is rather with a broader strategy extending beyond the preservation of workers’ jobs in any given industrial unit to the interests of the class as a whole. What is called for, he argues, is a policy which matches needs of the entire population with available resources and which gives priority to a society’s disadvantaged members.

On 10 October 1985, the workers of Steyr-Nigeria in Bauchi force-marched the managing director of the company out of the factory premises and told him not to return to the factory until he was ready to negotiate with their union officials. Other management staff, local and foreign, either took to their heels or went into hiding to avoid coming into contact with the highly provoked and agitated workers. The workers were protesting against the deteriorating conditions of work and management’s anti-labour rationalisation policies, following the decline of the Nigerian economy and the massive reduction in import licences, necessary for the importation of completely knocked down parts. Similar demonstrations took place a week before, on 4 October, at Peugeot Automobile of Nigeria (PAN) in Kaduna and at Volkswagen of Nigeria (VON) in Lagos in December 1985.

These demonstrations brought to the fore a hitherto hidden, but important, dimension of the operations of vehicle assembly plants in Nigeria. Public debate had primarily focused on the failure of the assembly plants to transfer technology to Nigerians, improve upon their local content supply and maintain a stable and reasonable price for their products. Indeed, the astronomical price increases of the vehicles generated a barrage of criticisms against the plants, with many middle class Nigerians calling for their closure and the re-introduction of the policy of
direct importation of fully built up cars. The demonstrations established a connection between technology transfer, local content supply, stable prices and workers' rights. The workers' stand was quite clear and emphatic: strategies of adjustment and rationalisation would have to take into account the interests and rights of the workforce, which stands at well over 15,000, excluding those in the support and allied industries.

The thrust of this article is to discuss the crisis of the vehicle assembly plants against the backdrop of the general recession of the Nigerian economy. Of particular importance is the effect of the rationalisation programme on the job security and living standards of the workers, which led to a major industrial relations crisis in 1985. But there were serious constraints on the workers' resistance strategies following the technical problems of the plants, the weak worker-alliances within the auto industry, the repressive character of the state and the vestiges of patronage structures in the company.

Post War Boom and the Assembly Plants
Assembly plants are a feature of the petro-Naira boom. The post-civil war economic strategy was aimed at transferring a substantial amount of the nation's wealth into the hands of Nigerians and establishing the basis for a capital goods sector-led industrialisation which would raise the contribution of value added in the manufacturing sector. The second national development plan of 1970-74 selected vehicle assembly plants, along with the iron and steel complex, the petro-chemical and chemical industry and four other industries as the backbone of an industrialisation strategy.

The import control measures of the Gowon regime, however, depressed the high demand for private cars during the civil war years. After the war, the administration was unable to contain the pressures from business persons and the middle classes to lift the ban on imports. A well articulated and efficient public transportation system would have helped to check the pressures but the government was reluctant to de-emphasise the role of private vehicles in its transport programme.

The orientation of the indigenisation scheme, the illusions of petro-Naira affluence and the strength of private sector interests made public transportation a non-issue. Indigenisation was not to be synonymous with public control of enterprises and an efficient welfare system. Instead, it was to be an instrument for fanning the flames of private enterprise and corruption. It is not surprising, therefore, that the second national development plan called for the establishment of three car assembly plants. There was no mention even of tractors and trucks which have a more direct bearing on productive activities. Elite and car-business influence was formidable.

Prior to 1970 some form of truck assembly had developed at the Apapa industrial area of Lagos, pioneered by two organisations. One was Federated Motor Industries (FMI), a subsidiary of United African Company, which started assembling partially-knocked down parts of Bedford commercial vehicles in the 1950s, with the cab, chassis, axles and wheels shipped separately to reduce shipping cost. The second was SCOASSEMBLY, a subsidiary of Societe Commercial Occidental Africaine, which started the assembly of parts of the Peugeot 404 pick up van in the 1960s. These pioneering efforts were, however, primarily aimed at reducing the cost of importation. The two companies were under no obligation to source their component parts locally. A definite policy on assembly plants was not formulated until the implementation of the second development plan and the oil boom.
Apart from providing employment and limiting the importation of fully built up cars, the administration was optimistic about the backward integration effects of the auto industry. It reckoned that allied industries could expand to meet the needs of the auto plants in such areas as tyres, hoses, belts, mats, seats, tubes, joints, grease, windscreens, windows, mirrors, lamps, wooden bodies, batteries, etc., which account for about 35% of the auto-parts, and that with time, the steel plant would allow for the local production of the remaining parts.

It was the astronomical increase in government revenue, following the oil price hikes of 1973, that hastened and expanded the establishment of the plants to include the existing two truck plants — FMI and SCOASSEMBLY — and four new ones, viz. Leyland at Ibadan, National Truck Manufacturers at Kano, Anambra Automobile Manufacturing Company (ANAAMCO) and Enugu and Steyr-Nigeria at Bauchi. PAN and VON, the only two car plants, were the first to take off in 1975. The other four new companies were incorporated in the third national development plan of 1975-81.

Steyr-Nigeria was commissioned on 18 July 1979 as a joint venture company between Steyr-Daimler Puch AG of Austria and the Federal Government of Nigeria. The federal government controlled 35% of the shares, Bauchi state government 7.5%, Borno, Gongola and Plateau state governments 2.5% each, Nigerian Industrial Development Bank 2.5%, Nigerian Technical Company 3%, other Nigerians 4.5% and Steyr Daimler Puch AG 40%. The company started its operations with a share capital of N21m with long term loans provided by the Nigerian Industrial Development Bank, a Nigerian banking consortium and a consortium of European banks. Production started with the model 586 having a payload of 10 tons. The green revolution programme of the Second Republic encouraged the company to introduce tractor assembly as well. Six product lines were in operation before the economic crisis erupted in 1981/82.

The Assembly Plants and the Recession
The Financing and Technical memorandum which established Steyr in September 1977, allowed the company to assemble the cabs and chassis, trims and fittings, front and rear axles, gear box and engines for its commercial vehicles. Within three years of production, i.e. by 1982, ‘the company was to manufacture in its plants such items as Steyr traditionally manufactures to the extent of 15% local content’. Local content was to go up to 50% in 1984, 75% in 1988 and 100% in 1992. There was, however, no obligation on the technical partners to achieve this target. There were neither incentives for performance, nor penalties for default. Instead, Steyr, as technical partners, were simply ‘to assist in this and in incorporating additional items from local manufacturers which are to constitute a further 15% local content’. The representatives of the technical partners have interpreted this section of the financial and technical agreement as ‘purely intentional... mainly based on the promise of market protection by Government and the promise to buy locally by the assembly plants. (Business Concord 21 March 1986).

It is not surprising that Steyr did not start in-plant manufacturing of some of the auto parts until 1985. Thus, only five items, mainly fabricated and machine products, such as the mudguard, were being produced locally in May 1986. What is more, even those five products rely on the importation of the major component parts. The company has been able to incorporate additional items worth about 18% of local content from sixteen local manufacturers and negotiations have been established
with seventeen others. However, only eight of the sixteen companies are still current with their supplies. They provide mainly paints, lubricants, fluids, body building, body parts, seats, covers and foams. The other eight companies which supplied the bulk of the locally acquired parts have run into raw material shortages. These companies used to supply batteries, clutch pressure plates, clutch driven plate shock absorbers, tyres and tubes, fasteners and safety glasses. With the raw materials crisis the percentage of local content must have declined considerably. When one takes into account the fact that the components for the manufacture of the locally produced parts are also imported, it would be surprising if the actual local content of the industry is more than 10%.

Experts in the automobile industry agree that local sourcing is an uphill task. Some even maintain that it 'is a dead end' (Klaus von Bothmer, African Guardian, 24 April 1986). The deputy technical manager of Steyr, Dzarma, believes that the government put the cart before the horse. Backward integration is difficult to achieve when the pilot enterprise is a capital-intensive transnational corporation with a fully integrated production package. Being primarily concerned about profit maximisation, such a company will tend to rely on its already perfected cost effective sources of inputs rather than experimenting with new techniques of local sourcing which could very well increase the initial cost of production.

The target date of 1992 when there would be fully produced Nigerian tractors and trucks was either based on a wrong diagnosis of the problems of the assembly plants or a deliberate cover up to get the projects off the ground before the oil revenues dried up. There was no way a fully built up car, truck or tractor could have been produced in the country without well established steel and petrochemical plants and a machine tool industry. Yet the iron and steel plant took off about the same time as the assembly plants. About 65% of the components of a car require flat steel which is not produced by the basic steel plants at Ajackuta and Aladja and the steel rolling mills at Oshogbo, Jos and Katsina. These plants only produce long products, useful for the construction industry. The fourth national development plan recognised the need for a third plant to produce flat steel but shelved the plan because of the capital-intensive nature of the industry. It is only now that the scheme is being revived.

The assembly plants are, therefore, directly affected by and in turn contribute to the economic crisis which the country has experienced since 1981. The automobile plants and the other 'priority industries' failed to stimulate the economy in the 1970s. Instead, they turned out to be large foreign exchange guzzlers. Industries were established without much consideration for the availability or procurement of local raw materials. The central objective was to secure a commercial outlet to sustain profit levels. For instance, although gross fixed capital formation jumped from 22.8% to 40.1% between 1973 and 1979, the inter-sectoral distribution of capital investment outlay was predominantly in favour of buildings and construction activities. The contribution of manufacturing to the gross domestic product remained consistently below 7% in the 1970s even though manufacturing activities experienced a 15% rate of growth. More than 85% of the total output of the manufacturing sector is still accounted for by light industrial consumer goods with hardly any from the capital goods sector. The manufacture of agricultural and special industrial machinery and equipment, household electrical apparatus and technical equipment account for only 2.3% of value added in manufacturing. (Teriba et al).
A substantial amount of the oil revenue was, therefore, spent on the importation of capital goods and raw materials. This jumped from $1.189b. in 1974 to $7.705b in 1981, representing a growth rate of well over 600%. In fact, the expenditure on capital goods and raw materials accounted for about two-thirds of the total imports in 1980. (State of Nigerian Economy, Table 6). Another major dimension of the recession was the way in which the local resources and funds were pilfered by the private sector and transferred abroad because of the inflated exchange rate of the Naira. Transfer pricing is rampant in Nigerian industries. Witness the revelations of the dubious role of the Johnson Mathey Bank in facilitating the swindling of N$6.2 billion from the country under the pretext of importing goods, some of which never reached the shores of the country. What is not known, however, is the extent of transfer pricing that takes place in the operations of the automobile plants.

Surprisingly, most of these plants have consistently recorded losses since their inception in the 1970s. In the case of Steyr, it was only in 1981 and 1985 that modest profit was recorded, i.e. if we exclude the pilot scheme of 1979. Yet, their turnover has increased from N21.5m in 1980 to N62.3m in 1985, in spite of marked declines in the intervening years because of the crisis.

Table 1: Turnover and Profit of Steyr-Nigerian, 1979-85

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<tr>
<td>Turnover</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>62.4</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>62.3</td>
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<td>Profit</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>-8.2</td>
<td>-16.4</td>
<td>-7.4</td>
<td>-0.136</td>
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Source: Financial Division, Steyr-Nigeria

Butto has drawn attention to the possibility of transfer pricing in Steyr stemming from the huge expenditure incurred in sales and administration. In 1981, for instance, Steyr spent about N19,581,298 on administration and N10,321,951 on sales. Administrative expenses alone accounted for about one third of the turnover that year and administration and sales expenditure combined took about 50%. Yet the staff force stood at about 744 in 1981. Expenditure on junior staff salaries and benefits was well below N2 million.

Apart from these anomalies, suspicions are rife that most of the assembly plants make their profits at source by inflating the imported completely knocked down parts (CKDs). The relatively protected domestic market serves as an incentive for this practice.

Importation of fully built up cars (FBUs) experienced an exponential growth during the Second Republic. In 1981 alone, in only four months, 34,000 FBUs of panel vans entered the country (Business Concord, 21 March 1986). The total value of the importation of FBUs jumped from N$97m in 1974 to N$1,316.9m in 1981. Even so locally assembled vehicles continue to enjoy immense benefits in the Nigerian market making it difficult to expose the industry to the full rigours of competition.
When, for instance, the cheaply imported Datsun panel van threatened Volkswagen's market in 1981 due to Shagari's liberal imports policy, the management of VON succeeded in getting the government to impose controls on Datsun imports after warning of an imminent collapse of the company.

Not surprisingly, the current minister of industries, Bunu Sheriff, has attributed the high cost of vehicles to the inflated cost of the CKDs and has talked of government plans to obtain the services of the International Police to investigate the true prices of the CKDs imported by the vehicle assembly plants.

The dramatic collapse of oil prices in the 1980s sounded the death knell of the post-colonial pattern of import substitution industrialisation. These industries had been set up mainly with an eye on the oil revenues. Federal Government revenues, however, dropped from N15.2b in 1980 to N10.947b in 1983, necessitating some rationing in the allocation of import licences and thereby dealing a serious blow to the turnover of the auto-plants. All pretence about reaching an optimum capacity and developing an integrated local industry was buried. The huge investment on infrastructure and the imposing factory buildings now stand out as merely a showcase of the poverty of development planning in the country.

Steyr, for instance, was built to produce 8000 trucks and 5000 tractors annually. It is interesting to note that the production of both trucks and tractors from 1979-85 has not reached any of the annual targets. Only 5795 trucks were produced between 1979 and 1985, about 60% of the annual target. Output of tractors for the same period was 4,257. Such a poor performance draws attention to the 'unviability' of the industry. Less than one quarter of the import licenses the company used indicate that of N43m import licences applied for only N10.5m were received.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>trucks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pilot run</td>
<td>1471</td>
<td>1965</td>
<td>1149</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>385</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>tractors</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>1470</td>
<td>1130</td>
<td>7</td>
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Source: Steyr-Nigeria — Technical Production Unit

The crisis in the assembly plants has been compounded by the shrinking market for some of their products, particularly trucks. Morley, the managing director of Leyland, has observed, for instance, that the five medium and commercial vehicle assembly plants 'have a combined single, shift capacity of approximately 26,000 units per year whereas the market currently requires 8-10,000 units per year', and insisted that there was room for only three companies to continue operations. (The Guardian, 12 March 1986). A survey carried out by Business Concord which relied on data provided by the Nigerian Auto Manufacturers Association showed that sales of 7089 heavy commercial vehicles in the first nine months of 1985 was 18.35% below sales in 1984 of 8683 units. In fact sales of heavy commercial vehicles went
down by more than 50% when compared to a figure of 17,697 vehicles sold in 1981. This partly explains why Steyr seems to be concentrating more on tractor production.

Rationalisation and Adjustment
The assembly plants must rank among the hardest hit of the industries in the recession. The life line of the industry, import licences, has been shortened with the collapse of oil revenues. Companies continue to record negative profit. In fact, most of the plants operate below 25% capacity. Steyr, for instance, is currently operating at 15% installed capacity.

Nigerian industries have introduced various rationalisation and adjustment measures to sustain their pre-crisis profit levels. When austerity measures were announced by the government in April 1982, the Nigerian employers Consultative Association distributed a circular to its members suggesting ways of responding to the crisis without resorting to mass retrenchment. The measures included an embargo on new appointments, reduction on overtime and work days, elimination of shifts, retrenchment of temporary staff and suspension of expenditure on employee welfare services. Whilst most of these measures have been introduced by the auto plants, the deepening crisis has called for an even more stringent and comprehensive package.

Management strategies have varied but, at bottom, they are primarily aimed at resolving the crisis on the backs of the workers. The labour force is to be drastically reduced to an 'optimum' level to correspond to the availability of CKDs. Compulsory leaves can then be periodically introduced when there are no CKDs to hand. Part of the retrenched staff can be held in reserve, to be recalled for higher productivity work when the CKDs arrive. This way, annual production targets can be reached very quickly at reduced cost since the reserved workers enjoy no benefits and the permanent workers can be sent home without pay after the CKDs have been exhausted. The Procedural and Collective agreements provide that workers may not be paid if there is no work.

Peugeot and Volkswagen, with big labour forces, have combined compulsory leaves with progressive retrenchment because of the high cost of paying benefits in one fell swoop. Steyr has adopted the more standard approach of an initial massive retrenchment since such an exercise did not entail a high retrenchment bill. Its staff strength was reduced by about 44% from 744 in 1981 to 418 in 1982. The retrenched junior staff were given four months salary benefits whilst the senior staff received six months pay. There was a gradual reabsorption of some of the workers, with the entire staff gravitating between 539 in 1984 and 518 in 1985. It appears that the management has decided to peg its staff numbers at around 500 barring any major upset in future allocations of import licences which now stand at an annual average of N10m.

More adjustment measures, such as temporary layoffs, had to be adopted by Steyr in 1983 as the supply of CKDs dried up. Compulsory leaves or drastically reduced work days have become notorious in most of the auto plants. Temporary layoffs started in PAN in 1982, intensified in 1983/84 and deteriorated in May/September 1985. Volkswagen of Nigeria has shut down at least eight times since 1981.

Steyr introduced a package of austerity measures to cover the period 1983/84. Junior staff were placed under austerity measures from 1 October to 30 November
Table 3: Size of Staff Force at Steyr-Nigeria, 1979-85

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<tr>
<td>Junior staff</td>
<td>630*</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>384</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior staff</td>
<td>n.a</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>84</td>
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<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>n.a</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expatriates</td>
<td>n.a</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>744</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>539</td>
<td>518</td>
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* Estimate

Source: Steyr-Nigeria, Personnel Department

1983 which entailed their receiving only 50% of their basic salary. Virtually the entire factory was closed from 2 December 1983 to 9 January 1984. The apprentice training programme was suspended for four months and even though the management tried to reach a compromise with the workers by paying all staff their full December salaries during the closure, the annual bonus for 1983 was cancelled. Moreover, management insisted that the four working days during the closure from 2-5 January would be deducted from the January salaries of all staff.

As part of the rationalisation programme, automobile plants have tampered with the range of parts that are to be assembled locally, so that they come in partially assembled instead of in the completely knocked down condition stipulated in the technical agreement. Allegations that this has been done at Steyr are rife among the union officials and workers. According to the Secretary of the defunct in-plant union, John Pam, who went through the three year training programme of the company, 'there are times when the engine is already assembled. Then all you do is to put the tyres, do repairs and test the engine'. In fact, workers refer to the CKDs as PKDs (partially knocked down). Union officials maintain that this practice became acute after 1983. No doubt such a policy must have contributed to the adjustment process and the streamlining of the labour force.

Workers’ Resistance
Workers’ response to the national industrial crisis has varied between industries. But overall relations of domination which generally characterise workers/management relations are being reinforced by the patronising ideology of the ruling class, the limited extent of the capitalist sector and the low level of political and organisational work within the unions themselves. Workers are consistently told by their employers and state officials to be thankful for being on the payroll when millions of Nigerians are jobless.

The economic crisis has deepened those prejudices. Nigerian workers have been quite dynamic, however, since the colonial times, in fighting for their historic rights and defending threatened gains. In fact, it was as a result of this tradition of spontaneity and resilience that the Nigerian state has devised various strategies of
labour control and subordination culminating in the restructuring of the trade union movement during the period 1975 to 1978. This restructuring altered the affiliations of the previous labour centres and their respective trade union units by regrouping the latter into 42 industrial unions, in the process strengthening some of the old unions and weakening the others. Most of the unions that made up the Automobile, Boatyard, Transport Equipment and Allied Workers Union of Nigeria (ABTEAWUN) were relatively new when the Nigerian Labour Congress was established in 1978. The national union has been forced, therefore, by the constraints of finance and lack of seasoned unionists to give considerable initiative to in plant branches.

Workers in the textiles, automobiles and construction industries have been adversely exposed to the crippling effects of the depression. This should not be surprising given that the construction boom depended on high government patronage whilst the textile and automobile industries have relied upon a guaranteed supply of foreign exchange to import raw materials and CKDs. Workers in these industries have, therefore, experienced more stoppages, compulsory leaves, deferment of salary payments and retrenchment than most other Nigerian workers. But no major industrial dispute has been recorded in the construction industry because of the low level of unionisation there. Strikes, go slows and demonstrations are, however, rampant in the textile and automobile industries. Workers demonstrated, for instance, in Kaduna Textile Limited in January 1984 against the deferment of salaries and other benefits and at PAN and Steyr in October 1985.

The Problem as perceived by Steyr Workers

The events that gave rise to the October 1985 crisis started to unfold in February of that year. The immediate problems were housing, transport allowances, the annual increment and bonuses which were progressively being undermined in the company's adjustment measures. Workers resistance to the 1982 retrenchment exercise was low key since the union was still in its infancy and no strategy had been worked out to cope with the crisis; such was also the case with the 1983/84 austerity measures which the workers and their union representatives grudgingly accepted. That particular experience, however, exposed the workers to the realities of having to contend with periodic closures and attendant assaults on bonuses, facilities and hard earned wages.

The union reviewed the industrial scene in late 1984 and decided as a priority to fight for the revision of the worker's handbook by including it along with the other outstanding demands in their negotiations with management. They reckoned that negotiations on the other outstanding areas would be fruitless without a serious revision of the worker's handbook, the contract of employment, which was solely drawn up by the company in 1979 before the branch union was formed. The areas in the handbook which deal with terminations and dismissals were considered to be obnoxious since they had been used by the management to get rid of labour without having to pay any benefits. Terminations had become rampant in many factories as management tried to avoid the payment of heavy retrenchment benefits. The union insisted, therefore, on strengthening its contractual position by instituting a collective and procedural agreement that would spell out the rights and duties of management, and guarantee workers jobs during the recession or at least ensure that workers got their salaries even if the factory were to be closed periodically because of lack of CKDs. The revision of the handbook, restoration of bonuses and
annual increments and the provision of housing and transportation were to form the backbone of workers' demands in 1985. The union had resolved that the restructuring programme of the industry should not be carried out at the expense of labour alone.

**Crisis in Labour-Management Relations**

Pending the revision of the handbook, the union signed a temporary agreement with management to restore the yearly increment which had been suspended during the 1983/84 austerity measures. The increment was to be added to the January 1985 salaries. Management's failure to honour this agreement prompted the union to schedule a labour-management meeting in February to discuss the increment and the other outstanding issues such as the handbook, housing and transportation. Management maintained that there was a serious financial problem facing the company which called for a major cut back on facilities and benefits. It alleged that the company incurred a loss of N7 million in 1984 and a debt of N30m. in November 1984 and that although the debt was reduced to N16m. in 1985, the company still operated an overdraft of N35. In the circumstances, it maintained that the payment of annual increments and bonuses and the provision of staff cars were unreasonable. The union asserted that they were not consistently informed about the actual liquidity of the company, and that the annual increment was a right which their earlier agreement and guaranteed.

Management's intransigence led to a work-to-rule for three days. A plea was made to call off the industrial action and an agreement was temporarily reached. Management was to give the yearly increment by July 1985 when 'the financial position would have improved' and would look into the other outstanding problems. An agreement was signed after the company Secretary publicly addressed the workers stating the terms of the agreement. The workers went back to work.

Union elections were held on 6 June which resulted in a new executive taking office with the exception of the vice-chairman and treasurer, who were re-elected. The need for an effective union response to the problems of workers was emphasised during the election campaign. The new executive had pledged not to let the workforce down in the outstanding negotiations. Management was, however, getting worried about the increasing radicalism of the union. Previous acts of militancy over confirmation of appointments had been firmly dealt with in 1980, leading to the termination of eleven workers. Relations between the union and the management were strained by that incident, prompting the local NLC to set up a commission of enquiry on the dispute. Such bitter memories resurfaced in June 1985 as union officials accused the personnel manager of putting obstacles on their way to get introduced to the managing director as the new union officials. They had to book a direct appointment with the managing director to discuss the outstanding problems of the workers.

The company's decision to buy three new 505 and four 504 peugeot cars convinced the union and the workforce that the company's financial position had improved. They were made to believe that the old cars were sold to management staff at drastically reduced prices instead of returning them to the car pool. Workers were outraged by these discoveries. They added weight to the union's agitation on why workers should not continue to bear the brunt of the austerity measures.

After several meetings with the managing director, a temporary agreement was reached which allowed the management to look into all factors affecting labour/
management relations with a view to solving them 'in the near future'. However a publication appeared in *Sunday Triumph* on 29 September 1985, in which the managing director was alleged to have given an interview threatening the imminent closure of the company. Tension was high the following day at the factory as workers besieged the union officials and insisted that they should demand from management the true situation in the company. The union gave the management a week's grace since, as it reasoned, such a major decision like closure would not be announced on the pages of newspapers without discussions with the union.

The union wrote the managing director on 7 October 1985 demanding an immediate meeting to discuss the alleged closure and other outstanding issues. Union officials reckoned that the story was deliberately planted in the newspaper to get the workers and the union to scale down their demands. The managing director replied that he would not be able to see the union officials until 14 October. He maintained that he had just returned from Austria and had other pressing issues deserving his attention for the rest of the week, that his deputy was already in Lagos trying to obtain the approval of credit lines to secure the importation of CKDs, and that he had to prepare for a Finance Committee meeting of the Board of Directors scheduled for the following week.

The union officials felt slighted by this decision. They were under tremendous pressure from the workforce to clarify the newspaper report and reach an early settlement on other important issues. The workers had become restless about their deteriorating conditions of work. The bus service had been withdrawn for two weeks, and workers had to trek long distances to work or pay high transport fares. All attempts to get the personnel manager to prevail upon the managing director for an early meeting failed.

A meeting of the sectional representatives was, therefore, called by the union to discuss some limited pressures that could get the managing director to change his stand. The meeting decided on a work-to-rule on the tenth of October. The union officials went back to the personnel manager on that day to get him to prevail upon the managing director to schedule an early meeting to prevent escalation of the dispute. But the managing director stuck to his guns.

The union executive, undeterred by such intransigence, went back at around 1 p.m. to see if negotiations could be held as situation reports showed that the workers were getting restive about the management's arrogance and insensitivity. But all of the principal officers were away and did not return until around 2.30 p.m.

By this time, however, the workers had decided to go beyond the work-to-rule. Apparently without the knowledge of the union officials, who were in the offices trying to revive the negotiations, the workers had determined to demonstrate their disgust at the managing director's behaviour. They walked directly to his office, marched him off the premises of the factory and told him not to return until he had learned to behave himself and negotiate with the union officials. Acting on the advice of the union, the workers returned after the incident and stayed on the job until closing time at 5 p.m. Some senior members of staff had, however, phoned the police and asked for protection. The police commissioner of the state arrived at the factory but found the workers already on the job and advised that the peaceful atmosphere be maintained. Management had been completely humiliated. Workers' power had been demonstrated and the mask of authority unveiled.
Constraints on Workers' Struggles

Even though management's authority was deflated and useful lessons drawn about the centrality of the workforce in production, the workers did not take over the company. Steyr's operations involve a heavy capital outlay tied to the operations of the parent company and the availability of foreign exchange to import the necessary CKDs. Steyr workers could not have taken over the factory and run it successfully without a national revolution and solidarity with the workers at Steyr-Daimler Puch AG in Austria. The workers' action was limited, geared mainly towards the achievement of two objectives: to protest against the arrogant posture of the managing director whom many believed was a racist and to strengthen the hands of the union officials by demonstrating to management the extent to which the workers could go on defending their interests.

Management was determined to forestall the workers' show of strength and re-impose its authority. Given the ease with which such authority had been dislodged there was a strong temptation to use extreme measures to restore the status quo ante. The following day, 11 October, workers reported for duty hoping that management would have drawn the appropriate lessons and would be ready to discuss with the union. To their dismay they found the factory gates locked, with a big sign board saying that the company was closed until further notice. There were also two units of armed policemen guarding the company premises. Management had decided to close the company in order to resolve the crisis on its own terms.

The battle lines were drawn, but it was a battle which has now put the workers on the defensive since they were not allowed to regain possession of the factory. Management was in full control of the premises and could dictate the new terms of re-entry. Union officials recognised this weakness. They instructed the workers to report for work every day at 7.30 a.m. as a way of putting pressure on the authorities to reopen the company. Workers' power at this stage of the crisis could only be effective if the workers were allowed to be at the workplace.

The Bauchi state branch of the NLC, under the able leadership of Shehu Abdullahi, waded into the crisis and rendered support to the branch union since the national secretariat of the ABTEAWUN was unable to send officials to Steyr sufficiently quickly. The NLC wrote to the chairman of the board of directors of Steyr-Nigeria and the military governor of Bauchi state expressing great concern about the punitive measures of the company which amounted to a lockout, outlawed by decree 68 of 1968, and appealed to both bodies to prevail upon the management of the company to reopen the factory and settle outstanding issues with the union. A series of negotiations was also held with Steyr management, all aimed at bringing pressure to bear on the policy makers to reopen the factory gates which had by this time been besieged by workers for about a week. A heated public debate also developed about the relevance of the assembly plants in the country, given the high prices of the vehicles. The plants were clearly receiving a bad press.

The union had hoped to cash in on this bad publicity by drawing attention to the industrial relations aspect of the plants. For his part the minister of industries was worried about the possibility of a generalized crisis at the assembly plants which could trigger off a general strike. He visited the various plants to study the situation and settle the crisis. He disapproved of the workers' actions and accused the union officials of sabotaging foreign investment in the country. But he also called on management to open the factory immediately and set up a committee that would include the union officials to help in pointing out the culprits. The union's
participation in the work of the committee, however, was blocked since on this same day, 18 October, the company served the union officials and other active members of the workforce with letters of dismissal, backdated to the 10th of October.

A total of seventeen workers were dismissed, including six members of the new executive: Musa Abubakar (Chairman), John Pam (Secretary), Sunday Adeyemi (Vice Chairman), Patrick Mobutu (Public Relations Officer), Goddefry Dackas (Treasurer) and Jibrin Atokolo (Assistant Auditor). The Auditor and the Assistant Secretary were on excuse duty and the Financial Secretary, Ladele Umar Gurkuma, was not mentioned. No reason was given for his exemption. In addition, several ex-union officers were also dismissed. Samuel Ishiaku (Auditor) Bako Doga (Assistant Secretary), Evans Jones (Chairman), Garba Inuwa (Financial Secretary) Auto Yekhen (ex-Financial secretary), Gambo All (ex-Assistant Auditor), Usman Agude, Moses Nyipwo, Samuel Kajange and Adamu Mato (all floor members). The seventeenth worker was a former chairman of the union who had in fact graduated to the senior staff scale. He was terminated. It would seem the authorities were determined not only to crush the executive but to wipe out all vestiges of unionism in the factory.

The board of directors of the company held a meeting on the 17th of October and resolved that the factory will open on Monday, 21 October. All employees were instructed to reapply to the office of the managing director for re-employment. The company maintained that 'any employee who had not applied by the following Friday for re-employment should consider himself/herself automatically terminated from the company'. The application form for re-employment sought to reverse whatever gains the workers had made since the factory was established. Management would decide on the position where the re-employed worker would now be placed and the worker would agree unconditionally to terms of employment as specified by the company and comply with all rules and regulations imposed. Management could now change the contract of employment without even referring to the contentious worker's handbook.

The workers were enraged. The situation was tense. The union, fully supported by the workforce, resolved to resist the re-employment conditions. Security forces moved in and arrested seven top union officials and activists. The arrested officials were dispersed into various cells and detained for three days. They were later prosecuted with six others after a bail of N400 had been granted to them. The arrests were aimed at breaking the link between the union and the workers to get the latter to obey the injunctions of the company and return to work on Monday, the 21 October.

It was difficult to break the solidarity of the workers. The NLC officials filled the vacuum created by the arrests and instructed the workers not to accept the anti-democratic conditions laid down for re-employment. Other activists emerged from among the ranks of the workers to co-ordinate the resistance with the NLC. The NLC chairman wrote the managing director a strongly worded letter protesting the arrests and the anti-worker conditions of re-employment and urged that the proposed enquiry be allowed to take off without prejudice.

Since it was management that was now keen on resumption, workers' power lay in resisting it. All workers were urged not to return to work until their union officials had been released and reinstated. They were also instructed not to sign the re-
employment forms. Not a single worker turned up for work on 21 October, the day the factory gates were re-opened. A few who wanted to report for duty were dissuaded by well organised groups of activists, positioned strategically on the main road leading to the factory. A stalemate ensued for about three days.

The board of directors was tactful in giving a whole week for the re-engagement of the workers since it reckoned it would be difficult to break workers solidarity in a day or two. Workers had completely lost faith in the integrity of management. They looked solidly up to their union officials and the local NLC for leadership and direction. But the security forces had tried to penetrate the ranks of the workers by identifying the militants and separating them from the general workforce. The arrest of the unionists was part of that strategy. Management’s injunctions were given the widest publicity in the media. The failure of national union officials to arrive on time afforded management the opportunity to suspend its negotiations with the local NLC by insisting that the latter had no locus standi in the crisis. The forces ranged against the union were now formidable with the state and federal governments, security forces, the local media and notable personalities in the town putting up a well articulated campaign to intimidate the workers into submission. Apart from the NLC and a few other local workers’ unions only the BACAS branch of the Academic Staff Association (among the non-workers’ associations) openly supported the Steyr workers.

The members of the senior staff association in Steyr were initially included in the re-engagement exercise. However, the policy makers realised that some members of the association could be used to bring pressure to bear on the resistant workers. An agreement was reached with the senior staff association exempting them from the conditions of re-employment, thus securing their loyalty to the company.

There is a strong patronage element in the mode of recruitment in Steyr and many Nigerian companies generally. Very rarely do companies employ labour purely on the basis of advertisements and interviews. In any case, there are no employment bureaus to act as a link between companies and prospective labour. The slow pace of capitalist development, the over-supply of labour and competition for jobs are responsible for such a situation. Workers invariably end up being employed through patronage structures, with senior relations on the job, well placed bureaucrats, politicians and business-persons playing the role of godfathers. The situation is compounded in small cities like Bauchi where inter-personal relations are very strong. This is reinforced by Steyr’s quota system of employment with the catchment area, Bauchi, having a 43% share of the labour force. Those of Borno, Gongola and Plateau are 2.3%, 4.2% and 6.7% respectively. The remaining 43% is open to national competition. A good number of the workers in Steyr owe their employment to senior relations in the company.

There was a two-pronged strategy of breaking the workers’ resistance after the senior staff had been exempted from the re-engagement exercise. Senior members of the company, at times acting in concert with other local personalities, held private meetings with identified individual workers and persuaded them to return to work and ignore the ‘empty union posturing’. They claimed that the union had been disbanded and that management was actually determined to strike off all erring workers from the payroll after 25 October. They also pointed out the difficulties of getting new jobs in a recessed economy and played on the psyche of the workers by claiming that three-quarters of the workforce had already filled the forms. To prevent a possible confrontation with the hard core of the militant
workers, senior members would volunteer to submit the forms to the managing
director.

Why would the company devise such divide and rule tactics if, as the chairman of
the board of directors boasted, ‘there are millions of Nigerians more qualified than
some of them, roaming the streets and corridors of offices in search of whatever
jobs are available to them’? The point, of course, is that there is a limit to the policy
of mass dismissals. Some of the more technical positions could not be filled at short
notice since they required years of training. The company had, in any case, cut down
its training programme because of the recession. Furthermore, the survival of
patron-client relations demand, at times, cautious and moderate approaches to
crisis-management. Mass dismissals could undercut the social base of some of the
senior members of the company and other political and business notables in the
state. There could be no guarantee that such a policy would not start social unrest
or even riots in the town or around the premises of the company which could not be
controlled by the management. The safest policy, therefore, was to persuade the
workers to return to work.

The second part of the strategy was the use of regionalism. Since the union officials
were predominantly northerners it was impossible to use the standard divisive
argument that southern unionists wanted to hold down the development of the
north. This time the argument was reversed and personalised. ‘Northern unionists
want to frustrate the ambitions of individual southern workers in the company
since northerners could always get jobs in their areas. Southerners have struggled
hard to be employed under the company’s stringent quota system; the recession
works against southern immigrant labour in the north; and, in any case, most of the
northern workers have already filled the forms and handed them over to their
senior relations in the company’.

The union was unable to counter these retrogressive initiatives. It was difficult to
know which workers had succumbed to such pressures since most of the activities
were done in private. Some of the affected workers reported to the unionist and the
NLC some of these activities but there was little they could do to those who
complied. The union leadership had been intimidated by the security agents.
Propaganda work became difficult to sustain. Pay day was also just around the
corner. Management issued a statement on 24 of October, just a day before the
deadline expired, stating that ‘all employees of Steyr who by Friday 25 October 1985
have submitted their applications for re-engagement will be paid their full salary for
the month of October 1985,’ even though there had been no work for about two
weeks. Furthermore, those who had submitted their application ‘in accordance
with Board directives’ and who were subsequently notified in writing about their
re-engagement by Friday 25 October would be regarded as having been
continuously employed by Steyr-Nigeria Limited with no break in their service to
the company’.

Most workers were worried about their October salaries. Since these were now
guaranteed by the management, many felt that they should secure them and
continue the struggle from within, especially as the latter part of the company’s
statement created the impression that many workers had already signed the forms.
There was no strike fund to sustain the resistance.

Many other workers who genuinely wanted the industrial action to continue
requested from the NLC an alternative to the management’s bait. The NLC branch,
of course, lacked the financial resources to support a prolonged resistance. Since
the national union wasn't around and the local branch had been incapacitated, it
was difficult for the NLC to urge the workers to hold on. A good number had actually
returned to work by Thursday, 24 October. Those holding back could not be assured
of an alternative. By Friday, most of the workers were back at work. The resistance
had collapsed.

Post-Re-employment Developments
There were very serious constraints on the workers' struggles. Localised union
struggles had been difficult to sustain nation-wide since the recession set in, in 1981.
The problems of rationalisation which triggered off the October demonstration had
affected all the auto plants and many other manufacturing industries in the country.
Pockets of industrial disputes accompanied these rationalisation programmes. The
demonstration at PAN on 4 October 1985, for instance, influenced that of Steyr a
week later. Auto workers had hoped to attract easy public sympathy since the
public debate on car prices and technology transfer was weighted against the
assembly plants. The workers had hoped to get the public to accommodate
workers' plight in the debate and persuade the companies and government to take
into account workers' rights in the rationalisation programme.

The tragedy of the October demonstrations was that there was no national inter-
plant co-ordination of the workers' struggles against management's rationalisation
package. The national union lacked the resources to play an effective leadership
role in the general crisis and the branch unions were unavoidably too busy co-
ordinating their own local disputes. As it happened, the national secretariat failed to
maintain a presence in either the PAN or the Steyr demonstrations. Most of the
work was done by the NLC and the local unionists and activists. The branch union at
PAN was, in fact, split as workers accused a section of the branch secretariat of
collaborating with management.

National co-ordination of strategies, buttressed by propaganda and public
education was missing. The opportunity offered by the two major demonstrations
at PAN and Steyr to wrest concessions from management and influence the
rationalisation programmes was lost. There was no way the auto plants could have
survived a general assembly plants strike without some major concessions to the
workforce. Instead, the individual unions were left to face their employers who
have always relied on inter-plant management cooperation through the Nigerian
Auto Manufacturers Association and state resources to deal with their workforce.

The workers in Steyr went back to work without management meeting any of their
demands and in consequence a serious blow was dealt to trade unionism in the
company. There was no viable organ left to defend workers rights and interests.
Instead the disbanded union and the national secretariat became saddled with two
outstanding court cases and an industrial dispute. The first is a criminal case filed
by the management against the dismissed workers on charges of disturbance of
public peace, grievous hurt and assault. The second is a civil case filed by the
disbanded branch union against management for wrongful dismissal. Finally a
trade dispute has been filed by the national secretariat of the union at the Industrial
Arbitration Panel.

Workers, however, continued to identify with the dismissed unionists even after
their acceptance of the obnoxious conditions of re-engagement. In fact, several
attempts were made at the beginning to withdraw their check off funds and give
them to the unionists as a way of sustaining them until the three cases were resolved. One of the remaining unionists, the financial secretary, Umaru Gurkuma, withdrew ₦1000 and ₦900 separately from the union account on 2 December 1985 and 3 February 1986 respectively. He was, however, issued with a query by the personnel manager on 25 February 1986 to explain who authorised the withdrawal and account for the expenses incurred with the money. The union had made the mistake of keeping its dues in a separate code in the company’s account instead of opening a separate bank account in town. Given the new situation in the company there was little the remaining unionists could do to ward off what actually amounted to gross interference in workers’ rights in the disbursement of their check off. The query was heeded.

The workers also agreed to make voluntary donations to a Dismissed Workers Support Fund. Contributions ranged from ₦2 to ₦5 per worker per month. Management got to know about this and issued a warning to the workers to discontinue with the practice. Even so, contributions continued until December, 1985.

Union power has now collapsed. But management wants the national secretariat of the union, which is anxious about the blocked check off dues in the company accounts, to organise elections for a new branch executive. Management insists that otherwise the check off will not be passed on to the national secretariat. The national secretariat has resisted this, since holding elections would undermine the civil case in court and the industrial dispute at the Industrial Arbitration Panel. The disbanded executive has until 1988 before its term of office expires.

Meanwhile workers’ problems remain. Dismissals and terminations are rife. The morale of the workers is low. The company was, in fact, closed down by the summer of 1986 because of non availability of CKDs, but most probably also because of the anticipated high cost of production that would accompany the introduction of the second tier foreign exchange market. There was no union to negotiate the terms of closure, a situation making workers even more insistent on the reinstatement of their branch officials. Many of the workers interviewed were themselves willing to serve the union and continue the struggle from where the sacked unionists left it.

Conclusion
The current crisis has demonstrated that most of the assembly plants are not viable after all. The policy makers failed to carry out a proper appraisal of these plants and of how they fit into the industrialisation strategy. They easily succumbed to the pressures of the technical partners who were more concerned about finding an outlet for their products. As Diaku argued there was neither ‘a legal framework for enforcing the terms of the contract nor an efficient institutional mechanism for checking the performance of the plants against policy targets’. What is more, the establishment of an intermediate and capital goods sector with a high local content did not take place before the plants were established. The awkward situation, therefore, arose where both the assembly plants and the so-called local content suppliers were dependent upon the state for the importation of CKDs and raw materials. With the collapse of oil revenues and the rationing of import licences, both sectors of the industry faced very serious shortages, necessitating rationalisation policies that affected both labour-management relations and the prices of their products.
Various proposals have been articulated by the Nigerian public concerning the future the assembly plants. These range from complete closure (reintroduction of fully built up cars, to privatisation (so that government funds can be spared of this unviable enterprise) to standardisation of the auto parts and and specialisation in product range (to allow for economies of scale, more profitability and the generation of local research) to allowing the realities of the market to take its toll on the less efficient ones.

These proposals fall within the short to medium term perspective and have direct implications for labour. In fact, they take a purely technicist position ithout any regard for the role of labour in the rationalisation programme. The execution of these programmes could lead to more retrenchment, reduced work days, compulsory leaves, forced saving, curtailment of bonuses and increments and the suspension of workers' facilities. Such policies are responsible for the frequent industrial disputes in the plants. Government's own rationalisation programme which may be based on the standardisation of the autoparts does not deviate from this anti-labour perspective. The primary objective, it would seem, is to simply increase the local content supply without jeopardising the profit levels of the companies. But the capacity of the government to enforce controls has been extremely weak. What it fails to take into account is that the workers can effectively monitor the operations of these companies locally, starting from the clearance at the ports to the actual production and sales stages. My own experience with some of the workers is that they know a great deal about what goes on in these industries and could produce better results than INTERPOL, at least at the local level, if major concessions were made addressing their specific demands and rights. As it were, most of them are not prepared to expose the dubious activities of these companies because they believe that the state's and management's interests converge and workers will be penalised if, as happened in Steyr, they challenge the unpatriotic activities of the plants.

Whatever position finally emerges, workers in these industries have to devise appropriate strategies to respond to the crisis. The Steyr case shows that the national union needs to do much more in providing effective leadership to the general workforce. Propaganda, self education, inter-plant union co-ordination and effective strategies of bargaining and industrial intervention have to be set in motion if the labour force is not to be depleted.

But workers response should not stop at the defensive level. Obviously, the future of the assembly plants is bleak. Most of them are not viable. The introduction of the second tier foreign exchange market is likely to lead to the permanent closure of most of the plants or a massive reduction in turnover as their products go out of the reach of ordinary Nigerians. The industrialisation strategy itself which established the plants was defective. Undoubtedly, Nigeria does not have the economic base for the production of cars, trucks and tractors. A more efficient public transportation policy should have been devised to depress the need for private vehicles.

In contrast to the chaotic pattern which has prevailed heretofore a rational and peasant-based agricultural policy would have determined whether to operate just one closely monitored tractor plant or import the product until the appropriate infrastructure and support industries have been established for a tractor plant. Workers, of course, need to think about the long term strategy of transforming the economy to serve popular needs and make it more self-reliant. The final position might very well be that assembly plants are not needed at this stage of the country's
development. Many Nigerians have made this point but they have not advanced any suggestions about what to do with the 15,000 or more workers in the industry. Workers will support closure only if alternative employment and new training facilities can be provided. Most of the workers interviewed support the orthodox policy of providing sufficient foreign exchange for the importation of OKDs. They are genuinely worried about their jobs.

A rational and progressive long term strategy involves mass based political education, the forging of broad alliances among workers from various industries and the public service, and democratic links with other vital sectors of the society like the peasantry, the progressive intelligentsia and various sectors of the urban poor who have been seriously affected by the adjustment programme of the state and capital. These are the forces that will transform the Nigerian economy and phase out the vehicle assembly plants without subjecting the labour force to the dictates of bourgeois rationalisation.

Bibliographic Note
A number of interviews or discussions were held with union and company personnel during the course of research for this paper. These include Mr. A.D. Dzarma, Deputy Technical Manager, Steyr-Nigeria, 8 May 1986; Mr. Haroun, Deputy Personnel Manager, Steyr-Nigeria, 8 May 1986; officers of the in-plant union, John Pam, secretary, Musa Abubakar, chairman, Sanduel Ishiaku, auditor, 1984, and Patrick Mobutu, PRO, 6 and 7 May 1986; Monday Maji, Deputy National President of the Automobile, Boatyard, Transport Equipment and Allied Workers Union of Nigeria, 12 February 1986.


Labour Movements or Popular Struggles in Africa

Michaela von Freyhold

In this article von Freyhold considers and evaluates the kind of popular or class struggles capable in the long run of reducing inequality and exploitation. She begins with a critique of dependency theory which, if accurately portraying economic patterns characterising developing countries, remains essentially functional in its assumptions and tied to a model of change based on an inaccurate historical account of the metropolis. The author points to important differences between the experience and position of the working class in the West and its counterparts in other contexts. In particular the fundamental element of racism intruding into the relationship between worker and employer in colonial situations has meant a broader gap between the exploited and controlling elements of society there. This in turn has fostered the emergence of movements and struggles which, as a matter of course, have transcended the boundaries of the working class. It is such forces, suggests von Freyhold, which are likely to make a positive impact in transforming the status quo. The role prescribed for labour is not as an independent force but as a part of a larger and broader initiative.

This article attempts to put together ideas and observations that have been prevalent for some time and are implicit in many of the analyses published in ROAPE and elsewhere over the last few years. The theory that emerges is not really new. It tries to answer the three questions that many have been asking for some time: What is it that makes the dynamic of capitalism in the third world so often different from capitalism in the centre; that is, what is the root of the patterns that we call 'underdevelopment'? What is the role of popular struggles/class struggles in development? What kind of social and political struggles are likely to have — at least in the long run — a chance of reducing domination and exploitation and maybe even a chance of slowing down the global destruction of the environment? As will be seen, the tentative answers to these three questions are related. As will also be seen, we have travelled a long way from certain orthodox Marxist approaches which were strangely similar to certain conventional answers given by 'bourgeois' theory but it seems this journey has been necessary. While the answers we are trying to find would apply to most parts of an increasingly heterogenous Third World, their applicability is particularly obvious in the case of Africa, on which the following analysis will focus.

The Roots of Underdevelopment

Although much has been written to criticise dependency theory, it is still frequently used to 'explain' underdevelopment. Dependency theory, it will be remembered, is basically a functionalist theory. It describes the economic pattern of
underdevelopment: the heterogeneity of the internal economy, the overdeveloped sector of luxury goods, the weakness of the investment goods sector and the fact that the export sector is vital since it has to pay for the imported capital goods and technology etc. This type of economy functions in such a way that much of the surplus is syphoned off through trade, through the transfers of profits by multinational corporations, through interest payments to foreign banks etc. to the metropoles. As a result, the process of local capital accumulation and the penetration of more advanced types of labour relations throughout the economy are slow, uneven and reversible when international markets change. The export sector relies for its competitiveness in the world market on cheap labour and often also on labour which is partially reproduced outside market or wage-relationships, where workers or peasants or, more often, their wives, have to carry on with subsistence activities. According to this theory 'development' is what the metropolitan countries have, an integrated economy with large internal markets, an economy where workers are, of course, still exploited but where starvation and the type of misery prevalent in the Third World are no longer known. The credit for this development is given to the metropolitan bourgeoisie who, for some reason that remains to be explained, has been more inclined to invest in the integration of the national economy in Europe. In contrast the bourgeoisie in Africa does not live up to its historical 'task' and usually behaves like a 'comprador bourgeoisie' selling the nation down the drain. The solution to all this is said to be a revolution where workers in combination with progressive bourgeois or petit bourgeois elements take over and embark on some type of autocentric development and of disengagement from the world market.

The critique of this type of theory might be summarised in the following points:

1. The emphasis is on market relations, on the type of exchanges that take place within the economy and between it and the world market, not on the productive relations underlying these exchanges.

2. The emphasis is on the external interaction between the economy and the world market and the role which the underdeveloped economy plays in this context is seen as determined by outside forces while the internal social processes which help to reproduce or unmake this role are neglected.

3. The theory explains more how the system continues than how it changes — which it does, even in the context of dependency itself, apart from the fact that dependency systems sometimes do break down or are transcended.

4. The theory is ahistorical and overgeneralised: a theory that is supposed to be as relevant to early colonialism as to imperialism in the eighties and to Mali as much as to Singapore is likely to produce the kind of night in which all cats are grey.

5. The role of the rules classes and subordinated social groups is merely seen as that of victims, not of actors that take part in the creation of the system. So the talk is about the subsistence sector where it actually should be about women, and the conservation of precapitalist or semicapitalist social relations is merely analysed as functional to the system while it usually is the result of the tenacious struggles of people to preserve some control over their means of production and cultures. Too often, this type of analysis is not aware that the functionality of certain phenomena to the maintenance of a certain economic system does not explain how these phenomena developed nor why and how they are reproduced.
6. Dependency theory cannot distinguish between causes and effects or essence and appearance of the system of underdevelopment. Every part and attribute of the system is attributed equal importance.

7. Dependency theory lends itself politically to all those who seek economistic and technological solutions to development problems rather than social and political solutions. It therefore becomes the rhetoric of modernising elites inside and around the state sector — whatever their practice may be. It is a welcome justification for aid agencies in need of a progressive camouflage. It is a welcome subject in universities. It provides all those with ideologies or justifications who like to think about all the things that could be achieved if only the right kind of people could get control of the economy doing the right kinds of things for the people rather than with the people. On the other hand dependency theory is pretty useless in popular struggles where questions of power and distribution of incomes play a much more important role.

8. Dependency theory is similar to modernisation theory in defining 'development' in terms of the type of economy and the type of productive system with all its social, political, and ecological consequences that has emerged in the advanced capitalist countries, which means that dependency theory is trying to find the way from one blind alley into another.

While the last point requires different kinds of considerations altogether, the development of an alternative to dependency theory can start with the concession that the economic patterns which this theory describes are correctly observed. The typical distortions of an underdeveloped economy can, however, be traced back to two related phenomena: the cheapness of unskilled and semi-skilled labour (of peasants, workers, small commodity producers) and the weak development of what might be called a technological middle class of technicians and fully qualified craftsmen. In other words, a situation of extreme class polarisation in which most of the immediate producers are poor and powerless in economic, social and political terms. This powerlessness is, of course, the result of a long historical process. Colonisation, it will be remembered, was above all a process in which labour was extracted by force from precolonial economies, a process in which this labour was subdued and its costs of reproduction lowered, a process in which a class division was organised between black hand and white brain with a wide gap between the two. Only after cheap labour had been produced in this manner was the colonial economy fit to assume its assigned role in the international market.

If one compares this situation to that of workers in Europe in the early phase of industrial revolution, it is clear that workers there were also starving and miserable but never quite as powerless. Within two or three generations they were able to push through the rights of trade union organisation, the right to be politically represented and, along with these some kind of a class compromise with the bourgeoisie that would give them a slowly rising level of income and gradual improvement of living and working conditions. It was this class compromise, or rather a series of compromises, which provided the incentive and direction to capitalism in the metropoles to develop in the manner it did. The 'national bourgeoisie' in the metropoles was not more national or more enlightened than their counterparts elsewhere. It was simply pushed onto a road of technological innovation and of catering for an ever expanding internal market by the pressure of the working class. This pressure was successful not because the social and economic gap between workers and bourgeoisie was smaller, although this was
also the case, but because the cultural gap was smaller. Except for the special circumstances of a civil war, there were limits to the number of striking workers that could be executed or shot by the ruling class as long as the members of the latter felt that they belonged to the same nation, the same species. There were moral limits and there was always the possibility of class alliances between factions of the bourgeoisie, parts of the intermediate classes, and the working classes.

Racism, as the organising ideology of colonialism, precluded for a long time the possibility of successful working class pressure, and to stave off the possibility of class alliances even further, the small intermediate class was often recruited from an ethnic group unrelated to the mass of the working classes. Towards the end of colonial rule there were some small concessions which were partly due to the fact that the period of political colonisation coincided with a period of reorganisation of the colonial economies. In many colonies the supply of cheap migrant labour had been exhausted to the point where the bargaining position of workers and peasants was beginning to become stronger and where organised labour in particular stood a chance of gaining ground vis-a-vis a colonial state that was politically on the defensive.

This was also a time, however, when internal and external circumstances prompted a switch to more modern and more capital intensive technologies in the mines and on the plantations. During the same period multinational corporations were increasingly setting up certain industries in the periphery which had a higher demand for stable and committed labour both within the industries and to look after the economic and administrative infrastructure which these enterprises needed. The result of this intensification of production was growing unemployment with the bargaining position of the workers once more deteriorating. The postcolonial state and those who had taken up positions within it as well as the local bourgeoisie where it existed, could, of course, no longer operate on the basis of racism as an organising ideology, although ethnic differences could in some countries serve as a substitute to some extent. But even in the absence of those differences economic polarisation was relatively little diminished. In most countries, the new rulers viewed the masses and dealt with them in a very similar fashion to the way in which their European predecessors had done, especially after the short honeymoon following independence had passed. Although conditions differed from one country to another, there were very few moral rules or ‘human rights’ to be respected when dealing with oppositional groups and in particular when dealing with protesting workers or peasants. Workers in key sectors and in the capital city might have a larger room of manoeuvre, but for the rest of the working population the possibility of gaining concessions was extremely limited. This type of history varies, of course, from country to country, and needs to be spelled out in detail for each particular case. But on the whole the cultural polarisation of classes was such that popular demands were met typically with heavy and effective physical violence which prevented the working classes from pushing the state and the local bourgeoisie into investment patterns that would have helped to internalise export earnings in more stable and integrated national economic structures when conditions on the market were still more favourable than they are now. Nor were workers, let alone peasants, able to defend their slender gains when the terms-of-trade on the world market turned against most African economies.

It is this type of analysis which can explain what has been going on in Africa over the last 25 years. All one has to do in order to get beneath the economism of dependency
theory is to take seriously the hypothesis of Marx that the way in which history and in particular economic development moves is determined by the outcome of class struggles — provided one is capable of seeing how and in what context these struggles actually take place.

Working Class Movements as Popular Movement or Class Movements?
The idea that working class struggles may be important to the future of underdeveloped countries is, of course, an old one. The way in which this idea is applied to the realities of Africa is very often the following. First, there is a statistical exercise to determine the size of the industrial or semi-industrial labour force followed by a theoretical exercise of deciding who else might also be considered as ‘proletarianised’ or still only semi-proletarian, migrant, petit bourgeois or too privileged to be included. Then a look is taken at the types of struggles in which this ‘working class’ engages and an assessment of whether these may or may not imply a proletarian consciousness, whether they have recently advanced to a trade union type of consciousness or are still stuck at this ‘level’. These observations usually end with the conclusion that some kind of proletarian consciousness is in the making but that we still have to wait for the day when the revolutionary potential of the working class will unfold itself.

African politicians and social scientists have sometimes criticised this approach as Eurocentric because it involves looking in Africa for social configurations that have been relevant to European history. There is, of course, nothing wrong with starting with questions that were first posed in Europe and then trying to find out how they apply to the rest of the world — whatever the answers we might get. Little will be achieved, however, if the concepts and questions we use are already inadequate to explain what has happened in Europe. We should then hardly be surprised if they fit even less elsewhere. In order to get a more fruitful ‘Eurocentric’ point of departure we might, for instance, turn to E.P. Thompson’s famous analysis of The Making of the English Working Class. Thompson, it will be remembered, started off with the understanding, that social class is not an economic ‘category’ but an aspect of social relations, an experience that is transformed into a way of living and a type of culture. Let us look at some of the observations he made about the early working class movement in Britain:

1. The early working class movement was not primarily a movement of workers but of artisans who had come under pressure in the course of the industrial revolution. Only much later did the factory workers take up the heritage of this movement.

2. The early working class movement was never narrowly economistic. It was a political movement right from the beginning, challenging the dictatorship of the nobility and the rising bourgeoisie.

3. The early working class movement was first and foremost a ‘human rights’ movement in a very comprehensive manner concerned with the recovery of the dignity of the ‘freeborn Englishman’ both in terms of political rights and in terms of an effort to retrieve dignified living and working conditions from the onslaught of the industrial revolution. The concern with dignity was also present within the movement in the way meetings were conducted or in the search for decent lifestyles and new religious forms.

4. The hopes and demands of the early working class movement were informed by the desire to restore the ‘moral economy’ which medieval society usually adhered
to and which included the ‘right’ of the individual to be looked after by the community in times of need, the ‘right’ to stable and meaningful work, the protection of the family as a social unit, and in particular the control of technical progress so that life, social relations, and the natural environment were not unduly disturbed and harmed. At the same time the possibilities opened up by the decay of feudal relations to get rid of old authorities and to use science to better the human condition were welcomed. Long before Marx the nascent working class had also begun to formulate a rough critique of bourgeois political economy and had come to the conclusion that ‘economic laws’ were not natural laws but the result of the uninhibited greed for profit by the bourgeoisie. The daily struggles over wages, jobs, and working conditions were thus imbedded in a radical critique of the emerging capitalist mode of production and some ideas about possible alternatives.

5. The early working class movement was much more a popular movement than a class movement. Led and shaped by artisans it reached into strata of cottage labourers and casual workers, factory workers and even lumpen elements on the one hand and up into the ranks of the small bourgeoisie on the other. Its campaigns vacillated between reform and revolt depending on the particular combination of social groups participating. The hours of success were, however, those when it was possible to split the ruling bloc and to draw part of the bourgeoisie into the campaign. In this manner it was possible, after a while, to achieve the right to assemble freely and organise, the right to strike, some, very limited, participation in parliament, and a minor improvement of living conditions.

6. At this point the movement stagnated for a while and since the class of independent artisans was being eroded the factory workers took over. On the basis of the gains already made they were to achieve in the longer run an improvement of living and working conditions while the more fundamental challenge to the capitalist and industrial mode of production was dropped.

When Engels decided to study the condition of the working class in England around the middle of the nineteenth century, he was studying it at this turning point and decided that what he was dealing with was not the retreat of an old social movement but the emergence of a new one. Overlooking the fact that there had already been a long political struggle, he expected the movement to start from narrowly economic and trade-unionistic positions and to move onto a radical political challenge at a more mature stage and with proper intellectual guidance. He also saw the reduction of what had been a fairly broad popular movement to one more and more restricted to factory workers as progress, not as decline. Contrary to the evidence he himself collected he expected the most revolutionary consciousness not from the part of the working class that participated in the science and culture of the middle classes but in the most exploited and culturally deprived parts of the working class who were to be taught by their own powerlessness and misery to combine and finally overthrow the fetters of capitalist domination. Thirty years later he remarked in hindsight that something had been wrong with his predictions, that struggles had been more radical in the early stages of industrialisation, and that it had been easy to co-opt the British working class once it had been fully proletarianised. (The German working class, he still hoped at this point, might do better).

If one looks at working class struggles in Africa without the blinkers imposed by an arbitrary scheme of working class evolution and sees them as they were, embedded in popular movements right from the beginning, one becomes aware of a different
type of working class history which revolves around some of the issues that were also at stake in Europe.

This kind of history starts with the early anti-colonial resistance, the resistance to forced labour and taxation and the refusal to enter the capitalist economy on the terms offered, and it continues in the form of overt and covert resistance against inhuman working conditions and low wages in mines and plantations, resistance ranging from the quiet avoidance of particularly bad work places to deliberate sabotage and poor work performance to pilfering and open revolt. Another reaction was the emergence particularly among migrant workers of nativistic and syncretic religious movements with obvious anti-capitalist and anti-colonial overtones, movements in search for renewed cultural identity and the restoration, under new circumstances, of the moral economy of precolonial times. Although suppressed, these movements often did provide an underpinning to independence movements when they later emerged, even to liberation struggles, in Zimbabwe, for instance, or in Angola.

The upper stratum of workers and employees tended to congregate in voluntary associations, friendly societies etc., whose first focus was on mutual support and self-improvement in order to achieve and maintain 'dignified' lifestyles under degrading circumstances. Quite a number of these societies soon moved on to the question of civil and human rights and eventually become the cradle of unions and nationalist parties. Where these societies emerged on the mines they were, of course, restricted to miners and maybe some traders present in the area, but elsewhere they tended to include different occupations and strata or at least to see themselves as spokesmen for wider public concerns. Early trade union activity in the more narrow sense was political from the outset since workers knew that their employers always had the state to back them so that all demands had to be addressed primarily to the state. Because of this industrial actions often turned into public actions when striking workers went out to demonstrate somewhere in town or when industrial unrest spread from one enterprise to another in entirely different sectors.

Both before and after independence working class action was never a matter of the working class alone but has relied heavily on moral and sometimes also material and political support from other strata, particularly the self-employed in the 'informal sector', and more often than not demands were made not in the name of the working class, but the 'common man' (particularly in West Africa) and his rights to a decent livelihood.

Particularly in the British colonies there was, of course, a systematic effort to restrict unions, once they were permitted, to industrial and economic matters and to exclude them from politics, and yet up to independence there were usually links to the nationalist parties and the workers knew that the attainment of civil and human rights were directly related to economic demands and acted accordingly. The post-colonial state rightly feared that after independence trade unionism might become aligned to oppositional tendencies and treated them accordingly. Where trade unions have been able to maintain a certain degree of independence they continue to pose in overt or covert ways political challenges to the state and they often interact with a wider social movement, the latest IMF riots being an illustration of this.

That this long process of covert and overt struggles and resistance have had some
impact on the path which the colonial and post-colonial economies have taken can be shown in detail for different countries. It has, for instance, been instrumental in speeding up the decay of the colonial mode of production and the intensification of the labour process which then took place and it may have helped to reduce the surplus that flowed out of the country after independence and spread the fruits of what little development took place to a somewhat larger circle of beneficiaries. However, this influence has been marginal, not the type of breakthrough that might change the way in which these economies interact with the world market.

What is also clear is that these struggles have had, most of the time, a populist rather than a proletarian character and that the working class has sought, and sometimes achieved, the support of other underprivileged sections of the population. It may also be important to remember that these struggles have very often focused on the contradiction between the state and the common people rather than on the contradiction between capital and labour and that they have had a lot to do with human and civil rights, with human dignity, and, in some cases, with cultural identity. All these are, of course, the typical symptoms of ‘populism from below’ which still has a bad name in some Marxist circles.

According to Ernesto Laclau’s very penetrating analysis, however, populism from below is not at all a sign of the immaturity of the working class but rather of maturity and of an offensive. It is nothing less than a challenge to the economic, political, and cultural hegemony of the ruling class, an effort to erode its legitimacy and pull some of its factions over to the other side, an effort to realign social forces and to change the contract between state and society. Where the working class speaks and acts on behalf of the people rather than just in its own narrowly defined ‘proletarian’ interest, it usually also begins to come closer to notions of an utopia of a free and self-organising society, even if all that may appear to be attainable at the moment is some degree of fairly conventional formal democracy, some guarantee of the ecological and economic means of survival, some respect for cultural identities and some protective social relations.

The Significance of Popular Struggles Today
What emerges from this analysis is the idea that in order to change the direction of economic development, or rather underdevelopment, in Africa and elsewhere, popular struggles are necessary that aim at and succeed in reducing the violence and power of the state and that aim at and succeed in inculcating into the ruling classes some respect for the inviolability of the life of the citizens of their country and the right of the people to protect their means of survival. Only where the rules of the game are changed between state and society, is there a chance for material demands to have a lasting impact. ‘Revolution’ as such is not the answer as long as ‘revolutionary’ or ‘socialist’ regimes are not more open to popular pressure than others. This may sound like a truism but it has become a very urgent and practical matter in the face of the global economic crisis and the accelerating ecological and cultural destructiveness of the type of investment that takes place in the Third World today. Issa Shivji has argued that the economic crisis has taught popular movements in Africa a lesson. Since independence masses in Africa have been forced or persuaded to sacrifice their demands for democracy of whatever kind to the fetish of ‘development’. Developmentalism, left or right, socialist or capitalist in rhetoric, has always consisted of the promise by the state to take care of development if only the masses kept quiet and did not resist the cooptation or suppression of whatever autonomous or semi-autonomous organisations they had.
Now, that it is clear that development hardly took place and is easily dismantled, the question of the nature of the state and of the rights people have to organise and defend their livelihoods, according to Shivji, once more take precedence.

The issue of democracy that was forgotten after independence is once more on the agenda, a democracy that will, or course, take a somewhat different form and have a somewhat different content from what the Westminster model or some other European models might be. Shivji argues that it is this quest for democracy, participation and self-determination, which informs many of the new popular movements in Africa today. In the case of India, Rajni Kothari draws similar lessons from the ecological and cultural crisis brought about by what is conceived as 'modernisation'. The central state, Kothari argues, has proved incapable of producing the type of development that is compatible with the survival of the people and their cultures and so ecology groups, feminist groups and minority groups are beginning to combine their efforts to curb the power of the central states, impose democratic rules and controls on it and make room for democratic reorganisation from below. The issue of human and civil rights is a common cause to all of them, human rights which are indivisible from social and cultural rights.

To some, this emphasis on democracy, self-organisation and on the right of the people to protect their environment, livelihoods and their cultures in a struggle between state and society may sound familiar. There are similar concerns in the new social movements in Europe. This is no accident. Despite all the specific differences between underdeveloped and developed economies, capitalism is creating a global predicament which provokes similar answers. This would, of course, also be a good reason for new types of solidarity movements — if we are interested in drawing some practical consequences from our academic insights.

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The Two Faces of the Black Trade Union Movement in South Africa

Eddie Webster

In an up-to-date account of the black labour movement in South Africa, Webster argues that the unions have made significant industrial advances in the period since their legal registration. He argues, however, that from the point of view of the state the process of recognition accorded to the collective bargaining system will provide an inadequate means of incorporating black workers without the granting of political rights. As this is still so far from the reform agenda (particularly, we may add, in the wake of the recent all-white general election), the unions are bound to seek to short-circuit the ‘reform’ process by adding to its industrial face, the face of democratic and representative politics. The author assesses how far the creation of the Congress of South African Trade unions can meet this double role.

South Africa had, until 1979, a dual system of industrial relations, a legal system of industrial rights for non-Africans established in 1924 under the Industrial Conciliation Act, and a unilateral system of control over black workers resting on the despotic power of the supervisor. This despotic regime inside the factory was backed up by a tight system of control exercised by the state through influx control over black workers outside the firm. This dual system of control entrenched a dualism in the labour market — between a predominantly skilled and privileged white labour aristocracy, and a non-unionised and vulnerable black and unskilled labour force.

This despotic regime was to trigger off a crisis of control in the 1970s. The crisis was a result of a multiplicity of forces, both economic and political, that led to challenges on the shop floor to the managerially controlled liaison system. These challenges were to culminate in the establishment of the Wiehahn Commission to investigate industrial relations in 1977. Arising out of this investigation, the Industrial Conciliation Act was amended to allow for the recognition of black unions for the first time in South African labour history. It would be better, Wiehahn concluded, to allow African trade unions to register at an early stage in order to control the pace of union development.

The Wiehahn solution was clearly contradictory. The intention was to control the emerging unions by drawing them into the established industrial relations structures, in particular the Industrial Councils, thus preempting these unions’ attempts to establish a shop floor presence. This required giving unregistered unions state recognition, enabling them to win space in their attempt to move beyond the struggle for recognition to direct negotiation at shop floor level. Recognition at plant level was not won without struggle, but in the years immediately after Wiehahn, a new frontier of control was being defined as
recognition agreements at plan level became increasingly common in different sectors of the economy.

In the immediate post-Wiehahn period, South Africa's industrial relations practitioners embarked on the difficult task of attempting to integrate black workers' demands into the new industrial relations system. Their aim was to institutionalise industrial conflict along classical pluralist lines, where unions confine themselves to workplace issues only. Political engagement is left to political parties which individual unions may attempt to influence. State strategists saw the concession of collective bargaining rights as the first step in a gradual reform process that could culminate in certa, yet-to-be determined political rights for blacks. The unacceptable alternative for the apartheid state was a radical politicization of labour with an overtly political trade union movement engaged with the national liberation movement.

It is now seven years since the state introduced these reforms — time enough for a tentative evaluation as to just how successful the strategists have been in attaining their goals. How effective has the state been in patterning union development along 'pure' collective bargaining lines? To what extent have the new unions been absorbed into the industrial relations system in a way that institutionalizes the separation between economic and wider political struggle?
The results of the Wiehahn reform strategy have been contradictory. On the one hand, it would appear that significant gains have been made in the immediate post-Wiehahn period in developing a system of collective bargaining along traditional industrial relations lines. An estimated 20% of the black labour force now belong to trade unions. The foundations for national-based industrial unions have been made in all major sectors of the economy. Perhaps more significant is the organisational depth of these emerging unions. By the end of 1985 they had organised in 3500 workplaces, signed 450 plant agreements, and had an estimated 1500 shop steward committee/councils and over 12,500 shop stewards.

Management's unilateral power to dismiss has been curtailed by the emergence of a system of industrial legality in the workplace, laying down a set of procedures to be followed in the event of dismissal or retrenchment. These procedures have been strengthened by a dramatic increase in the use of the Industrial Court by trade unionists from 20 cases in 1981 to over 2000 in 1986. The National Union of Mineworkers made legal history when the Supreme Court upheld an Industrial Court ruling that the dismissals at the Marievale gold mine during the 1985 wage strike were invalid. The court ordered the reinstatement of several hundred workers who had been dismissed during the legal strike, severely limiting the power of employers to dismiss workers involved in such industrial action.

Strikes are becoming a 'normal' part of the collective bargaining process, losing many of the sinister implications attached to them in the past. Workers are using a range of tactics from go-slows and over-time bans to factory occupations and sit-ins. Most strikes continue to be over wages. The Institute of Industrial Relations estimates that of 351 reported disputes in 1986, 288 were related to wages. However dismissals, retrenchment, recognition and detention continue to be major causes of strike action. Of particular significance during 1986 was the work stoppage of over 250,000 miners called by NUM on October 1 over the Kinross mine disaster — the largest black workers stoppage in the history of South African mining.

During 1986, wage bargaining came to the fore in the industrial relations arena. Many of the emerging unions have now joined the Industrial Councils and have begun to draw on the skills of professional economists in their negotiations. Although wage increases in unionised plants in 1985/1986 exceeded the average increase in black wages they are still below the inflation rate. In fact the average minimum wage, expressed in real terms, is at its lowest point since 1986. In addition to wage bargaining, a number of other issues which have in the past been the subject of management's exclusive prerogative, such as health and safety, or simply neglected, such as the conditions of women workers, have become industrial relations issues. In 1985 CCAWUSA signed a comprehensive maternity agreement with a national retailer, Metro Cash and Carry, that allows for 12 months maternity leave — seven of which are on paid leave at 33% of salary — with a guaranteed right to return to work.

Significantly, the state has begun to withdraw partially from two key areas of the labour market — statutory job reservation and, more ambiguously, the pass laws. The 'abolition' of the pass laws in June 1986 only establishes freedom of movement as a nominal right. Residence in urban areas still depends on 'approved accommodation'. Job reservation however has been abolished from all occupations except mining.

From a trade union perspective, the significance of these gains lies in the rights
established on the shop floor rather than the benefits won by organised workers. In the metal industry, for instance, where national wage bargaining involving an emerging union has been taking place on a national basis since 1983, average wage increases in 1986 were 11% whereas the inflation rate was 19%. No union has yet attained its goal of a living wage. But managements now have to be more circumspect with dismissals and they have to follow certain procedures when they retrench. The substance of these marginal, but not insignificant wage and job security gains rests in their political implications. They have empowered workers. Organised workers have experienced a new sense of collective power born out of collective struggle against the despotic power of the supervisor. This new sense of power has developed out of the democratic character of these shop floor struggles, and unions' commitment to the longer term goal of worker control of the production process.

While the state has attained a degree of success in incorporating the demands of black workers into the industrial relations system, it has seriously undermined its own reform programme. Historically, capitalist reforms have only attained a degree of success when collective bargaining concessions were backed by political rights, as happened in 19th century Britain. Although Wiehahn foresaw the necessity for political rights, the South African state has been unable to move in a direction that is acceptable to the black majority.

The contradiction in the Wiehahn reforms is now clear — it created the legal space for the rapid growth of industrial unions while failing to provide the conditions for their political incorporation. Instead of accepting the universal franchise which has always served as a useful integrating mechanism, the state has moved hesitatingly towards a racially based restructuring that excludes Africans, while maintaining white control. This has led to an intensification of the demand for national liberation. At the same time the recession has deepened producing high levels of youth unemployment. It is above all this social category — along with students — that has led township resistance since the invasion of the townships in August 1984 by the South African Defence Force.

Trade unions have therefore been more sharply confronted with a dual challenge since 1984. They have been forced to confront the question of national liberation and they have had to relate to a youth-led civil war in the townships. These pressures have forced union leadership to think through the relationship between trade union, factory-based struggles and broader political struggle. However, in the absence of one united trade union federation, there was no unified strategy in response to these pressures. Consequently, strategies were shaped at a local level.

The occupation of the townships by the army was the catalyst that was to precipitate COSAS — the leading student organisation whose demands had not been met — taking the initiative. In doing so, they called for the support of community organisations and trade unions. Responding to this call, parent-student committees were formed in a number of townships. In the Transvaal between August-November 1984, a working relationship between community/student organisation and trade unions emerged. This was to lead to the November 1984 stay-away. It was the beginning of united mass action between organised labour, students and community organisations, with unions sometimes taking a leading role. For key sectors of the independent union movement, it marked a decisive break with abstentionism. The sheer scale of the stay-away must be understood in
## Black Worker Stayaways 1984-1986

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Actual Duration</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Demands</th>
<th>Organisation Involved</th>
<th>Employers Response</th>
<th>Effectiveness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>3 September 1984</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>Sharpeville</td>
<td>Rent</td>
<td>Civic associations/shop stewards</td>
<td>No work, no pay except SASOL who dismissed all 6,000</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>17 September 1984</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>Soweto</td>
<td>Solidarity on rents</td>
<td>R M C</td>
<td>No work, no pay</td>
<td>35-65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>22 October 1984</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>Springs</td>
<td>Student demands</td>
<td>Parent/Student Committee</td>
<td>No work, no pay</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>5-6 November 1984</td>
<td>2 day</td>
<td>P W V area</td>
<td>Student demands</td>
<td>Union Students</td>
<td>No work, no pay</td>
<td>80% in unionised factories Approximately 800,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>18 March 1985</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>Port Elizabeth</td>
<td>Retrenchments and petrol prices</td>
<td>PEBCO + PEYCO</td>
<td>No work, no pay</td>
<td>90% Africans (PE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>21-22 March 1985</td>
<td>2 day</td>
<td>Uitenhage</td>
<td>Solidarity for victims of repression</td>
<td>UYCO</td>
<td>No work, no pay</td>
<td>36% Africans (Uitenhage)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>14 May 1985</td>
<td>Up to 1 day stayaway on East Rand, Elsewhere short stoppages</td>
<td>East Rand</td>
<td>Solidarity stoppage over death of Raditsela in detention</td>
<td>CWIU and FOSATU</td>
<td>Partial and uneven</td>
<td>98% Africans (Uitenhage)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>18 July 1985</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>Pietermaritzburg</td>
<td>Support of striking SARMCOL workers</td>
<td>MAWU</td>
<td>No work, no pay</td>
<td>16% Coloureds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>10-12 September 1985</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>Cape Town</td>
<td>Opposition to State of Emergency</td>
<td>Unclear</td>
<td>No work, no pay</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>9 October 1985</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>Nationwide</td>
<td>Day of Prayer</td>
<td>Bishop Tutu</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>37% on 11 September Overall unsuccessful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>5 March 1986</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>P W V area</td>
<td>Release of detained union leader Moses Mayikeso</td>
<td>MAWU</td>
<td>No work, no pay</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>21 March 1986</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>Port Elizabeth/ Uitenhage</td>
<td>Commemoration of Sharpeville and Langa</td>
<td>UDF and COSATU</td>
<td>No work, no pay Also authorised leave</td>
<td>98% African (Port Elizabeth/Uitenhage)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Labour Monitoring Group, SALB Volume 10 No.6; Volume 10 No.7; Volume 10 No.8; Volume 11 No.1; Volume 11 No.2; Volume 11 No.5.
terms of the build-up of conflict and struggle in three key areas — the townships, the
schools and the factories.

Black Workers’ Stayaways 1984-1986
This shift in involvement of key trade unions into a more direct concern for non-
factory issues was to crystallize in the formation of COSATU in December 1985.
COSATU identified publicly with the national liberation struggle early in 1986 after
a visit by a COSATU delegation to Lusaka. The joint ANC-SACTU-COSATU
statement acknowledged the independent existence of COSATU, while at the same
time affirming that trade unions are an essential component of the national struggle:

As a representative of our working class COSATU is seized with the task of engaging the
workers in the general democratic struggle, both as an independent organisation and as
essential component of the democratic forces in our country.

This statement of intent by the COSATU leadership was an attempt to come to
terms with the crisis in the townships. Essentially, this meant thinking through the
relationship with the national liberation movement and the relationship between
students, unemployed youth and the organised workforce. As the largest federation
in South African history, COSATU combines two major traditions of trade union
opposition in South Africa — the one class based, the other linked to the national
liberation struggle. 'The one will ensure,' Lewis and Randall suggested a the time of
its launch, 'that COSATU does not withdraw into a narrow economism, the other
will guarantee the interests of the working class for immediate economic gains and
long term transformation'.

How successful has COSATU been in merging these two traditions? Opposition to
alliance politics emerged openly in the months following the COSATU launch
amongst a section of COSATU leadership who were critical of its new political
direction. They charged that this new orientation was ‘misdirected’, and that this
‘rush’ to espouse ‘alliance politics’ might result in the destruction of the democratic
trade unions. Their assumption is that populism and nationalism stand in absolute
contradiction to a working class politics. The organisational styles and political
content of each are regarded as so different that any involvement of the working
class in such politics can only mean one thing: the abandonment of independence
and with it the abandonment of working class politics. Furthermore, it is argued by
these critics that the inability of the unions to control the populists has been a
serious problem because of the ‘confrontationist’ strategy of the populists. These
practices have been seen as potentially exhausting the unions rather than the state,
as they get ‘dragged into each and every adventurous action that is initiated’. Critics
of alliance politics have seen evidence of such ‘adventurous action’ in the poor
response to COSATU’s call for a day of action on the 14th July to protest against the
State of Emergency. It failed, they argued, because the leadership underestimated
the extent to which detentions had weakened the organisation, adequate
consultation had not taken place with affiliates and COSATU had not invited other
progressive union federations to join the stay-away. This critique is constructed
from a number of different sources inside COSATU. [The authors prefer to remain
anonymous. Ed.]

Increasingly the larger unions in COSATU have been far more interested in giving
specific content to the rather general and abstract principles outlined by the
COSATU leadership in its early phase than debating whether or not alliances are in
the interests of the working class. Such debate now centres on the form such
alliances should take, the definition of socialism, and its relationship to national
struggle. The Metal and Allied Workers Union, for example, at its congress in July
1986 committed itself to building socialism in South Africa in a struggle
spearheaded by the working class. The resolution argued that:

Worker leaders are increasingly playing a leading role in the community. The lack of
initiatives, and the confusion that exists within the community itself on political issues arises
from the lack of a working class programme.

The union went on to set itself the task in the coming period, 'of beginning to define
what we mean by socialism'.

Similarly, the leadership of NUM at their congress in March 1987 began to give
content to their notion of alliance politics by inviting Winnie Mandela, wife of the
jailed ANC leader and honorary President of NUM, Nelson Mandela, and Murphy
Morobe, acting publicity Secretary of the UDF, to speak at the opening of the
congress. James Motlastsi, NUM President, spelt out his understanding of the
political direction of the union:

Attempts by the government to impose the tricameral parliament system and community
councils have failed totally. Its reform plans have been met with large scale opposition from
every part of the country — urban and rural. Today the state's plans lie in ruins.... Only a
democratic socialist order, which uses the country's resources for the benefit of its people will
solve the crisis.... We must build firm, disciplined and effective alliances with the democratic
organisation.

It is significant that these debates are taking place amongst the larger, industrially
based affiliates of COSATU, for it is here that real power lies. This power became
consolidated during 1986, when mergers took place in the transport sector (the
merger of TGWU with GWU to form the new TGWU) the food sector (the FCWU,
SFAWU and RAWU into the FAWU), and the absorption of a plastics union in the
Western Cape into the CWIU. Although COSATU failed to meet its ambitious
deadline, the principle of mergers has now taken hold. A major merger in the metal
industry is expected soon; a S.A. Railway and Harbour Workers Union, which will
merge into TGWU, has now been launched, as has the new construction union,
CAWU; plans are proceeding with a nation-wide agricultural union.

Apart from consolidating power industrially, the crucial issue of the relationship of
organised workers with the unemployed remains. While difficult to avoid, it
remains a challenge that union movements in other societies with substantial
welfare state provisions have not had to confront in any concrete organisational
sense. At present the potential for real tension exists between organised and
politisied, unemployed youth, and unionised workers. Political oppression has
compounded the generational tensions in township households. The attitude of the
youth is complex and contradictory: they recognise that their parents are victims of
racial oppression and economic exploitation, and therefore empathize with them;
but they blame their parents for not fighting against this with sufficient vigour, and
therefore feel anger and frustration at what they perceive to be their parents’
failings.

In many senses the unemployed youth are the vanguard of township resistance. They
are the sons and daughters of workers and many of their parents are active
union members. But there is a great deal of tension within the home and family, as
youth accuse their parents of not being committed enough to the struggle.
Furthermore they see the unions as self-centred organisations, concerned only with
furthering the interests of their own members. These questions, put by an unemployed youth to a shop steward, illustrates their perception: 'will you tax your wage and put money in a fund for the unemployed in the area? We have organised and prevented scabs from taking your jobs while you were on strike. How, will you take this step and stand in solidarity with us?'

COSATU has resolved to establish an unemployed workers union and the leadership is presently exploring the form that this should take. Unemployed youth are themselves involved in this initiative, which will have a significant bearing on the type of labour movement to emerge in South Africa. Further COSATU has launched a living wage campaign in which they call for a ban on overtime, a 40 hour week, a sharing of all work on full pay and a massive public works programme.

COSATU's attempt to merge the two major traditions of trade union opposition has been compounded by the complex nature of what is a sharply divided working class. These divisions cover skill, education, religion, language, employed/unemployed, access to political power, ethnicity, region, migrant labour and, above all, race. These divisions are expressed in many complex ways in the repertoire of working class culture. They are also reflected in two manifestations of working class political culture — divided worker organisation and a divided political tradition. Their persistence, and indeed promotion by the apartheid state, creates significant obstacles in the way of COSATU's attempt to promote alliance politics.

The most important of these divisions emerged when CUSA and AZACTU withdrew from the unity talks that preceded the formation of COSATU. They opposed the existence of white intellectuals in leadership positions in the emerging trade unions. Their opposition eventually crystallised in the formation of CUSA/AZACTU in October 1986 claiming a membership of 350,000. Ideologically it is a logical development as it reflects the alternative Africanist or Black Consciousness tradition in oppositional politics.

The second was the launch, in direct opposition to COSATU organisationally and ideologically, of the Inkatha backed United Workers Union of South Africa (UWUSA) on 1 May 1986. UWUSA's two main policy issues are support for the 'free enterprise' system and opposition to the campaign to isolate the S.A. regime through sanctions — a sharp contrast to COSATU's anti-capitalist economic programme and call for international pressure against South Africa. Justifying the launch of a new union, whose existence would inevitably be divisive, Buthelezi argued that COSATU had neglected the economic interests of workers in favour of advancing the interests of the ANC/UDF tradition. Most observers argue the reverse. While Inkatha's political support among Zulu-speaking people in Natal is widely acknowledged, a considerable scepticism exists in their capacity to mobilise workers into trade unions. As Morris has written:

Buthelezi's cleverist move would have been to remain solely on the political terrain with which he was already familiar, and fairly well grounded in the long term he (has) laid his organisation open to being shown to be incompetent in this new and unfamiliar terrain of factory-based struggles.

A third division lies with those who have tried to retain the orthodox collective bargaining tradition of trade unionism expressed through the Trade Union Council of South Africa (TUCSA). At the time of its dissolution in November 1986, its membership had dropped from nearly 500,000 in 1979 to less than 150,000 in 1986, the majority of whom were Coloureds and Indians. Robbie Botha, President of
THE BLACK TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

TUCSA at the time, attributed its demise to the growing politicisation of the shop floor.

This politicisation is perhaps the most important factor in TUCSA’s demise. It is a tragedy, and demonstrates the difficulty of maintaining the middle ground in S.A. the Middle ground is fast disappearing in S.A.

Significantly the largest concentration of unions, many of them Coloureds, Indians and Africans, is now independent of any federation. In early 1987 an attempt was made to fill this gap by launching Labour Forum — a potential platform for these unions to coordinate information and common responses to the state.

Conclusion
The re-emergence of alliance politics, in particular the establishment of COSATU, has the potential to combine the two major traditions of trade union opposition in South Africa. Powerful forces are, however, determined to break this embryonic alliance. The entire security apparatus is in a state of mobilisation to try and contain the vigorous movement of resistance that has emerged since 1984. The Labour Monitoring Group’s December 1986 report showed that 614 union leaders, about 80% of them with COSATU links, had been arrested under the emergency regulations. More disturbing was the murder of at least four MAWU members at Mpophomeni near Howick on 5 December 1986 by vigilantes reported to be carrying Inkatha flags.

The most effective response to this onslaught is still being debated. Some are arguing for a return to collective bargaining unionism. Significantly, the National Union of Mineworkers President James Motlatsi at their annual congress in March 1987, chose not to retreat from alliance politics, but rather to begin to spell out what the union means by an alliance. Lambert believes that such an alliance, unlike SACTU in the 1950s, has the potential to succeed in the long run because of the greater strength and durability of the shop-floor structures that have been established in the workplaces.

This is the tactical and strategic choice facing the union movement — to retreat in the face of the state onslaught or, on the basis of the shop floor gains won in the post-Wiehahn period, to consolidate the embryonic alliance, take up the concerns of working people as a whole, and engage directly with the national liberation movement.

Bibliographic Note
An extended version of some of my argument appears in R. Lambert and E. Webster ‘The re-emergence of political unionism in contemporary South Africa?’ R. Cohen and W. Cobbett (eds) Popular Struggles in South Africa James Currey (Forthcoming).

Agricultural Development in Nigeria: The Role of Market and Non-Market Forces

Mansur Mukhtar

A favourite explanation of African countries' sluggish agricultural export performance is to attribute it to inappropriate marketing board policies. This paper seeks to examine this proposition put forward by Williams in ROAPE 34 in relation to Nigeria's experience. It begins by reviewing evidence from the agricultural sector so as to establish the dominant trends. It then proceeds to examine the analytical and factual basis of market-based explanations of these trends. An attempt is made to provide a more credible account of agricultural performance. This represents a preliminary step towards identifying sound policy choices as well as highlighting areas of further research.

Policy and Performance in Nigeria's Export Agriculture

At independence in 1960, Nigeria was firmly established as a major exporter in the world market for cocoa, groundnuts and oil palm products. Long before this period, marketing arrangements had been formalised to deal with domestic procurements and export arrangements for major agricultural export commodities. Legislation vested monopoly export rights in centralised marketing organs, whose establishment was ostensibly motivated by the desire to protect producers' interests. These bodies soon became agents of state control through which peasant surplus could be extracted. Gradually, pricing policy objectives came to be dominated by a desire to raise taxes rather than stabilise producer incomes. Helleiner provides a detailed account of marketing boards' role in generating fiscal resources for development. As instruments for mobilising savings, the marketing board system was effective. The revenues derived from export produce constituted a significant percentage of central and regional financial resources, and the basis for growth until the late sixties, when oil earnings came to dominate the revenue structure.

For many of the marketing board-controlled commodities, production reached its peak in the mid-sixties. Between 1970 and the early eighties the production of these commodities steadily declined. This decline is most dramatically exhibited in groundnuts and palm oil output. Not only was their export wiped out but by the late seventies substantial imports were required to fill a domestic supply deficit.

A note of caution is warranted at this juncture. Not enough is known about the actual trends in the country's agricultural production. Declining commodity exports alongside rising vegetable oil imports do not necessarily reflect a collapsed and stagnant agricultural sector. Much of this trend may be accountable in terms of an expanded domestic demand. The expansion of demand for Nigeria's agricultural produce has arisen partly from the rapid population growth and urbanisation experienced. It is also a result of income increases associated with the oil-boom. In
addition to the growth in domestic demand, there has also been an expansion in sales for export through unrecorded channels. Evidence for this is provided by the growing incidence of produce smuggling made lucrative by an overvalued exchange rate. Thus any attempts to derive agricultural production trends from commodity board purchases and import levels are bound to underestimate them. Hence, when we talk about an output decline or sluggish growth, we are specifically referring to the official perception of agricultural performance, which has been largely informed by available statistics. There has been an increased appreciation in official circles of the unreliability of existing statistical information.

Officially, the apparent decline of Nigeria's export crops has been attributed to marketing board policies. As indicated in a recent statement by the secretary to the government, 'the boards made the export market unprofitable, and therefore unattractive... The groundnut pyramids in Kano were killed by the boards not as a deliberate policy but as an inevitable outcome of their policies' (Newswatch, 19 May 1986). This view also enjoys widespread currency in academic circles, as is concisely summarised in Williams' (1980) statement that 'state monopoly market boards introduced a new form of exploitation of the surplus value of peasant labour, and increased the rate of exploitation to a point where the continued production and marketing of agricultural exports came to be threatened'. The logical conclusion from this argument is that marketing board intervention has resulted in a sustained withdrawal of surplus. These withdrawals depress the level of prices received by the producer, hence reducing the total amount farmers produce. If the price elasticity of the supply of a commodity is positive, such surplus extraction leads to a potential reduction in output, and consequently sales.

The theoretical and empirical underpinning for this statement has been provided by numerous econometric studies on supply response. The studies reveal, with varying degrees of emphasis, that export crop producers exhibit a positive response to price changes and therefore provided a strong case for the pursuit of policy measures that seek to enhance output growth through price changes. The government itself has come to a gradual recognition that its policies might be having a deleterious effect on cash crop production. Thus the 1973 Progress Report on the Second Plan noted that 'the stagnation in the output and export of some cash crops is attributed to the marketing board system'. Since then, the state has shifted its interventionist emphasis towards 'providing adequate incentives to producers through the pursuit of a price policy which would substantially increase producer's income as an inducement to expansion' (Daily Times, 13 January 1973).

It is difficult to establish how decisive supply response studies were in inducing a shift towards more positive pricing policies during the mid-seventies period. It is possible to argue that the growing dominance of oil earnings in the foreign exchange and tax revenue structure since the late sixties significantly altered the perception of policy makers on agriculture's role in the economy. Petroleum's share of exports grew from 18 per cent in 1968 to 58 per cent in 1970 and has exceeded 80 per cent from 1972 until recently. Mining taxes and revenues gradually came to dominate the composition of government finances.

Oil revenues enabled the initiation of reforms in 1973, which were aimed at lowering tax burdens on export producers, and thus raising prices, and improving marketing board operating efficiency. New legislation prevented these boards from accumulating trading surpluses, and the federal government pledge to make up for any operational losses that might arise as a result of this. In 1977, the monopoly
powers of these boards were abolished, giving farmers the chance to sell their produce through any outlet of their choice, within the domestic market. However, export trade still remained the exclusive preserve of boards. To what extent, then, have these policy reforms succeeded in correcting the price distortions that previously discouraged production?

International border prices provide a useful reference point in measuring the level of distortion arising from national policies. These, together with the level of prices received by the producer, make it possible to compute Nominal Protection Coefficients (NPC), which measure the extent of bias against agriculture. The NPC of a commodity is the ratio of the price received by agricultural producers to border prices, converted at the official exchange rate, adjusted for marketing and storage costs, as well as transport charges. Low values of NPC reflect a heavy bias against agriculture, while NPCs above one indicate a subsidy or transfer to the commodity. A value of one for the NPC indicates a neutral policy. NPC's are employed here as general indicators of policy impact, rather than precise measures. Thus they are not suggestive of the actual extent of deviation from an 'optimal' price level, rather, they provide a measure of the extent to which particular interventions have changed prices.

The table below gives average ratios of producer to export prices for some major commodities controlled by marketing boards. Conversions have been made using official rates of exchange prevailing during the specific periods. The periods chosen as classification accord with different eras of policy choice. The 1964/73 period, our chosen base for comparison, represents the period when export crop production was at its peak for most commodities, and the marketing boards very active in their taxation policies. Reforms initiated in 1973 became fully operative in 1974, and lasted until 1977, when they were superceded by further reorganisation. Average figures are provided for this period. The last period depicts the post-1977 reforms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commodity</th>
<th>1964-73</th>
<th>1974-77</th>
<th>1978-83</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cocoa</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groundnuts</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palm kernels</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palm oil</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Average</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: World market prices are derived from IBRD (1985), Commodity Trade and Price Trends. Producer prices are compiled from Central Bank of Nigeria Economic and Financial Reviews and Annual Reports for various years. Exchange rates used for conversion are obtained from IMF International Financial Statistics Yearbook, various issued.

Our table reveals that there has been a marked and positive change in producer pricing policy between 1964/73 and 1984. While during the 1964/73 period, export crop producers were receiving about half the prevailing world market prices, this was increased to levels amounting to between 70-84 per cent during the 1974/77 period. The only exception was cocoa, whose price ratio did not alter. By 1978-83 period, price ratios had increased to about 80-127 per cent. In fact the lowest increases were for cocoa and palm kernels, commodities which continued to be purchased by the marketing boards and exported during this period as they do not command a significant domestic market.
In the case of commodities with sizable domestic markets, such as groundnuts and palm oil, for example, prices obtained in the local market far exceeded marketing board producer prices. The implied protection to the farmer from world prices is therefore higher than that revealed in the table. As we mentioned earlier, this does not yet take into account distortions in exchange rate. Our calculations only indicate the direction of change in the level of distortion arising from marketing board policies above. In spite of these being more positively oriented, there has not been a marked impact on arresting the trends of Nigeria's export crops. Indeed, paradoxically enough, it may seem that the period since the late seventies, which has been marked by rapidly rising producer prices, coincided with an accelerated decline in commodity board purchases alongside a concomitant food import rise. Why have efforts to revitalise Nigeria's export sector through pricing policies failed to have any significant impact? It is to this question we now turn.

Particularly relevant to our discussion 'Dutch-Disease' models which have been developed recently to examine the problems of structural transformations deriving from externally-oriented, sector-specific booms. Using this framework, we examine the processes through which internal developments tied to the oil-boom may have contributed to the emergence of the recent problems in Nigerian agriculture.

The Macro-economic Context of Pricing Policy
It is clear that Nigeria's economy has exhibited features that are symptomatic of a 'booming-sector' syndrome observed elsewhere in the world, where the rapid growth of a few primary exports (in the Dutch case, natural gas) and the resultant inflow of foreign exchange have been coupled with a real appreciation of the exchange rate. This has raised the relative costs of labour and encouraged investments in commodities and services which are not traded across borders to the detriment of exports.

Expenditure patterns from vastly enhanced oil revenues during the seventies lead to massive structural changes in the Nigerian economy, with an overall growth rate averaging four per cent a year, and major spending increases on education and roads.

The boom in construction and services spending, a lot of which was concentrated in the urban sector, created a demand-led rise in real wages and increased the rate of rural-urban exodus. According to World Bank (1985) estimates, labour costs increased at the rate of 20.7 per cent a year during the 1970-1982 period, as compared to the corresponding increase in the consumer price index, which was 17.5 per cent. Between 1979 and 1983, peak season rural wages increased by about 200 per cent as against a 100 per cent food price increase, in current terms.

These changes imposed an acute constraint in terms of availability of labour, which in turn generated rises in real wage rates. As an increasingly greater number of able-bodied men were lured away from agriculture, farm households were forced to replace family members with extensive hired labour. Associated with this transformation has been the establishment of trade and exchange rate patterns unfavourable to agriculture. Gelb (1984) has calculated Nigeria's trade-weighted real exchange rate movement using the ratio of its domestic price level to those of its trading partners. Real exchange rates rose by 31 per cent, 70 per cent and 109 per cent for the periods 1974/78, 1979/81 and 1982/83, respectively, from a 1970/72 base period average.
Exchange rate initially appreciated partly because of balance of payments surpluses created by rapidly-rising oil revenues. But it also reflects the relatively higher rate of inflation in Nigeria during the period as compared to that of its trading partners. The sources of this inflation may be largely traced to expansionary monetary and fiscal policies pursued by government. In the face of these changing underlying conditions, government maintained a rigid exchange rate, preferring to use exchange and import controls to limit the resulting demand for imports.

Exchange rate distortions in Nigeria derive their origin from specific macro-economic policies, rather than a conscious attempt to extract surplus from agriculture. Whatever their origin, the resultant overvaluation undermined the potential incentives to agriculture that would have arisen from product pricing reforms, by reducing the potential revenue accruing to the producer. Indeed, some statistical studies of developing country experiences reveal an even stronger correlation between exchange rates and growth performances than that of other price distortions.

One problem with NPCs is that they do not distinguish between the effects of distortions arising from direct intervention, such as pricing policy, and those arising from exchange rate policy. As a result, any implicit tax on exports — that is, domestic price lower than the external price — would be underestimated, while import protection would be overestimated. Thus when border prices are calculated taking the real exchange appreciations into consideration, any incentives provided by new commodity board pricing policies are bound to have been eroded.

Calculations in the World Bank's *1986 World Development Report* (Table 4:3) reveal that this is indeed what occurred. The 9 per cent apparent gain in incentives enjoyed by Nigeria's export crops between 1972 and 1983, from a 1969/71 base average period, was translated into a disincentive representing a 40 per cent loss. For the 1981/83 period, the differences are even more staggering. Here, a 49 per cent nominal gain has been effectively reduced to a 37 per cent real loss. This unfavourable situation has been compounded by the pursuit of certain trade policies, including the massive importation of food grains and vegetable oil at negligible import duties which, while aimed at appeasing a rapidly expanded urban populace, served to weaken the incentives to produce for agricultural producers. These food imports in most cases constituted cheap alternatives to domestically produced crops, and were made even cheaper on account of the exchange rate overvaluations. The net effect was a loss of competitiveness in Nigerian produce.

We have stressed the negative consequences on agriculture of policies that induce a distortion on farm incentives. Much progress has been made in Nigeria recently, under the auspices of a structural adjustment programme, towards eliminating these disincentives. We fear, however, that in the process, too much attention is being paid to the 'freeing of markets', to the detriment of other needed reforms. In spite of government's promise to channel huge sums towards the expansion of rural infrastructure and improving the quality of life in the rural areas, recent reports seem to suggest that the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure has not been performing its functions. Since inception, this body's activities have been shrouded in secrecy. There have been newspaper reports of funds being diverted to pay salaries of Local Government officials. The directorate's officials have so far chosen to maintain a publicity-shyness. If present trends continue, there is a danger that the potentials from a 'corrected' incentive structure will be massively undercut.
In must be understood that correcting price distortions is an insufficient means of attaining agricultural growth. 'Getting prices right' constitutes only one aspect of the problems confronting developing countries' agriculture, as prices are not a sufficient condition for raising production levels and productivity. For these to be effective, they need to be backed by complementary policies, especially those relating to the adequate provisioning of physical and institutional structures, as well as the development and dissemination of suitable technological innovations.

The Role of Some Non-Price Factors in Nigerian Agriculture

The importance of these non-price measures in complementing pricing policy has been highlighted, even in recent orthodox economic studies. In an extensive survey of econometric studies on supply response, Askari and Cummings (1976) suggest technical, social and political factors have an overriding influence on farmers' supply responsiveness. Cleaver's (1984) review data on the impact of price and exchange rate distortions, from thirty-one sub-Saharan African countries, including Nigeria, revealed that while, as is widely believed, these policies have had a negative effect on agricultural growth, they have not been as important as other factors such as patterns of public investment in agriculture, input supply policy, and population growth. At a more general level, the relationship between price distortions and growth performance in thirty-one selected developing countries has been empirically tested by Agarwala. Only one-third of total variance in their growth rate was accounted for by price distortions.

Historical evidence abounds to illustrate the crucial role infrastructural investments play in complementing agricultural incentive policies. The importance of agricultural research and extension services in increasing agricultural productivity can hardly be underestimated. These complement each other in the development and dissemination of much needed technological improvements in labour saving devices to cope with seasonal labour shortages as well as the development of drought and pest-resistant high yield seed varieties.

There are sound economic reasons for advocating the active involvement of government in the provision of certain important agricultural supporting services, especially the types mentioned above. First, private and social marginal costs and returns may not coincide, so that certain socially desirable investments may not materialise if left to individuals and not undertaken by governments. Second, the market system may be unable to provide certain types of goods or services, for example, because the size of investment required exceeds the capability of single individuals. Finally, markets may be riddled with imperfections which distort the allocation of resources. While possibilities exist for employing the price mechanism in correcting some of these shortcomings, there may be cases which require direct government involvement as the most cost-effective way of achieving given policy objectives.

The period of improved marketing board prices in Nigeria coincided with declining government effort in agricultural investment vis-a-vis other sectors. Since 1970, government policies including public expenditure patterns have been characterised by a distinct urban bias. The agricultural as well as the rural sectors have received a low priority in the national budget. There is also a distinct bias in infrastructural spending against the agricultural sector. Table 2 below illustrates these points, and are consistent with Gelb's (1981) finding, that among oil exporters, 'urban-bias' in public capital expenditure was most pronounced in Nigeria. 'Urban-
bias’ has the tendency to accelerate the rate of rural-urban migration and consequently induce labour constraints. Public spending in agriculture did grow in absolute terms during the period. However, the realised benefits from public investment spending in Nigerian agriculture has been hampered by inappropriate design of projects and strategies as well as the absence of adequate institutional structures for implementing them.

Table 2. Percentage Distribution of Public Sector Investment in Nigeria, by categories, 1962-1983.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Agriculture</th>
<th>Non-Agriculture</th>
<th>Infrastructure*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962-68 (1st Plan)</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>86.4</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-74 (2nd Plan)</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>81.2</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975-80 (3rd Plan)</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>93.4</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-83 (capital)</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>92.6</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-83 (recurrent)</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>99.6</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-83 (a+b)</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>95.5</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Unbracketed figures relate to planned allocation. Actual spending is presented in bracketed figures.
*Denotes infrastructural development spending only. The total does not add up to 100 per cent as there are some undefinable categories that make up the residual.

Until recently, Nigeria’s public investment strategy for the agricultural sector has been characterised by massive government involvement in direct production activities. Most money has been spent on large-scale irrigation schemes, organised around River Basin Authorities, reflecting a general orientation of Nigeria’s agricultural strategy around its water resources and large-scale mechanised farm holdings. Successful execution of large-scale irrigation projects requires complex managerial and technical expertise. They involve dislocations of established ways of life that seldom lead to smooth institutional transitions. These projects have in fact encountered serious operational problems and bitter resistance which leads one to question whether their full potential benefit could ever be achieved. Many of these projects now remain unfinished. This is because their design was predicated on obtaining a continuous flow of funding from overseas, which has not been forthcoming. It is interesting to note that the government has recently requested that River Basin Authorities disengage themselves from direct production activities and revert to playing a facilitating role for the private sector.

Indirectly, government has itself engaged in input-procurement and distribution services. There has been a proliferation of various public agencies, with considerably overlapping functions, engaged in the provision of farm support services. These have come to depend heavily on government budgetary support for meeting their financial needs; a support which can no longer be promised in the face of fiscal difficulties.

There has also been a corresponding shift in agricultural strategy from socio-economic and bio-technical research to extension and input delivery systems. In
the last two decades, agricultural research allocations have declined in relation to government expenditures on agriculture, reflecting an increased priority on non-research programmes. More recently, budget cutbacks in the nation's agricultural research institutes have eliminated most of the operational fundings required for success. Many of the research institutes are now undergoing a period of relative inactivity in the generation of new technologies. This is at a time when such technologies are needed to overcome growing labour constraints and to provide new locally adaptable seed varieties that are resistant to drought. In the context of efforts aimed at raising agricultural output in Sub-Saharan African countries, Lipton has noted that without a corresponding effort in research, 'the elasticity of total farm output to currently recommended policy changes, including price changes, can seldom be very large'. It is not being suggested, however, that a direct correlation exists between levels of agricultural research expenditures and returns to them. For various reasons, returns to agricultural research outlays have been particularly poor in Sub-Saharan African countries in comparison with other parts of the world. The policy reforms needed must therefore extend beyond increments in budgetary allocations to agricultural research to encompass institutional changes.

Extension efforts in Nigeria have also not yielded much fruit. Part of the problem arises from the fragmentation of the extension service, but is also a result of the absence of any formal links between research and extension efforts. And while inputs have enjoyed substantial subsidies in Nigeria, the lack of an appropriate institutional structure for channelling these has minimised their impact. Imports of fertiliser have risen steadily since the seventies, reaching an estimated one million metric tonnes in the early eighties, much of which has been financed by a World Bank loan. This was being distributed at levels of subsidy which by 1983 were 75 per cent of actual cost. Benefits from subsidies have been undercut by delays in arrival as well as exploitative practices along the distribution channels, creating avenues for the enrichment of corrupt bureaucrats and middlemen.

There has been a government attempt to provide credit for alleviating farmers' seasonal and medium term needs, thus the setting up of an agricultural credit bank, the Nigerian Agricultural Development Bank (NACB). In the private commercial sector, an agricultural credit guarantee scheme fund is being operated. This is financed by government which also requires commercial banks to make a fixed proportion of their loans to agriculture. But so far only a few individual large farmers has benefited from these. The NACB direct lending scheme has also mainly benefited few large farmers whose investment ventures have been concentrated in poultry and livestock rather than dry season farming. The amounts designated for allocation to small farmers through state governments are diverted into other projects. Similarly, commercial banks, faced with low interest ceilings inadequate to compensate for high risks and administrative costs associated with small farmer lending, have preferred to support less risky ventures in the agro-industrial sphere. The agricultural credit guarantee scheme has had only 628 beneficiaries from its inception in 1978 to 1983, over 30 per cent of the total loan guarantees were for livestock, while between 1979 and 1980, 60 per cent were for poultry. A high default rate is currently hampering the operation of this scheme.

Conclusion: Market Forces, Infrastructure, and the Social Basis of Agricultural Development
This Briefing has reviewed evidence relating to Nigeria's agricultural policies and
performances. It established the diminished influence of marketing boards in structuring agricultural incentives. In providing an alternative account of recent agricultural performance, we demonstrate how the oil-syndrome influenced the course of macro-economic events, and how, in turn, macro-economic policies, specifically trade and exchange rate policies, as well as fiscal and monetary measures, substantially affected progress in the agricultural sector, both directly and indirectly.

Significant policy initiatives have been undertaken recently to eliminate some of the price distortions associated with oil-induced transformations. However, we note that excessive focus on 'correcting' price structures and 'reforming' markets has led to a neglect of other needed transformations in both infrastructure and institutions. There is therefore a need to broaden research and policy concerns towards addressing some of these 'non-market' but nevertheless important issues.

On another plane, we suggest that the debate on Nigeria's agricultural development must now transcend the theoretical confines set by the 'Market Forces' debate in ROAPE 34. Much of this debate, in emphasising, either intentionally or by default, the sphere of exchange as the overriding determinant of agricultural development and transformations, has shifted focus away from the more fundamental sphere of production. This mis-emphasis automatically carries with it a conceptualisation of production as social activity only insofar as it relates peasants with one another (and the outside world) at the sphere of exchange. The social nature of production, however, extends beyond the market place.

Bibliographic Note
Workers’ organisations in the core and periphery serve different and often conflicting purposes. Historically, Third World trade union movements performed social and political, as well as economic functions, which contributed to national independence movements and to political and economic development. The particular form a Third World labour organisation adopted and the specific policies it pursued usually reflected the interactions of indigenous and external socio-economic and political forces.

During the post-World War II era, American organised labour and the international labour institutions influenced by the United States, sought to spread their own particular brand of ‘bread and butter’ and ‘business’ unionism throughout the developing world. The American model, in contrast to the broader initiatives emerging in many developing countries, held that trade unions should function as sectoral interest groups focusing on economic issues. This narrow, non-political view of unionism manifested an acceptance of American corporatist values.

American labour leaders have encouraged societal corporatism and its illusion of balanced tripartite structures. The American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) the other unions promote the internationalisation of American capitalism and democracy, the spread of productionist over distributionist principles, and the struggle for ‘bread and butter’ benefits over workplace control and democracy. Most important, the AFL-CIO’s foreign policy, in conjunction with the activities of the American state and capital sector, perpetuates the acceptance of a theory of collective capitalism in which worker and management are integrated in a state guided harmony.

American trade unions’ unilateral activities and their past participation in international organisations (e.g. the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and the International Labor Organization) have aimed at encouraging American corporatism in the Third World. This strategy includes, among other things, American created and/or supported labour education programmes and institutions. Trade union education programmes serve as a means for the penetration of foreign labour union models and as a vehicle for changing the nature of indigenous labour movements. American unions’ narrow view of trade unionism manifests itself in a constricted interpretation of labour education which, in turn,
reduces such programmes to technical training courses in industrial trade union skills. These programmes have also served as vehicles for American state — via the Central Intelligence Agency and the Agency for International Development — involvement in Third World labour unions and political affairs.

This article offers a preliminary view of the AFL-CIO's labour education programmes in the Third World. Based on a brief review of the activities of one of the AFL-CIO's major foreign labour institutes — the African-American Labor Center — it provides some tentative hypotheses on the nature of American trade union foreign policy and suggests avenues for further research. Two caveats are appropriate. First, the paper focuses on the perceptions and actions of United States labour leaders and industrial relations experts rather than those of the Third World. Second, while recognising that significant differences exist between the labour hierarchy and rank and file workers, the study emphasises America's labour elite.

Trade Union Foreign Policy
American trade union foreign policy has been based, in part, on the assumption that most Third World labour movements are political rather than economic movements. Labour economists have tended to support this contention. Walter Galenson, an industrial relations scholar, for example, explained in the late 1950s that although 'vast differences in culture, political institutions, and economic capabilities' prevailed among Third World nations, Third World unionism was 'a highly political form of unionism, with a radical ideology.' As early as 1949, Irving Brown, a prominent figure in the AFL's foreign policy hierarchy, had attributed India's 'backward' trade union organisation to the movement's 'great emphasis upon political objectives.' Three decades later, Miles Galvin, another industrial relations expert, described the Puerto Rican trade union movement's maturation from the early Latin American genre — 'socialist-syndicalist-anarchist,' — into 'a domesticated Caribbean version of the North American style of “pure and simple” business unionism.'

These simplistic analyses, which inundate AFL-CIO policy statements and reports, reveal a stage theory of trade union development. Somewhat similar to bourgeois economic development theories, this conceptualisation of trade union development separates political or radical unions (backward or primitive stage) and economist unions (advanced or modern stage). The 'advancement' of trade unions from the former to the latter stage requires, among other things, technical assistance from 'modern' economist trade unions. American labour leaders and experts consider the export of American trade union 'know-how', in the form of trade union education, as essential for the proper advancement of Third World labour movements. Indeed, the director of the AFL-CIO's Industrial Union Department, Everett M. Kassalow, argued that American labour education could help Third World unions to skip 'long years of struggle which molded Western union leadership and membership.'

Trade Union Education
American labour's foreign education programmes reflect, in part, the status of such programmes in the United States. In the early twentieth century, labour education emerged as a radical cultural and political enterprise. Its goals transcended teaching union skills, and focused on arousing working class consciousness, identifying working class culture, and developing commitments to progressive
socio-economic and political change. The Great Depression, World War II, and the Cold War witnessed important alterations in labour education. According to Stanley Aronowitz, it became 'trivialized' and limited to the 'function of supporting and enlarging the influence of the trade union bureaucracies.' Education programmes trained unionists in the administration of the contract and indoctrinated them in the union's political and economic policies.

Whereas Aronowitz lamented the 'degeneration' of trade union education, other labour experts praised the course of its 'evolution'. The objectives of the American labour movement, and hence the goals of its education programmes, 'advanced' from ideological (commitment to social change) and cultural goals to institutional (building organisational loyalty and participation) and professional (preparing leadership) goals. The conventional wisdom held that American unionism's goals were essentially non-ideological; hence its labour programmes also were non-ideological.

United States trade union officials and labour experts believed that they could develop or refine this 'pragmatic character' within Third World labour organisations. Officials described the training of Third World unionists in collective bargaining, leadership skills, self-financing of union activities, and government-business-labour cooperation, as a purely technical task. At the same time, however, they assumed that such technical assistance would lead to one of two desirable results: the reproduction of American trade unionism abroad or foreign labour appreciation of, and support for, American labour's international policies and ideology. American labour leaders and experts rarely acknowledged that the creation of 'technically' proficient labour organisations in the Third World meant the simultaneous infusion of an American economist ideological orientation. Technical know-how and ideology, however, were inseparable partners.

Technical Aid and Ideology
George Meany dominated the AFL-CIO's international programme from the 1940s through the 1970s. A rabid anti-communist and true-believer in American corporatism, Meany structured a foreign policy which would 'maintain the American system, the only system under which labour can make progress'.

Although the AFL-CIO supported and participated in several international labour institutions, Meany preferred an independent and unilateral policy with regard to trade union development in the Third World. During the 1960s, the AFL-CIO, with the financial and administrative assistance of the United States government and American multinational corporations, established its own foreign policy instruments in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. The AFL-CIO created the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD) in 1961-62, the African-American Labor Center (AALC) in 1964, and the Asian-American Free Labor Institute (AAFLI) in 1968. A major function of all three institutes was the education and training of union officials and members in basic union skills and knowledge.

Of the three institutes, the AIFLD, the organ for Latin America, came under the most criticism both at home and abroad. Victor Reuther, an official of the United Automobile Workers, attacked the tripartite structure of the AIFLD (The AIFLD was financed and administered by representatives of the AFL-CIO, the United States government, especially the Department of State and the Agency for International Development, and various American corporations doing business in Latin America, e.g. ITT, First National Bank, and Anaconda). More damaging to the
AIFLD's operations was evidence that the institute received CIA funds to assist right-wing Latin American unions and that it aided CIA operations designed to destabilize progressive and radical unions. The AIFLD, concluded Reuther and other critics, constituted 'an exercise in trade union colonialism.'

While controversy clouded the AIFLD's activities in Latin America, the AALC and AAFLI operated in relative obscurity. They, too, received the bulk of their funding from AID, with additional support from the AFL-CIO and multinational corporations. They, however, did not have government or business representatives sitting on their boards of directors or administering their programmes. CIA activities were linked to both institutes, although the evidence was not as clear as in the case of the AIFLD.

AFL-CIO officials initially established the AAFLI to support the South Vietnamese Confederation of Labor. In conjunction with AID and CIA 'pacification' programmes, the AAFLI extended its educational and training programmes into rural South Vietnam in the late 1960s. As America withdrew from Vietnam, the AAFLI increasingly turned its attention to other countries in Asia. The AAFLI began sponsoring seminars for trade unionists in Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Jordan, South Korea, Lebanon, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Turkey. Seminar subjects included trade union administration, dues collection, arbitration, mediation, job evaluation, and time-and-motion studies. The AAFLI and AALC hoped to mold trade union movements in Asia and Africa through 'legitimate' educational activities.

In organising the AALC, AFL-CIO officials placed its headquarters in New York City (moved to Washington, D.C. in 1979), with an African office based in Lomé, Togo. To meet the demands of African trade union leaders for greater input into AALC projects, the centre created the African-American Consultative Committee in 1967. The committee, comprised of leading African trade union officials, meets twice a year to define the problems and issues facing African unions and to examine the appropriateness of AALC programmes in meeting these questions. AALC officers consider the committee's functions as purely advisory, to help guide the AALC in the technical aspects of its programmes. Those programmes are formulated and implemented by the AALC's executive staff in New York and its approximate fourteen technical advisers in Africa. Most of the AALC's personnel come from either affiliated AFL-CIO union bureaucracies or from labour, state, or academic labour education positions. The current executive director of the AALC, Patrick J. O'Farrell, served as a labour economist in the United States Department of Labor (1959-1962), before joining the United Steelworkers as a research associate. He went to Africa in 1967 as the AALC's labour education specialist in Ghana. In 1969 he became deputy director of the AALC and then, in 1973, executive director. George McCray, the AALC's West African Regional Representative during the 1970s, began as an officer in the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees in Chicago. He taught at the International Confederation of Free Trade Union's African Labor College in Kampala, Uganda during the 1960s before moving on to the AALC. John Gould, AALC Regional Director for Eastern and Southern Africa, worked for the United Steelworkers; served as director of a labour programme at the University of Connecticut; served as director of a labour programme at the University of Connecticut; was principal of the Ghana Labour College; taught trade union education in Addis Ababa; and then became director of the Trade Union Institute for Economic and Social Development in Lagos, Nigeria.
Most of the other AALC personnel have similar stories. The individual who left the largest impact on the AALC, however, was the centre's first executive director, Irving Brown.

In its formative decade, the AALC had the distinction of being led by Irving Brown, one of George Meany's chief foreign policy lieutenants. Brown's trade union career began during the depression. After receiving an economics degree from New York University in 1932, Brown became an AFL organiser in the automobile industry. Between 1942 and 1945, Brown represented labour on the tripartite War Production Board. In 1945, Brown went to Europe as an agent of the Free Trade Union Committee, the central international affairs department in the AFL at that time. For the next two decades Brown set the torch of anti-communism, American corporatism, and broad and butter and business unionism to every assigned task, from AFL representative on the European Recovery Programme's trade union advisory board to positions with the ICFTU. After serving as the ICFTU's representative to the UN (1962-1965), Brown became director of the AALC.

Under Brown's direction, the AALC became exactly what Meany wanted, a vehicle for funnelling the bilateral American aid to pro-capitalist, pro-economist African trade unions (See Appendix 1, 'AALC Policy Statement.'). According to Brown, by 1971, the AALC had become 'the major bilateral trade union organisation developing comprehensive programmes on the continent.' Brown and other AALC officials travelled through Africa, liberally funding local or national labour education centres and special educational seminars for African labour leaders. Between 1965 and 1971, the AALC directed and/or sponsored over 100 projects in 33 countries. The AALC helped to build a trade union education centre in Botswana in 1971, and then financed the courses and paid the salaries of the centre's organiser and secretarial staff. After the overthrow of the Nkrumah government, the AALC helped the Ghana Trade Union Congress to establish the Ghana Labour College. In 1966, the AALC and Nigeria's United Labour Congress created the Trade Union Institute for Economic and Social Development. The Institute's directors were American trade unionists nominated by the AALC.

In addition to building and subsidising trade union education centres throughout Africa, the AALC engaged in other education activities. The centre's four publications, Labor in Perspective, African Trade Union News, AALC Reporter, and Labor and Development, spread the word about AALC projects and reported on African labour developments. The AALC's Regional Economic and Research and Documentation Centre in Lome provided economic data, information about national labour legislation, and other material vital for trade union organisation and operations. With AALC assistance, hundreds of African trade unionists visited the United States and/or participated in American universities' industrial relations programmes (e.g., the Harvard University programme). Much of the AALC's work focused on educational seminars. These seminars varied from the 1973 workers education seminar in Zambia to the 1978 African-American Symposium on Employment and Trade held in the Ivory Coast. The AALC also distributed American trade union literature to various African organisations.

The message relayed through all these activities was familiar: the practicality of economism, labour peace — harmony with the state and the corporate sector — productionism, and technical trade union skills.

Collective bargaining, according to the AALC, grew out of traditional African
practices. 'African Traditions and Trade Unions,' a 1971 film written by Nate Gould, principal of the Ghana Labour College (and later the AALC's representative in Nigeria), and produced by the AALC, linked together 'the ancient African art of negotiation and compromise to the modern trade union techniques of collective bargaining and arbitration.' AALC technical advisers often explained the importance of collective bargaining. At a Pan-African conference on the role of trade union women, a conference co-sponsored by the AALC in 1973, Regional Director John Gould correlated African labour's lack of workers' rights to the weak state of collective bargaining on the continent. 'It is through collective bargaining,' explained Gould, 'that rights are established.'

The AALC's generous financial support to certain African trade union leaders appeared to have the desired effect. At the 1974 'Exchange of Views' in Geneva, Seydou Diallo, a trade union official in Mali, declared that:

The AALC brutally wrenched us out of an empty trade unionism, full of infantile ideological quarrels, to plunge us into the reality of problems vital to the development of trade unionism in Africa. Education, vocational training, the establishment of cooperatives — these were the real problems which we had ignored for so long. For this, we must sincerely thank them.

Geoffrey Mosimakoko, education secretary of the Botswana Trade Union Education Centre (built by the AALC), spent four months at Harvard University (with AALC support) studying trade unionism. On his return to Africa in 1972, he announced that although different conditions existed in the United States and Botswana, 'the principle of trade unionism is the same and, within our limits, we have to try to build a sound trade union movement as this is the most natural and effective means for the protection and well-being of the workers.'

Such statements obviously reflect an ideology of economism. The AALC provided technical and financial aid to indigenous labour organisations. That support helped spread a system of technical knowledge inextricably tied to economism. Arguing that the latter effort caused the former situation, however, is an oversimplification. As Richard Sandbrook and Robin Cohen have demonstrated, 'economism has been the prevalent orientation in all African countries'. American labour education programmes, therefore, reinforced an existing tendency toward economism.

The AALC generously supported certain 'friendly' and 'cooperative' African labour leaders. Jean Bruck, former World Confederation of Labor (WCL) General Secretary, accused AALC officials of buying African 'trade union leaders who were generally poor and had no financial resources'. A 1977 Nigerian government tribunal of inquiry found that AALC funding to the United Labour Congress of Nigeria was so extensive that most of the union's 'affiliates didn't bother to pay dues to it'. The report suggested that AALC representatives 'had a free hand in the running of the affairs of the Congress'. As revealing as the AALC's activities in Nigeria may be, the centre's actions in South Africa clearly illustrate the goals, strategies, and obstacles which characterise AFL-CIO foreign education policies.

AALC and South Africa
During its first decade, the AALC was reluctant to get involved in the turmoil of South Africa's repressed trade union movement. At the annual AALC staff meeting held in Gaborone in April 1973, however, Irving Brown met with South African unionists and discussed the danger of a violent challenge to apartheid. Brown offered financial and technical aid for properly organised trade unions with 'responsible black leadership'.
Brown found a receptive audience in Arthur Grobbelaar, Lucy Mvubelo, and representatives from the Black Allied Workers Union. Grobbelaar headed the Trade Union Council of South Africa (TUCSA) which had been created in the mid-1950s as a coordinating body. The TUCSA proclaimed its dedication to promoting and advancing the economic, social and cultural well-being and rights of all South African workers, 'through responsible and recognized collective bargaining and free negotiation'. But historically, TUCSA had vacillated on the question of including black trade unions within its ranks; it considered the organisation of black workers only when such action benefited its white membership. The Black Allied Workers Union reflected the views of white-collar workers and the black intelligentsia. Like the TUCSA and the AALC, the union stressed productivity and economic reforms rather than political struggle against the apartheid system.

Lucy Mvubelo, General Secretary of the National Union of Clothing Workers, exemplified Brown's 'responsible black leadership'. A former vice-president of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), which advocated non-racial trade unionism and linked political and economic struggle, Mvubelo joined the collaborationist Federation of Free African Trade Unions of South Africa. In its short life (1959-1965), the FOFATUSA, supported by the TUCSA and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, failed to hold a national conference, to seriously confront apartheid, or to organise unorganised black workers. Mvubelo also led her union into the TUCSA and became 'proof' of the TUCSA's non-racial character. In the 1970s, Mvubelo began a close association with the AFL-CIO, becoming, in effect, the American union's 'black ambassador'. SACTU leaders labelled Mvubelo a 'renegade' and 'stooge', and denied that she represented 'the exploited Blacks under apartheid'.

Brown's offer to assist 'responsible' trade unions naturally applied to the TUCSA, the National Union of Clothing Workers and the Black Allied Workers union. Leaders of these organs advocated bread and butter and business unionism; opposed the withdrawal of American firms doing business in South Africa; and considered the creation of employment opportunities for blacks as crucial and the creation of trade union structures, collective bargaining agreements, etc., as the necessary steps to guarantee black rights in South Africa. Throughout the 1970s, the AALC supported collaborationist unions in South Africa while opposing the political, non-racial SACTU and the radical African National Congress. The AALC favoured continued American corporate operations and investments in the apartheid state. In 1977, Irving Brown suggested pressuring American corporations to engage in fair labour and employment practices. Through these means, peaceful change could occur within the existing South African political and economic system.

By the end of the decade, the AALC had begun to extend its labour education programme to South Africa. Between 1979 and 1982, the AALC budget, 90 per cent of which came from the Agency for International Development, rose from $3 million to $8.5 million. A small portion of these funds financed two work-study programmes for seventeen South African unionists who spent five weeks at Cornell University's New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations learning the fundamentals of trade unionism: collective bargaining, communications skills, union administration, social behaviour and work, contemporary labour problems, and occupational health and safety. Some of the participants later declared that their training had given them self-confidence and had contributed to their leadership
skills. But not all have been so sanguine about the programme's results or aims. Both black union organisers and European trade union representatives in South Africa questioned the way AALC labour education programmes aimed at the 'upper structure of the national unions'. The focus on leadership and union structure, and the subsequent neglect of rank and file interests were flip sides of the same coin. Noting the AALC's preoccupation with union leadership training, one Scandinavian union official in South Africa asked: 'But if you never train the rank and file members how will they defend their rights, especially against dishonest leadership?' A black union organiser in Cape Town contended that the Cornell courses corrupted black South Africans — leading to, among other things, 'lavish' financial practices.

Participants in the 1980 work-study programme doubted the efficacy of their training. The unionists acknowledged that most of the Cornell instructors knew little about South Africa. 'They would deal with the American situation and thereafter ask how we were going here, what the problems were.' The training offered at the School of Industrial and Labor Relations thus failed to meet or even recognise the daily needs and problems of the workers' movement in South Africa. AALC and AFL-CIO officials also mistakenly associated the South African struggle with the civil rights movement in the United States rather than a national liberation movement. They assumed that once the legitimacy of black unions' bargaining power was recognised and integrated into the existing political structure, then significant economic advances could be achieved.

In 1981, as the growth of independent black South African trade unions reached new heights, and as the International Labor Organisation slowly initiated its programme against apartheid, the AFL-CIO accelerated its strategy in southern Africa. The AFL-CIO officially adopted a 'Program of Action in Support of Black Trade Unions in South Africa'. Union officials viewed 'the development of a viable black labour movement as practically the only chance remaining to effect peaceful change in South Africa'. 'Effective enforcement' of the Sullivan Code, a set of guidelines for 'responsible' investing in South Africa, would aid in the development of that labour movement. As AFL-CIO Director of Legislation, Ray Denison told the House Committee on Foreign Affairs in October 1981, 'We believe that a massive infusion of skills, training to black workers and the introduction of a more hopeful view of the quality of life in store for them, will avert the final bloody confrontation which most right thinking people wish to avert'.

Under the AFL-CIO programme of action, the AALC established a unit to coordinate all American labour activity in South Africa. A special labour fund would finance programmes designed to 'aid in organising unions, collective bargaining, and leadership and cadre training'. Proposed activities in South Africa included, seminars and conferences, AALC technical experts, cooperative educational programmes and the expansion and use of existing skill-training facilities.

The AFL-CIO selected Nelson 'Nana' Mahomo to head the AALC's South Africa unit. Mahomo was another of Irving Brown's 'responsible' black leaders. A founding member and culture secretary of the Pan-African Congress (PAC), Mahomo had left South Africa shortly before the killings at Sharpeville in March 1960. He subsequently appeared abroad as a PAC representative. At the inaugural conference of the All-African Trade Union Federation in May 1961, Mahomo challenged the credentials committee's recognition of SACTU. Mahomo claimed to represent the FOFATUSA and demanded the right to speak for South African
workers, an unusual demand considering that he had had no trade union experience before his departure from South Africa. By 1963 Mahomo had established close ties with Irving Brown and rumours of both men's links with the CIA led to Mahomo's expulsion from the PAC. In 1968 Mahomo appeared at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Center for International Studies where he completed a thesis on the PAC. Turning his talents to film-making, Mahomo produced two films on apartheid, ‘End of the Dialogue' (1970) and 'Dimbaza' (1975) — the latter being financed by the AALC. At the end of the decade, Mahomo moved permanently to the United States. Mahomo's embrace of American trade union leaders and their principles helps to explain why South African labour leaders disapproved of his appointment as head of the AALC programme.

In an effort to sell its programme of action to South African trade unions, the AFL-CIO sent a delegation to South Africa in September 1982. The mission consisted of Irving Brown, then head of the union's international affairs division, Patrick O'Farrell, executive director of the AALC, Frederick O'Neal, secretary treasurer of the AALC and vice-president of the A. Philip Randolph Institute, and Sol 'Chick' Chaikin, vice-president of the AFL-CIO and president of the ILGWU. Having come uninvited, Brown and company received a cool response from those few black unions willing to talk to them. One Cape Town unionist acquiesced to meeting the delegation, but explained that 'we will certainly not agree to any involvement in their programme'. Brown's condemnation of SACTU's alliance with the African National Congress, with an ideology 'which we abhor' and which cannot 'lead to free independent unions', coincided with the South African government's efforts to de-politicise black trade unions. Local leaders doubted delegation claims that it was up to South African unions whether the AFL-CIO entered the country. As a former participant in the AALC work-study programme put it: 'Personally I think that these people want to have a hold in this country, but they want to do it through the workers, as though they are helping the workers'.

Negative reaction notwithstanding, the AFL-CIO pushed ahead with its programme. The AALC project intersected with the Reagan administration's policy of 'constructive engagement'. While shrinking the federal budget for social welfare programmes both at home and abroad, the United States government boosted its support for the AALC's labour education activities in South Africa — from $27,000 in 1981 to $725,000 in 1984. The AFL-CIO hierarchy, however, came under increasing criticism from those in the American and South African labour movements who sought an end to all United States economic links with the apartheid state. To fight these critics and to draw South African unionists closer to AFL-CIO policies, the AALC and the A. Philip Randolph Institute sponsored a conference in Washington, D.C. in January 1985. Eleven South African unionists listened to a number of speakers who favoured selective economic pressure on South Africa and 'responsible' investing by American firms. South Africa's largest black labour body, the Federation of South African Trade Unions, refused to attend. The second largest organ, the Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA), sent representatives as a matter of courtesy. (United States labour demonstrations had helped to pressure the South African government to release arrested CUSA leaders.) CUSA delegates declared, however, that their union would 'not tolerate any kind of trade union imperialism'. Instead, they requested greater control over any AALC labour education projects in their country. Believing that no American corporation could play a positive role in the country, they were shocked that the American labour hierarchy even would 'want to discuss the Sullivan Principles'.
(The AALC invited Rev. Leon Sullivan to participate in the conference). Speaking for his colleagues, Philip Dlamini explained that CUSA fought against apartheid not just as an economic system, but also as a social and political system. A conference designed to produce consensus on labour policy in South Africa, thus, did just the opposite. Patrick O'Farrell rejected all demands for more indigenous control over his agency's operations in South Africa; he continued to push for the labour education programmes which would bring non-political, economist, and pro-American unions to South Africa.

Conclusion

During the 1960s and 1970s, the AFL-CIO competed with a variety of national and international labour organisations, including the ICFTU, the British Trade Union Congress, the WCL, and the World Federation of Trade Unions, to influence, and perhaps control, African trade union movements. In this intense rivalry, the AFL-CIO, through its foreign policy arm, the AALC, actively assisted national labour federations in Africa, rather than grass-roots organisations. Grass roots labour movements presented the danger of radical change and spontaneous working class protests, e.g., general strikes, urban riots, or wildcat strikes. Uncontrolled grass roots labour militancy increased the possibility that workers' demands would exceed limited economic concessions. At the same time, the AALC avoided regional organisations which advocated extreme African nationalism and/or autarkic economic strategies. To control African labour militancy and radicalism, the AALC supported hierarchical, elitist structures that duplicated American trade union organisation. Trade union education programmes described collective bargaining, labour-business-government cooperation, arbitration, etc., as the building blocks for a technically efficient trade union. The AALC's labour education officials contended that transferring technical know-how to African unions did not mean forcing those groups to duplicate American-style trade unionism. That result, however, was inherent in the very nature of those trade union techniques.

The above discussion only begins to examine the nature of American labour activities in the Third World. AFL-CIO foreign labour education programmes present a microcosm of broader foreign policies and strategies advocated by the American state and corporate sector, as well as organised labour. This paper suggests two interrelated issues for further research and analysis.

Labour, capital, and the state collaborate in the formation, support, and operation of labour's foreign policy institutes. This reflects labour's acceptance of corporatist principles. In effect labour aids the state and capital sectors in implementing a policy over which it has little, if any, control or input. American labour's foreign education programmes have assisted in state and capital activities, both overt and covert, designed to undermine indigenous Third World working class movements. This collaboration, its formation and development, and its inherent contradictions, both in the United States and in the Third World, require further study.

If the CIA or AID did not exist, the ideological role of the AALC, AIFLD, and AAFLI would remain. Victor Reuther attacked American labour's collaboration with the CIA and multinational corporations. However, he never questioned the 'technical' content of American labour education programmes. This paper suggested that the inherent nature of AFL-CIO 'technical assistance' programmes is antithetical to long-run progressive change in the Third World. Further study is necessary to fully describe and analyse this relationship and, more importantly, to identify, if possible,
trade union characteristics which can assist Third World working class movements. All of these issues demand investigation from both the perspective of American labour, elites and rank and file, and Third World trade unions, leaders and membership.

APPENDIX 1: “AALC Policy Statement”

• The AALC was founded by the AFL-CIO in 1964. Its objectives are:
  (1) To strengthen African trade unions so they can better serve their members and participate in the development of their countries;
  (2) To provide direct assistance to African trade unions in union development and leadership training, workers education, vocational training, cooperatives and credit unions, health, labor economics, communication, and other areas related to the welfare of the workers;
  (3) To promote solidarity between African and American workers.

• All programs are undertaken at the invitation of the central labor organization of the host country and with the knowledge of the host government.

• All programs are carried out in partnership with the central labor organization of the host country.

• All programs are geared to the eventual assumption of complete control — managerial and financial — by the African labor movement. Thus, the AALC seeks to conclude its role within a specific period of time, to “Africanize” its projects as quickly as possible. To this end, especially with on-going programs such as educational facilities, the AALC trains local unionists to fully and effectively administer the program concerned.

• Trade union organizations or individuals wishing to discuss programs with the AALC should first contact the central labor body in their country.

Source: AALC Reporter, 9 (August-September 1974), 12

Bibliographic Note

Sources drawn on relating to the AALC and South Africa include Steve Askin, ‘U.S., S.

TAKING ON UNILEVER

Sorab Sadri

This briefing is on how the multinational corporation Unilever attempted to control labour in Nigeria through the implementation of a unified pension scheme and how the union successfully resisted it.

Ever since Africa was arbitrarily divided amongst the imperialist powers of Europe at the Berlin Conference of 1885, direct foreign private investment has been a feature of Africa’s colonialisation. Lever Hulme in the Western Region, King Leopold in the Central Region and Cecil Rhodes in the East and in the South were in the forefront of colonial exploitation. As time went by, Unilever became a major non-oil multinational in West Africa and the dream of Lever Hulme became a reality. From its headquarters in Rotterdam and London, Unilever controlled its operations through the colonial world. We are concerned here with Nigeria.

Prior to 1945 Nigerian export trade was oligopsonistic in nature while the import trade was oligopolistic. After the Second World War direct foreign investment was speeded up and Unilever prospered. Capitalist exploitation was made possible not only through the control of capital and labour but also through the control of the final stage of distribution. From rubber to textiles, from earth moving equipment to beer, from soap to palm oil, from timber to ocean liners, and from plastic to cement, Unilever controlled the non-oil sector of Nigeria’s economy. The multinational’s management viewed an untroubled relationship with its workforce as an essential complement to its economic position. It was argued that if workers could be controlled both within and outside the factory gates, the expropriation of surplus value would be easier. Hence the UNICO Pension Fund, organised under the auspices of Unilever, was important to its overall strategy.

When the union in Lever Brothers Nigeria (LBN) objected to the implementation of UNICO Pension Funds, the management put up a stiff resistance. A long legal battle ensued at the end of which organised labour gained a resounding victory. In this research note we have tried to document this legal battle blow by blow.

As can be seen from the manner in which they tried to prevent this investigation from going ahead, the management of the two Unilever giants, United Africa Company of Nigeria [UAC(N)] and Lever Brothers of Nigeria (LBN) did not take their defeat at the hands of the Union of Chemical and Non-Metallic Product Workers (NUCANMP) gracefully.
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The present account is the product of investigations conducted between 1981 and 1983 into the working of the UNICO Pension Funds and the legal battle that threatened the very foundation of Unilever's labour policies in Nigeria. All data was collected from the union records furnished by the courtesy of Mr B Sotubo of NUCANMP and the case file at LBN which we were briefly permitted to look at. As and when the need arose, interviews were conducted to supplement and complement data from the files of the union. Data was cross-referenced and the records of the National Industrial Court were examined. The version of the case obtained from the management of LBN differed only slightly from that obtained from NUCANMP.

Personnel at the UNICO Pension Fund Office at Lagos Island refused to speak to us and would not allow access to a copy of the Fund's rule book on the spurious excuse that it was out of stock. Initially (in 1981) we were informed that permission from New Niger House (three miles away) was required before anyone would speak to us. In 1982 the same refrain was repeated so we cross-checked with the Personnel Department and the Public Relations Department of UAC(N). We learned that nobody was aware of any such request having been made and we were asked to follow the matter up with the UNICO office. When in December 1982 we returned to UNICO office we were warned that the NSO would be alerted if we continued with the investigation. Up until November 1983 the UNICO maintained that they had not heard from UAC(N) and pending approval nothing could be said or done. We later found out that none of the workers interviewed by us had the rule book.

As a part of its global labour policy UNILEVER seeks to control labour without the use of unions. If the social security of the worker is provided by a company scheme, management can exert great pressure against all unionisation plans in this area. It was therefore necessary for Unilever to hold on to the UNICO fund and force the workers to join this pension scheme. The fund was underwritten by the United Africa Company of London, G.B. Ollivant of Manchester and the United Africa Pensions Trust (now renamed UNICO Pension Trust) of Lagos. Nobody we interviewed was sure of when the fund was founded but the earliest records show that it existed in 1957. It may be of interest to note that arising out of a letter from LBN to Unilever in London, Mr V. Mitchell of LBN wrote as far back as May 1956 to the General Secretary of Lever Bros. and Ven Den Bergh's Workers Union of Nigeria, which represented LBN's employees at the time, stating that the parent company in London saw nothing wrong with a local company having its own pension fund. Subsequent research revealed, however, that when Nigeria was granted independence in 1960 Unilever changed its policy on such issues. After 1960 Unilever wanted to have all its Nigerian interests under a single canopy and following uniform policy even when it was at variance with the union's wishes. Hence its position on UNICO funds changed radically. The workers at LBN were, thus, covered by the UNICO Pension Fund similarly as were all other workers in enterprises in which Unilever had a controlling interest.

In the mid-seventies, however, the Lever Brothers Workers Union, now a part of the National Union of Chemical and Non-Metallic Product Workers of Nigeria, objected to the continued application of the UNICO scheme on the following grounds:

1. the eligibility period before benefits could accrue to the workers was too long;

2. since their salaries were low the workers would not benefit from UNICO and would have been better off with a lump sum receivable on superannuation;
3. The union suspected that the fund was being invested in ventures and venues that they would neither approve of or have control over, such as the Republic of South Africa.

The Industrial Arbitration Panel (IAP)
When the union and the management of LBN failed to reach an agreement, their dispute was referred to the IAP. Having heard the arguments of both sides, the IAP decided as follows:

1. No award could be made in respect of the claim for replacement of the UNICO Fund by an independent life and pension assurance scheme. Rather, the UNICO scheme should be retained with amendments.

2. The scales of gratuity proposed by the management were confirmed.

3. Provided a worker had put in 20 years of service, the age for voluntary retirement should be fixed at 45 years.

4. No award could be made with regard to the claim for an increase in the level of contribution to the pension scheme.

The union as plaintiff formally objected to points (1) and (2). The respondents (management), in a letter dated 30 March 1977 and addressed to the Commissioner of Labour raised further objections to item (2).

On investigation, it appeared that no record of the proceedings had been deposited with either the Industrial Relations Department of LBN or the Union (NUCANMP) and that the whole procedure of the IAP was, to put it bluntly, bizarre. Neither testimonials nor the oral evidence were recorded. Dr Nylander acted as the company's solicitor rather than its barrister. He tried to justify the lack of verbatim records as resulting from unforeseen circumstances which he did not elaborate upon and from the informality desired by LBN. It was later revealed to us that it had been Unilever's practice to maintain records scrupulously when its position was strong on any given issue, but when the position deteriorated to revert to 'informal relations'. Even so, on an important matter such as this it is hardly conceivable that neither LBN nor IAP would have kept records of proceedings. It was suggested by some interviewees that the IAP had been especially sympathetic to LBN due to personal connections between the officers of the company and the military government in power at the time. There was no way of verifying this allegation, although we were given to understand it might well have been valid.

The case was referred to the National Industrial Court (NIC) and the hearing began on 14 April 1979. Counsel for the appellants were Chief Richard Akinjide and Mr H.O. Leyimu. When Chief Akinjide was appointed Attorney General and Minister of Justice for the Federation, Mr R.A. Ogunwole was appointed in his place. The counsel for the defendants was Dr Nylander who appeared with Messrs. C.O. Enuke and P. Obi for LBN. The judgement of the court was 76 foolscap pages long and dated 7 July 1981. The decision of the full bench (five judges) was unanimous.

During cross-examination of Mr Enuke, the General Personnel Manager of LBN, it became clear that UAC in London (the principal company) wielded enormous power in respect of the activities of LBN. Mr Enuke said that the Board of the UNICO Fund was the only body that could make changes in the workers' benefits and privileges or fix the contribution of the company. The scheme was administered by LBN under the aegis of UNICO. This shows the extent of the
control which Unilever exercises over its Nigerian interests on matters of labour policy. As an ex-union leader said to us: 'this is why we (the union) refused a seat on the Board of UNICO Funds. We would be stooges who would not be able to influence any decisions and would be a party in the exploitation of the rank and file'.

The appeal had been made to the National Industrial Court against the IAP Award under section 10 (1) of the Trade Disputes Act, 1976. It was in fact the case that there were precedents for companies opting out of the UNICO scheme. Afromedia, BEWAC and Nigerian Breweries were among those which had done so. Mr Ogunwole maintained that under Section 15 of the UNICO rules the consent of the parties to this end was required and that on 27 April 1956, as recorded in the correspondence between LBN and the union referred to above, the appellants had in fact given their consent to sever connection with the UNICO scheme. It was almost 22 years now and the union wanted a decision from the court.

Mr Ogunwole asked the court not to repeat the mistake made by the IAP in examining the advantages and disadvantages of the UNICO scheme when the central question was the membership of the fund. Mr. Ogunwole summed up by saying that the UNICO scheme was disadvantageous for the workers since to get gratuity a worker must have reached the age of 55 years and have put in 20 years service. A gratuity, he said, was an ex-gratia payment that is related to an employee's length of service and not his or her age. The UNICO scheme was, moreover, discriminatory since to qualify for membership an employee must put in not less than 10 years service, whereas an independent scheme admits members after six month's service.

The respondents urged the court to uphold the IAP's award but instead of putting forward a case for itself concentrated on attacking the union's position. They held that the UNICO scheme was dynamic and was amended from time to time. While the court was in session LBN in fact issued a circular on 26 June 1978 extending the 'death in service benefit' within the UNICO scheme retrospectively from 3 August 1977. The bonafides of this move is all the more questionable given that the UNICO Pension Rules 1980 were not amended to include it. The appellants, LBN held, had not put forward a concrete enough alternative to UNICO and what they appeared to want was a life insurance scheme and not the pension scheme which UNICO offered. The BEWAC alternative was moreover defective, LBN argued, since no employee under it would get 100% maturity value. Finally, Dr. Nylander argued, that the demand for the abolition of UNICO went against the grain of recommendations for 'sophisticated, defined benefit plans' in the private sector contained in the Udoji Commission Report of 1974-75.

The Judgement

The appellants produced three witnesses whereas the respondents produced one witness who was not an expert but a paid employee of LBN. The respondents tabled UNICO Rule Books 1973 and 1980 whereas the appellants submitted the 1976 Rule Book and based their case upon this. Having heard the depositions of both Mr. Ogunwole for the appellants and Dr. Nylander for the respondents the court ruled that:

(1) The UNICO Pension Fund had hitherto operated to the disadvantage of the appellants as evidenced by the shabby treatment meted out to the 2nd and 3rd witnesses (Messrs Akpaibor and Ayara) the latter of whom died during the hearing of the case.
(2) There was provision in Rule 15 of the UNICO Rules for severance of consent and this had been given by the appellants since 27 April 1956.

(3) It was a fact that the respondents could not unilaterally amend the UNICO Rules — one reason why they had been maintaining all along that pension and gratuity were not issues open to negotiation.

(4) The latest edition of UNICO Pension Funds issued in 1980 did not reflect the improvements allegedly made to the scheme and as claimed in exhibits 9 and 10, a factor that underscored the appellant's fears that these improvements could be withdrawn at any time by UAC of Nigeria who had been responsible for introducing them.

(5) The amendments and improvements to the UNICO scheme were made after this case was referred to the IAP and to this court.

According to records, the Court held that the respondents were buoyant and prosperous and there was no reason why they should have any difficulty in establishing an independent pensions scheme to be jointly administered which would provide retiring employees with gratuity pensions and life cover. The Court ordered that the respondents should immediately take such measures as were necessary for establishing and operating an independent pension scheme with effect from 1 January 1982. Furthermore, the appellants should be fully involved in the proceedings leading to the establishment of the new scheme.

The Court ruled that the gratuity was a kind of deferred payment vested in the employee which should be payable by reference to the length of service only. The 1977 edition of the Employee Handbook had predicated entitlement of gratuity to both age and length of service and this the Court felt was untenable. The minimum period of service before an employee was entitled to receive gratuity was fixed at 10 years. The Court then stipulated the terms of an equitable scale of gratuity which was to operate without reference to the age of the employee.

On the question of voluntary retirement the Court upheld the IAP award fixing the age at 45 years provided the employee had put in twenty years of service.

According to the appellants the Government had increased the compulsory retirement age from 55 to 60 years as per the Udoji Report and any reduction would be a move in the opposite direction. The Court rejected this interpretation and agreed with the award made by the IAP. The Court further recommended that the contribution of LBN in the proposed independent scheme be 12 1/2% and that the employer's contribution be 7 1/2%.

In sum, therefore, the court reversed the IAP award in favour of the union while at the same time upholding the position of the IAP on matters relating to voluntary retirement.

**Conclusion**

This case is of great importance to industrial relations in Nigeria because it shows that a trade union leadership which is politically conscious can read between the lines of a corporation's policies. The UNICO Pension Funds scheme had been both beneficial to Unilever and convenient to administer. The judgement in favour of an independent scheme deprived the multinational of a degree of control over its workforce.
On a more practical level, however, the judgement of the court did not completely negate the role of LBN in the matter of pension funds. As it happened, Mr Philip Obi, the Personnel Manager of LBN, was appointed as a trustee of the independent pension fund subsequently created. Hence the ability of LBN to influence decisions has not been written off, even though it has diminished.

The fact that it took about two years of agitation under a colonial government and twenty-two years of agitation under a Nigerian government to reach a final settlement shows the tenacity of the union leadership as well as the recalcitrance on the part of Unilever. On a political-philosophical plane, it demonstrates the 'will' of the multinational to resist change and to attempt to reinforce, through a consistent labour policy, a condition of dependency in peripheral areas. On a purely economic plane it shows that as long as macro-level dependency persists, a micro-level autonomy in the peripheral areas is unattainable.

COSATU 1987: from the Executive Committee

We greet you in the name of the Congress of South African Trade Unions. We greet you in 1987 — the year for the consolidation and decisive action of our movement.

COSATU is just over a year old. Today we are closer to the day when we — the workers and youth of our land — free ourselves from poverty, hunger, exploitation and racism. But a long and bitter struggle still awaits us.

Our struggle has come so far because of the struggle and unity of millions of people, led by the workers and the youth. The path we have travelled has not been easy, and although we have built COSATU into a mass workers' organisation, we can see that the path ahead is even more difficult.

The possibilities before us are greater than ever before — but so are the dangers. We are being attacked on all sides — the bosses, their government and their allies are panicking. They are confused — and in their crisis they can see we are getting stronger.

They want to stop us from advancing. That's why they have imposed a State of Emergency.

They have detained thousands of our comrades — among them Moses Mayekiso, Lizzie Phike, Enoch Godongwana, Noel Williams, Matthews Olifant and Amos Masondo.

They have sent their army and police into our townships and into our children's schools and into our worker meetings;

Their allies have sent vigilante death squads to attack and kill workers all over the country — like our MAWU comrades who were murdered at Mphopomemi.

They have tried to crush workers who dare to struggle for what they deserve — at GM and OK Bazaars and BTR and Goldfields and Impala.

We all know the situation is serious. We all know we need the maximum unity if we are to defend ourselves and move forward in our struggle. We all know we need to
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Their allies have sent vigilante death squads to attack and kill workers all over the country — like our MAWU comrades who were murdered at Mphopomemi.

They have tried to crush workers who dare to struggle for what they deserve — at GM and OK Bazaars and BTR and Goldfields and Impala.

We all know the situation is serious. We all know we need the maximum unity if we are to defend ourselves and move forward in our struggle. We all know we need to
learn from our mistakes and setbacks if we are to consolidate our gains, strengthen our organisation — and move forward in 1987.

Comrades: this year we have to overcome our problems. This year we have to overcome our divisions. This year we have to build the greatest possible mass united action under the leadership of the working class.

How can we do this?

**One industry, one union — Now!**

We have to make sure all our structures — at the local, regional and national level — are consolidated and working properly. To do this effectively we need one union, one industry.

We promised at our launch that we would merge and form big industrial unions within 6 months. It is now 14 months and still we do not have one union in each industry. This cannot be allowed to continue.

We have a big job to do, comrades. We have to organise millions and millions of unorganised workers into our ranks. We have to bring the millions of unemployed, farm, railway, construction and public sector-workers into our ranks. We can only do this by building strong and powerful industrial unions. Nothing must stand in our way.

Workers — make sure your union is coming together to form one big union in your industry!

**Build and strengthen shop steward councils**

All our structures must be strengthened, especially our local shop steward councils. They are one of the pillars on which COSATU stands. Make sure your views are represented by your shop stewards on the local COSATU shop steward council in your area. If there is no shop stewards' council in your area then you must make sure one is formed.

Build the COSATU shop stewards' council as the organised voice of worker unity in every area.

**Build worker solidarity action**

At our launching congress we said 'AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL' will be our guiding light, and we adopted powerful resolutions to guide us in the struggle ahead. We have made some progress — but not nearly enough.

Too often we have stood back and watched while our comrades struggled alone against the bosses or the government — like at GM, Crossroads, Impala, BTR or OK Bazaars.

Too often we stood back and watched while our comrades were detained — even though we have resolved to fight every attack on our organisation with united action.

And when we did take decisions for strong action — like the July 14 action against the Emergency or the December 1 action against the killings of our MAWU comrades — some problems and divisions in our movement weakened our protest.

This is bad, comrades. We must build our structures, our unity and our ability to
mobilise more strongly and seriously — so that we can take action on what we decide, instead of just having resolutions on paper.

The bosses and the government have seen this weakness too. They saw how we built June 16 and May Day into the biggest national general strikes ever, with millions of people taking action. They were scared. They saw how NUM and some affiliates mobilised the biggest ever national industrial action, against the death of our comrades at Kinross. They were alarmed. But they also saw how we failed to build July 14 and December 1 — and they grew more confident.

We must not forget that the base of our power is in the workplaces. We must ensure that every workplace has strong, democratic structures and active members. And we must not allow our differences to undermine our unity in action. Differences we will always have. They are necessary in every democratic organisation to find the best ideas for the strongest way forward. That is what worker democracy means. But it also means that once we have made a decision, we are all loyal to that decision — and we do our very best to carry it out in a disciplined and comradely way.

To let differences lead to a split in a union, as happened in NUTW; or hold up the organisation of a region, as happened in the Eastern Cape and Witwatersrand regions; or weaken a local, as happened in the Johannesburg local, is terrible comrades. Please, let's make sure these things do not happen and that we discipline people who try to divide us.

CAMPAIGNS
This year we will be working to turn our powerful resolutions into action. The campaigns for a living wage for all workers, for the organisation of the unemployed under the banner of COSATU and for national united action under the leadership of the working class are crucial.

Already, all over the country, workers are building these campaigns in action. The heroic OK workers have been on strike for a living wage for weeks now. COSATU workers have blacked supplies to OK in solidarity with the workers. The youth and all progressive organisations have increasingly been drawn into solidarity action with the workers.

Build the Living Wage Campaign
Together, we in COSATU must take these campaigns forward. The struggle for a living wage will be COSATU's main campaign this year. We must especially organise and unite our mass strength behind a clear, co-ordinated, united national living wage campaign, and for the organisation of the unemployed.

Our campaign will strike at the heart of the profit system. What we want is what we need to live decently. If the bosses' capitalist system can't provide us with what we need, then we don't need the bosses' system. We want the wealth we created to come back to us, so we can all have decent lives.

Build mass united action
Mass united action is our strongest weapon. As we move forward we must draw behind us support and solidarity from the millions of workers, youth and progressive democratic organisations outside our ranks.

In this way we will build a campaign of united action under the leadership of workers, and around our demands.
In all our campaigns, we will get the best results and strengthen our leadership of the struggle if we take the initiative and build the widest possible unity in action behind our demands.

This year we must make sure that our May Day and June 16 campaigns are much bigger than last year so that they truly are OUR national holidays. We can expect the strongest resistance to our struggle for national united action from the bosses and the government. In their desperation they will try even harder than before to attack our movement.

They will try to create vigilante gangs, especially from the unemployed, to divide and intimidate us.

They will try to encourage tribalism, racism, factions and division wherever they can to undermine our unity.

We must not let them.

**Organise the unemployed**

We have to organise millions of unemployed under our federation to strengthen our common struggle for jobs for all at a living wage. We, the organised employed workers, can help the struggle of our unemployed comrades by implementing our resolution for a ban on overtime and a 40 hour week. Let us mobilise support for this campaign and join unemployed workers in fighting for the sharing of all work on full pay and a massive public works programme, paid for by the bosses to create jobs and provide us with things that we need.

**Build worker self-defence**

We have to organise our own defence to protect ourselves and our struggle against attack. Already, in many areas, COSATU workers are starting to defend themselves. We have to strengthen this a hundred times over, in every workplace and every township. The attacks are getting so serious, so many people have died, that we must organise self defence in every workplace and every township to consolidate and protect the gains we have made.

No-one else will defend us or our struggle. We must do it.

**Build democratic community and youth organisations**

The problems facing us at work and in our communities are the same. Nowhere do we have control over the decisions that affect our lives: the rent we are forced to pay; high transport costs; terrible conditions in the townships.

These issues are directly related to the starvation wages workers are paid.

That is why COSATU workers are leading the struggle to build street committees in the townships. Like our unions in the workplaces, street committees will give us the democratic organisation and unity and strength to fight for all the things we need — including control over every aspect of our lives through our own democratic organisation under the leadership of organised workers.

There is a lot of discussion about alliances and allies in our struggle. The strongest, best and most reliable allies of the working class are the youth. Like us, the youth exploit no-one. They have nothing to lose and everything to gain by marching together with us to a workers’ future.
We must do everything we can to build close links with the students and youth and their organisations; to share our experiences with them of building democratic organisation — and to share our vision of our struggle and the future. At the same time we must give maximum support to the struggle for People's Education and the building of democratic SRC's and control over the schools.

Organise farm workers
Farmworkers are starting to get organised under FAWU. As farmworker organisation develops, a solid bridge will be built between workers in the cities and workers in the country-side. Millions of rural workers — together with the rural poor — will join hands with organised workers in the cities to struggle, like in the factories, mines and shops, for control over the land where they live and work. We must do all in our power to build this bridge as soon as possible — and to make it as strong as possible.

Women workers come first
In our movement women workers have a special place because they carry the heaviest load of all. It is the duty of every COSATU worker to make sure that the demands, participation and struggle of women workers are strengthened a thousand times over. If our liberation does not succeed in creating free people, equal to each other in every way, then we would not be liberated.

Our struggles for maternity rights; equal pay for work of equal value; childcare facilities that meet workers needs; against sexual harassment and harmful work must have the highest priority in all our struggles today.

Our leading role in the struggle depends on the courage, determination and leadership of women workers.

One federation — One country — Now!
Comrades — we are at a crossroads. We see a year of more struggle, more hardship and more suffering — and more hope. Now is the time. If we are to live, then we must go forward together against the bosses' system of profit and greed. We can see how far we have come. COSATU is the home for every worker in South Africa — employed and unemployed. That is why the old bosses' federation TUCSA has broken up. That is why the bosses are desperately trying to promote UWUSA against COSATU. All their divisive efforts are doomed to failure if we are united. There should now be no obstacle for all democratic unions to come together with us and form one federation in one country.

Our tasks
We are committed to the leadership of the working class in the struggle. This year we must show what this means by consolidating and uniting our organisation COSATU in decisive united action with other progressive organisations under the leadership of organised workers.

To do this we will need the widest possible democratic debate, through all our structures, on our weaknesses and our strengths, so that we can come to our National Congress in July with the program for the workers' way forward.

We must, through our organised strength and unity and clarity of purpose, really unite and really lead the vast mass of our people to a new, transformed society — a society where the needs of workers will be paramount.
How we build this society and what it will be like must be deeply discussed in our affiliates and in COSATU structures before the Congress and after it.

Comrade workers — the future is in your hands. The struggle depends on you and you alone. Make sure your organisation COSATU is united. Make sure your union is participating fully and actively in all the structures of COSATU. Make sure COSATU is democratic. Make sure COSATU is doing what you want under your control. The workers united can never be defeated.

One union One industry
One federation One country
Build maximum unity of the working class
Organise ourselves to defend our struggle
Consolidate and advance

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DEMOCRATIC NOT COLONIAL MANAGEMENT FOR LIBERIA

A Statement on the occasion of the fourteenth anniversary of the founding of MOJA-Liberia, by Tobga-Nah Tipoteh, President of MOJA-Liberia

21 March 1987 marks 14 years since the founding of the Movement for Justice in Africa (MOJA). Born in 1973 with the ideals of justice, freedom and democracy in Africa, it has grown in Liberia as the champion of the Liberian people’s struggle for rice and rights, the struggle for economic progress and social justice.

As MOJA-Liberia and the people celebrate this historic occasion, we have been lambasted with the shocking story of a sellout by the Samuel K. Doe military turned civilian, illegal government. The regime, in the service of foreign interest, has virtually surrendered the national sovereignty of Liberia to the United States of America. This has taken the form of seventeen national economic managers imposed by the United States government on the Republic of Liberia.

We of MOJA, and in the name of our people across the length and breadth of Liberia, declare that we reject in no uncertain terms the colonial arrangements being instituted by the Doe and the Reagan governments. MOJA denounces this managerial odyssey in the strongest possible terms and calls on the people of the US to demand of their government the immediate withdrawal of the colonial agents from our country. These colonial agents arrived in Liberia during the ides of March 1987 in a most desperate effort designed to prop up the dying, unpatriotic, undemocratic, blatantly corrupt and grossly inefficient Samuel Doe government. The physical presence of foreign elements to actually perform the tasks of Liberian economic managers is in violation of our sovereign rights. No patriotic government would tolerate the virtual take-over of the management of its economy by any foreign entity, especially after 140 years of nationhood as in the case of Liberia. Over sixty years ago in 1926, the sovereignty of Liberia was clearly violated with the imposition of a similar situation. This colonial style management lasted for three decades. The people of Liberia after terminating that most humiliating experience three decades ago cannot and will not take this one lying down. The Doe regime has no right whatsoever to surrender any iota of Liberia’s sovereignty to any entity. It is
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beyond description that the United States of America, looked upon as the bastion of democracy in the world, would succumb to being the dominant partner in the violation of the sovereignty of the Republic of Liberia. This demeaning affront to our national sovereignty comes at a time when there are several capable Liberian economic managers, forced into exile by state repression, who are performing prominent duties in national economic and financial institutions of other countries as well as in such international bodies as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

What is of particular annoyance is that the United States government remains most insensitive to the persistent pleas of the Liberian people for support in their struggle against state repression and for democracy. In the midst of the high wave of state repression, MOJA and ULAA (Union of Liberian Association in the Americas) in 1984, and ever since, joined by all other peace-loving and democratic-minded Liberians from all walks of life, have been waging a sustained campaign for the Reagan government to end all economic, financial and military aid to the Doe regime. The US response has been increased aid packages. What an affront. Official US government developed assistance to Liberia has risen from a pre-coup level of less than 9 million dollars to a peak of 75.5 million dollars since the 1980 coup. Starting from an annual position of below one million dollars, US military assistance to Liberia during the Doe regime attained a peak of 16.2 million dollars a year.

In giving a deaf ear to appeals of the people of Liberia, the United States government has now revealed a most dangerous trend. In the face of blatant corruption in government construction projects, the US government did not tie its further assistance to the institutionalization of honest and efficient Liberian Management. Rather, US government managers were imposed on Liberia to manage military housing projects. Now, when there is a collapse of national economic management in Liberia, the US government brings its own managers rather than support the utilization of efficient Liberian managers. The people of Liberia will definitely take firm corrective action to redeem their sovereignty and recover their economy. What then will be the response of the United States government? The deployment of US marines to perform the repressive duties of the Liberian military, police and other national security personnel?

In the landing of the US economic managers on the shores of Liberia what we are witnessing is the unwitting admission of the US government that its foreign policy in Liberia has failed. The government of the United States considers its unprecedented support of the Liberian government to be the correct basis for exercising positive influence on the drive towards economic recovery and democracy in Liberia. Now that the government of Liberia has demonstrated itself to be neither efficient nor democratic, then comes in the US government, yet once again, not to be useful in supporting the Liberian people's struggle for free and fair elections to ensure the peaceful election of a new government, but to deliberately manoeuvre its foreign policy by resorting to replacing the Doe regime by the Reagan government. In effective terms, the physical presence of the Reagan government's managers in Liberia essentially means that since the October 1985 national elections this is the second time that a new government has been installed in Liberia not through the ballot box but by foreign intervention.

The colonial control of the Liberian government must come as a most severe blow to the democratic aspirations of the people of the United States, whose taxes are
financing the mission of the 17 colonial administrators. The corrupt practices of the Doe regime are well known. The World Bank observed that the regime could not account for some 50 million dollars of public funds in 1984. Only recently, the United States General Auditing Office disclosed that 16.5 million dollars of US aid funds remain unaccounted for by the Doe government. It was on the reliability of this disclosure that US Senator Edward Kennedy made his February 1987 call for a halt to all economic, financial and military assistance to the government of Liberia. The IMF Occasional Paper No. 45 of July 1985 indicates that Liberia accounts for one-third of the 7 billion plus dollars worth of private bank holdings assigned to a partial list of African holders of Swiss bank accounts in 1984. Thus, more than 2 billion dollars owned by individual Liberians remain in Swiss banks while Liberia is confronted by a strangulating national debt of 1.3 billion dollars. MOJA welcomes the action taken by Senator Kennedy and calls upon the people of the United States to take the necessary action to prevent the flow of further US assistance to the Doe government.

As for the necessary action to be taken by Liberians everywhere, the people remain steadfastly united in their firm determination to build democracy in Liberia. After the bogus October 1985 national elections, the Liberian people came to realize that just as free and fair elections are not possible in South Africa until apartheid is dismantled, there must be the immediate dismantling of the illegal regime to pave the way for free and fair elections in Liberia. Although the people of Liberia bear principal responsibilities for the dismantling of the illegal government, foreign friends, like the democracy-loving people of the United States of America can act now to ensure a peaceful transition to democracy in Liberia. We count on the solidarity and support of all peace-loving and democratic forces the world over in our struggle for the attainment of a sovereign democratic Liberia.

MOJA, more than ever before, remains committed to the struggle for democracy in Liberia and continues to work actively with other organizations in the mobilization of all patriotic and democratic Liberians in sustained concerted efforts to build democracy in Liberia.

ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE OF LIBERIA!
GWEH FEH KPEI (THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES)!

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MANIFESTO OF UKENYA MOVEMENT FOR UNITY AND DEMOCRATIC DEMOCRACY IN KENYA

For over twenty years we Kenyans have seen our hard won independence mortgaged to foreign interests by the KANU regime of Kenyatta and Moi under the cynical ‘philosophies’ of Harambee and Nyayoism. Even our main ports and airports have been turned into U.S. military facilities (for both conventional and nuclear weapons) to serve Western strategic interests, thereby seriously compromising our sovereignty and threatening the security not only of Kenya but of the whole region.

At the economic level, Kenya has been turned into a looters’ paradise for transnationals and ‘aid’ agencies thus continuously bleeding our wealth and national resources. Every year these foreign companies register an ever-rising rate
financing the mission of the 17 colonial administrators. The corrupt practises of the Doe regime are well known. The World Bank observed that the regime could not account for some 50 million dollars of public funds in 1984. Only recently, the United States General Auditing Office disclosed that 16.5 million dollars of US aid funds remain unaccounted for by the Doe government. It was on the reliability of this disclosure that US Senator Edward Kennedy made his February 1987 call for a halt to all economic, financial and military assistance to the government of Liberia. The IMF Occasional Paper No. 45 of July 1985 indicates that Liberia accounts for one-third of the 7 billion plus dollars worth of private bank holdings assigned to a partial list of African holders of Swiss bank accounts in 1984. Thus, more than 2 billion dollars owned by individual Liberians remain in Swiss banks while Liberia is confronted by a strangulating national debt of 1.3 billion dollars. MOJA welcomes the action taken by Senator Kennedy and calls upon the people of the United States to take the necessary action to prevent the flow of further US assistance to the Doe government.

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At the economic level, Kenya has been turned into a looters' paradise for transnationals and 'aid' agencies thus continuously bleeding our wealth and national resources. Every year these foreign companies register an ever-rising rate
of profits while at the same time workers see their real wages falling. But the 'commission fee' dished out to the ruling comprador clique centred around the Presidency has created a small filthy-rich and greedy caste who have turned robbery and theft into a national creed. Corruption on a massive scale has seen national coffers looted, cooperatives robbed, parastatals paralysed for private gain and funds in national institutions like social security and insurance syphoned off. This has resulted in the impoverishment of our society, turning many workers and peasants into paupers and beggars.

The most productive land is in the hands of a few Kenyan landlords and foreign companies and has been turned over for production of cash crops for export at the expense of production of food for national consumption. Like in the colonial times peasants are still confined to narrow strips of land or reduced to squatting or worse still providing cheap labour under the most inhuman conditions on plantations.

At the political level the KANU regime has demobilised large sections of the people by monopolizing all political activities and crushing all patriotic and democratic initiatives. Political associations and organizations have been banned; the legal opposition party, KPU, was banned as early as 1969 and its leaders were detained. Kenya has since been a one-party state; workers and peasants have no rights freely to organize and manage their own affairs; professional organizations, student unions, certain religious and welfare associations have been abolished. Indeed this unrepresentative KANU has now been decreed to be the supreme body even above Parliament and the Judiciary.

At the social level, a large section of Kenyans live under the most deplorable conditions, deprived of adequate food, clothing and shelter. The gap between the rich and the poor in our country is one of the widest in the world. Thus, behind the facade of skyscrapers, deluxe hotels and mansions lies the bitter reality of some Kenyans sleeping the street in makeshift shelters through extreme weather conditions and others dying of malnutrition and hunger.

Adequate medical care is the monopoly of the rich. The same applies to other social amenities e.g. transport and communications.

The educational system denies large sections access to schools, colleges and universities. It is geared towards producing men and women with an imitative aping mentality and a dependency complex. Foreign languages are promoted at the expense of national languages, including the all-Kenya national language, Kiswahili. The entire educational system aims at making us look up to the Western bourgeoisie for everything while making us despise what is Kenyan, national and rooted in the people. Education is divorced from real production.

All creative cultural activities have been stifled by the KANU regime. Patriotic theatre and intellectual debates have been silenced with police batons and teargas. The aim has been to turn we Kenyans into mindless followers of presidential footsteps whereby leading us to tyranny and neo-slavery. The 'made-in-Hollywood' and 'Coca-Cola' culture masquerades as the new 'national' culture blindly aped by the nouveau riche.

The regime has been trying to crush the whole heritage of struggle whose highest peak was the Kenya Land and Freedom Army — Mau Mau — which had been the pride of all the struggling people in the world.

But the spirit of resistance lives on. Temporarily dampened by the short-lived
euphoria of independence, it has since grown into well organized national resistance movements. The best known of these are the December Twelve Movement with its newspaper *Pambana* and also *Mwakenya* with its organs, *Mpatanishi* and *Mzalendo*.

In the face of increasing popular resistance, the KANU regime has escalated the repression against our people to new heights. Wholesale intimidations of the people, detention without trials, imprisonment through kangaroo courts, stripping of citizenships, disappearances, torture, murder of students, execution of political prisoners, massacre of whole sections of the population — all these have created a climate of fear. This has forced many Kenyans into exile.

Kenya has been turned into a police state. Northern Kenya (the former Northern Frontier District stretching from Turkana to Lamu) for instance, is under a State of Emergency carried over from the colonial times. The present armed forces are instruments for the suppression of the population.

Today Kenya is the classical neo-colonial state.

We are being ruled by a comprador class — a parasite — which is a subordinate ally of international capital. It is an overseer of imperialist interests in our country. These surrogates, *mbwa wakali* of the West, are paid to suffocate the growth of national enterprises.

In order to mask their shameless mortgaging of our country to imperialism and to maintain their minority rule over us, they sow seeds of discord, dividing us Kenyans into 'tribal', racial and regional enclaves trying to make us believe that our problems exist because of this or that 'tribe', race or region. (An example is the way that the Moi regime often deflects people's anger against its own corruption and mismanagement by inciting crude racism against Kenyans of Asian origin.)

When this divide-and-rule policy fails and the resistance mounts, they use the policy and the army to put us down. Thus the security apparatus which should defend national interest and safeguard our rights have become protectors of foreign interests against any internal threats.

This class has marginalized the largest sector of labour force in our country — women. This has meant that the woman carries the double burden of class exploitation as worker and peasant, and social oppression as a woman. By perpetuating negative feudal patriarchal (social, political, cultural and legal) attitudes and practices towards women, the comprador class has reinforced structures of under-development inherited from colonialism. These feudalistic patriarchal attitudes and practices are indeed a barrier to women's meaningful participation in all aspects of our economic, political, social and cultural life.

At the international level, this class has aligned Kenya with forces of reaction thus dishonouring our revolutionary heritage and the name of Kenya in the eyes of the world.

This class is truly anti-national, anti-Kenya, anti-progressive and it is clearly the enemy of us Kenyans. We must unite against this class. We patriotic Kenyans — workers, peasants, students, professionals, soldiers and all the other patriotic elements must unite against it and its imperialist masters.

It is against this background of repression and resistance that we Kenyans living in Britain have come together and decided that we cannot stand idly by without taking
a firm side in the struggle. After four years of intense debate and discussion on the situation in Kenya, we have taken the decision to form *Umoja wa Kupigania Demokrasia Kenya* - UKENYA. UKENYA is an anti-imperialist organization committed to struggle for democracy and the regaining of Kenya's sovereignty. We declared our total opposition to the present KANU-led neo-colonial regime and our commitment to the dismantling of the neo-colonial structures in all sectors of our economic, political, social and cultural lives.

We support all the progressive and anti-imperialist liberation movements inside the country. We pledge to work hand in hand with these and with all the other patriotic democratic organizations outside the country.

United, we shall win, and a people-based democracy shall reign.

UKENYA is fully committed to the restoration of Kenya's sovereignty and national integrity. UKENYA shall therefore strive for the unity of all patriotic Kenyans who are struggling against neo-colonialism and hence are fighting for a national economy; a national democratic society; and a national independent culture which reflects the diversity of the nationalities of Kenya.

Towards the fulfilment of this, UKENYA shall be guided by the following *Broad and Particular* objectives.

**A. Economic Objectives**

*We stand for:*

1. The development of a national economy free from foreign domination and which is geared first and foremost to meeting the needs of Kenyan people.

2. The development of a truly national industrial base which will lead to self-sufficiency and cater for local needs instead of the present situation where our industries are mere extensions of Western transnationals. We shall struggle for an integrated economy where industry and agriculture will support one another. For instance, food production to meet the needs of all Kenyans must be our priority in land usage and planning.

3. The right of workers to gainful employment and the right of workers to a fair return for their labour. Therefore we support the workers' struggle for higher wages, decent housing, adequate medical care, education and other basic social necessities. We support the workers in their struggle for the right to strike and picket, and for their right to engage in any forms of political struggle necessary to achieve the above and to liberate their labour from internal and external exploitation.

4. The right of peasants, pastoralists, and fisherpeople to own adequate and productive land and other natural resources and to a fair return for their produce. We therefore reject the present situation whereby the most productive land and other resources are concentrated in the hands of a few big landowners, both Kenyan and foreign.

We support the principle of land reform and redistribution and reject private ownership and large tracts of land.

We support the right of peasants to struggle for land and for the right to determine how land is used and to have control over the disposal of their produce through
cooperatives or through any other forms of association appropriate to their locality, culture and situation.

We also support their right to decent housing, medical care, education and other basic social necessities.

We support peasants' right to engage in any forms of political struggle necessary to achieve the above and to liberate their economy from external control and to liberate themselves from social oppression.

5. The alliance of workers and peasants of Kenya in all their struggles.

6. The right of Kenyan people to struggle against the ever spiralling prices of basic commodities.

7. The legitimacy of Kenyan peoples' struggles against the present corrupt, thieving comprador minority that continues to empty national coffers into its own private treasuries at home and abroad and uses public institutions and cooperatives to feed its never-ending appetite for stolen wealth.

B. Political Objectives

We stand for:

1. National democracy and freedom in Kenya.

2. The equality of all Kenyan nationalities in all aspects of our national life.

3. The equality of men and women in all aspects of national life.

4. The intensification of the struggle for the right of Kenyans freely to express themselves, to organize, to form associations, to hold opinions, to receive information without state interference and harassment. Indeed, it is the right of all Kenyans to form associations to express even their special self interest as a group (e.g. women), for people's problems can only be resolved democratically, and not by presidential decrees and police boots.

5. The immediate abolition of the present Preservation of Public Security Act whereby people are detained without trial, are subject to all forms of torture, denied access even to their families and to lawyers of their choice. Indeed we are opposed to the present judicial system whereby Kenyans in general are harassed and patriotic Kenyans in particular are punitively jailed on trumped up charges, or summarily executed.

6. The immediate abolition of all the State of Emergency laws and regulations which have been used to govern Northern Kenya since colonial times and which have seen detentions, torture and wholesale massacres of Kenyans in the North, and destruction of their property.

7. The dismantling of the present military and armed police system used for the maintenance of neo-colonial structures, for the defence of the propertied few, and against the majority of the people. We believe in the creation of a genuine People's Defence Force.

C. Social Objectives

We stand for:

1. The right of every Kenyan to adequate food, clothing, shelter and medical care.
2. The right of all Kenyans to free, compulsory and universal education which will inculcate in the people a national consciousness, a national pride and one which is opposed to all forms of parasitic values and to the domination of Kenyan life by foreign imperialist interests. While absorbing all the best in the world democratic traditions, education should be geared to producing responsible Kenyans committed to the development of Kenya as a whole and who are responsive to the needs of the majority.

3. The development of a national transport and communication system that is geared to meet the needs of the entire country.

4. The development of Kiswahili as the all-Kenya official and national language and also as the language of solidarity with the struggles of peoples of East and Central Africa. At the same time, we support the promotion of all Kenya’s national languages.

5. The development of a national democratic culture rooted in our traditions of struggle and resistance to oppression and foreign domination. We support all patriotic movements in the areas of creative and performing arts, for instance in theatre, music, and literature.

6. The development of adequate leisure and sporting facilities for all Kenyans in all the regions.

D. Foreign Relations

We stand for:

1. The immediate removal of all USA military facilities and all other foreign military presence from our soil. We reaffirm the sanctity of Kenya’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.

2. The declaration of Kenya as a Nuclear Free Zone and the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace.

3. The realignment of Kenya’s international links so as to establish and strengthen our support and solidarity with liberation movements in South Africa and Namibia, indeed with the liberation movements in Africa, Asia, Pacific, Central and South America and the Caribbean.

UKENYA pledges to:

1. To work with Kenyans in Europe and elsewhere and organize ourselves into a united democratic resistance movement against neo-colonialism in our country.

2. Establish working links with progressive forces and organizations of Kenyans inside and outside Kenya.

3. Promote activities of democratic resistance in Kenya in cooperation with Internal and External democratic movements towards a unified national resistance movement. This will be done with the clear knowledge and understanding that externally based movements can only get guidance from those internally based (i.e. those within Kenya) and therefore that those abroad will mainly play a supportive role.

4. Establish friendly links with existing Kenya solidarity committees in Europe, Japan, USA and any others that might be formed elsewhere.
5. Establish links with other 'Third World' anti-imperialist democratic resistance movements.

6. Establish friendship with democratic forces throughout the world.

7. Engage in political, social and cultural activities which promote the welfare of Kenyans and enhance the dignity of Kenyan people and their proud history of resistance.

Issued by: UKENYA Movement for Unity and Democracy in Kenya, UK, P.O. Box 288, London SW11 3NU

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**CONGRESS IN ERITREA**

**Lionel Cliffe**

That this Second Congress of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front could take place unhindered from March 12-19th, was itself significant. With some 1350 delegates from the trenches, behind the lines and abroad plus 60 foreign observers, it could not be kept secret. The EPLF were in face daring the Ethiopian army to do its worst. In the event the elaborate camouflage and anti-aircraft protecting the specially built stone amphitheatre went untested. (Let us hope that the Eritreans will remember how to save £50 million on a conference hall when they eventually host an OAU meeting!)

**A Unity Conference**

Some drama did come out of the deliberations: a change in leadership, in structure and in programme. But first and foremost this was a unity Congress. The national liberation movement, the EPLF, was now consummating its union with one of the three factions into which the rival Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) had split in 1980. The Eritrean Liberation Front-Central Leadership (ELF-CL) was in fact the only ELF faction operating within the territory. The other two, one with only about 50 fighters, were both represented at the Congress. The Eritrean movement is thus well on its way to answering one of the main doubts that sceptics have levelled against its claims, and to countering one of the weaknesses manipulated by outside forces, as the Saudis were accused of doing to this day.

The unity theme was evident in much else. Some of the old nationalist politicians and various tribal leaders, moslem sheiks and a coptic churchman, were all honoured by the assembly. Professionals and businessmen long exiled were welcomed back. A wide range of interests and classes were to be catered for by some modifications to policies — with slightly less emphasis on land reform, and 'settling' nomads, but more on a 'mixed economy'.

**Reorganisation**

This more 'pragmatic' stance, marking a shift to greater flexibility rather than a radical departure, is a sign of a growing maturity. The cadres themselves are no longer the student radicals of ten, fifteen years ago. Their very obvious commitment has been tempered by the realism bred of a long, fantastically hard struggle. The organisation itself has chalked up remarkable achievements in the military, technical and social fields but is now seeking a greater effectiveness in its performance.
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Most attention will focus on the replacement of Ramadhan Mohamed Nur, still a popular, paternal figure and member of the Political Bureau, by the young and dynamic Issayas Afeworki, the former Deputy Secretary General, a post which now disappears. This change is much less a coup than an almost inevitable assumption of the leadership by a man who has been, arguably the main shaper of events.

More crucially, Afeworki has got the kind of slimmed-down, more professional structure he wanted. A smaller political Bureau will still provide collective political direction, but its members will no longer be a kind of cabinet of heads of departments. These will now be under administrative heads chosen for their technical proficiency, and answerable to a central Secretariat.

**A Diplomatic Offensive**

The most critical explorations at the Congress concerned the EPLF's overseas representation, which most outside observers will agree scarcely reflects their achievements inside. Here a big shake-up in organisation is promised. But a new approach is also envisaged, with pragmatism and flexibility again the watchwords. Facing one superpower, with the US seemingly more concerned with keeping the territorial integrity of Ethiopia and hoping to win it round to the west, and the OAU indifferent, the Eritreans lack that diplomatic support which could help promote a political solution.

This isolation and their own failings in putting their case were laid out with painful honesty in a long political report. And their previous appeals to outside forces on the basis of justice of their right to self-determination was seen as 'idealistic'. In a much more hard-headed approach, they want to put the kind of case that says: 'you may not recognise the justices of our cause for whatever legal or geo-political reasons, but that will not make the issue disappear. The realities of our impregnable military and political position have to be reckoned with.'

They were realistic, too about where they can turn. The Arab world, which sent the four governments represented at the Congress, was seen as too divided and beset with its own problems to offer much hope. Africa had been allowed to get away with the questionable view that Eritrean independence violated the OAU charter and set precedents for 'secessionist' movements and this will now be more vigorously challenged.

Western Europe was seen as a major arena for diplomatic initiatives, given a certain degreee of independence from the superpowers and the fact that it had some clout in Africa. The EPLF's pitch seems likely to be one of realpolitik: that people and governments in Europe ought to be sufficiently concerned about the continued turmoil in the Horn that they would feel some solution should be sought; and that they might perhaps be persuaded to give the EPLF credit for a certain statesmanship in its concern to see a negotiated settlement, but a concern that, unlike most other actors in the Horn, is rooted in the context of the whole region's geo-politics and is concerned to avoid a political vacuum in the Horn or in the region.

**A Peaceful Solution?**

Whatever diplomacy might yeild, first priority is still with the further strengthening of their political and military position. After repelling eight major Ethiopian offensives, their position in the base area defended by the long frontline, is clearly impregnable. But a general offensive or the taking of towns, which is clearly within
their compass but which can't be defended, are not immediate options. So the emphasis will switch to guerilla activity behind the lines. During the Congress there was in fact one action some 20 km. from the capital, Asmara.

There still remains the problem of how to translate their strength into bargaining counters. Believing that the Dergue's character precludes their seeking anything but military solutions, the EPLF have previously looked to civilian rule or a coalition of the opposition national movements within Ethiopia, but now see these as only distant prospects. Hence the Congress' call for the Ethiopian army to overthrow the Dergue. At first sight equally unrealistic, but on reflection this appeal, backed by an offer of an immediate ceasefire, is perhaps a shrewd pointer to a war-weary Ethiopian soldiery as to how they can end the fighting.

But any prospects for settlement are clearly not imminent. The bitter conflict will have to go on. Meanwhile the EPLF has geared itself organisationally and pragmatically for a new stage of struggle, and is clearly consciously bent on transforming itself from a guerilla movement into a body that aims to govern.

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**CONCLUDING DECLARATION**

**SECOND AND UNITY CONGRESS, ERITREA**

After ten years of bitter but rich experience in all fields of struggle, the Second and Unity Congress of the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front and the Eritrean Liberation Front (Central Leadership) was held in the liberated areas of Eritrea from 12 to 19 March 1987. Participants in this successful and impressive congress numbered 1,287, representing the army, the people's institutions and mass organisations at home and abroad. Also present were representatives of friendly governments, parties and organizations, liberation movements and two other Eritrean organizations, as well as veteran Eritrean nationalists and other personalities.

The Congress affirmed that the past ten years had seen the large-scale intervention of the Soviet Union and its allies and the courageous struggle of the Eritrean people and their revolution to confront the Ethiopian-Soviet onslaught, thus ensuring their survival and continuity. At the cost of great sacrifice, eight massive enemy offensives had been repulsed by the Eritrean people, with the EPLF playing the decisive role. All this proved the heroism and steadfastness of the Eritrean people, the capability of the EPLF to shoulder the tasks of the liberation war and the impossibility of defeating the Eritrean revolution by military means.

In the social, economic, political and cultural fields, these ten years had brought about great changes, thanks to the serious work that had been done to enlighten, arm and organise the Eritrean people. In this period, vigorous efforts were made to improve the livelihood of the people, as well as to intensify educational and cultural activities. The Congress affirmed that, as a result, the EPLF had broadened its influence and enriched its experience. All in all, this decade had been one of laying the foundations of national construction and strengthening the unity of the people.

With great admiration for the results achieved, the Congress assessed the developments in the struggle for national unity. The most important of these are the clarifying of the national democratic line and the strengthening and drawing closer of national democratic forces, the isolation and disintegration of the most divisive
their compass but which can't be defended, are not immediate options. So the emphasis will switch to guerrilla activity behind the lines. During the Congress there was in fact one action some 20 km. from the capital, Asmara.

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With great admiration for the results achieved, the Congress assessed the developments in the struggle for national unity. The most important of these are the clarifying of the national democratic line and the strengthening and drawing closer of national democratic forces, the isolation and disintegration of the most divisive
and destructive group within the ELF and the regrouping of a nationalist force. The external, anti-unity and interventionist elements became increasingly desperate as their anti-Eritrean schemes failed, one after another, while there was a growing role of the Eritrean people in uniting all nationalist forces. The EPLF made considerable efforts to bring all nationalist organizations and elements under one umbrella, suffering reverses at first because of the interference of external forces and treacherous Eritreans, but these were followed by increasing successes, as doubts were gradually eased and the gap bridged between the EPLF and the nationalist forces in the ELF. Exemplary is the relationship between the EPLF and the ELF-CC, which is a unique experience in Eritrea of an independent, democratic platform and independent, political decision and agreement that have been reached free from outside pressure and intervention. This has led to common views being shared among the rank and file, as well as among the leadership of the two organizations: a process that has now been crowned by organizational unity in a successful congress.

The past ten years were not only years of determined armed struggle and spectacular military victories which guaranteed the continuity of the Eritrean revolution. At the same time the EPLF proved its commitment to peace by making great efforts to bring about a just and peaceful solution to the question. Irrespective of the military situation, peace was the constant demand of the EPLF. Participating in the Berlin talks with a sincere interest in peace, the EPLF presented its views clearly and straightforwardly, issued a realistic referendum proposal, held preliminary talks with the Dergue without previous conditions and cooperated with the friends and interested parties who took initiatives for a peaceful solution. It became clear, however, that on the other side the Dergue was only interested in a military solution, that its peace slogans and moves were designed for public consumption only — depending on the prevailing military situation — and that its approach to peace talks turned out to be subterfuge, lies and procrastination. At the international level, interest in a just and peaceful solution grew.

The Congress also evaluated developments in Ethiopia over the past decade; from the initial stages, when the fascist Dergue deceitfully snatched power, weakened and crushed the opposition forces, one by one, turned the Ethiopian people into victims of its unjust war, squandered the country’s resources in military expenditure, increased the people's suffering and exposed them to the ravages of drought; up until the present time, when the regime is trying to set up a “republic” to legitimize its rule, consolidate its power and continue its military adventures. The Congress noted that, despite the Dergue’s stratagems, the resistance of the Ethiopian people is spreading. Futile, too, are proving the regime’s attempts to save its face in light of the continual defections and sacking of high officials. Crises rock the army, among whom opposition to the regime is mounting. The Dergue seeks to diminish this opposition by moves such as the recent shake-up of the cabinet. It was the view of the Congress that the downfall of the Dergue is drawing closer than ever.

At the world level, the Congress noted that, over the past decade, the Soviet policy of intervention and suppression of the Eritrean struggle has remained unchanged. At the same time economic and diplomatic support aimed at winning over the Dergue has supplemented Soviet military aid and has enabled the regime to continue its militaristic policy. The US and the Soviet Union have continued to ignore the appeals of the Eritrean people and of the EPLF. Both super-powers have created problems and obstructions for a just and peaceful resolution of the Eritrean
case. On the other hand, interest in, support for and initiatives towards such a solution are increasing among many governments, parties, organizations and personalities.

After carefully assessing the experiences of the past ten years and the new stage of the struggle, as well as the tasks ahead, the Congress adopted a clear line and practical policies which would enable the EPLF-led Eritrean people to confront successfully the military operations of the Dergue and its supporters, as well as to deepen the work of politicizing, organizing and arming the masses to strengthen the unity of the Eritrean people. This will facilitate the creation of a broad national democratic front which will oppose all treacherous and anti-unity elements. The search for a peaceful solution will continue and solidarity and cooperation will be extended to the Ethiopian peoples in struggle, in the hope that this will lead to a cease-fire if the army overthrows the Dergue and shows readiness for a just and peaceful solution. Action will be taken to broaden the political and material support at the international level for the struggle of the Eritrean people and to the increase the participation of friends and interested parties in the peace efforts.

The Congress elected a Central Committee of 71 members and 7 alternates to implement effectively the line and policies adopted. The Central Committee elected the Secretary General and a 9-member Political Bureau.

The Congress praised the Eritrean people's brave struggle to defeat the enemy, to combat backwardness, to alleviate their problems in a self-reliant way, to confront the machinations of the enemy and other hostile groups, to strengthen their unity and to safeguard their gains. It called on them to further consolidate their unity, to participate actively in national construction and to oppose all traitors and anti-unity forces. It called on Eritreans residing abroad to increase their participation, and on refugees to return home. It appealed to Eritreans who are being misled, not to be instruments of external interests, anti-national and anti-unity elements and, instead, to participate in the national struggle.

The Congress acclaimed the heroic Eritrean Peoples Liberation Army, along with the People's Militia and the Regional Armies who constitute the dependable shield of the Eritrean people and are a guarantee of the continuity of the revolution.

It commended them for scoring outstanding victories and for repulsing successive large-scale offensives — victories in which thousands of their finest members gave their lives. The congress called on the EPLA to increase its capability and readiness to shoulder its future tasks.

The Congress also applauded the democratic struggles waged by the Ethiopian peoples to achieve their democratic and nationality rights. It called on them to oppose the policy of forcible recruitment which uses them as cannon fodder for an unjust war and to strengthen their organization to overthrow the dergue and establish a democratic state. It called on Ethiopian democratic forces to avoid meaningless arguments and to strengthen and coordinate their efforts. It also called on the army to rise up and overthrow the regime which is the cause of the people's suffering.

The Congress thanked those governments, political parties and organizations which, standing on the side of the Eritrean people, provided political, military, material and humanitarian aid, particularly during the period of the drought, as well
as those who showed interest in and took initiatives for a just, peaceful solution. It called on them to increase their support and intensify their efforts.

The Congress expressed its appreciation to all Arab governments and organizations that provided political, material and moral support to the Eritrean people and their struggle and called on them to increase their aid. The Congress also called on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which supports the Eritrean cause in general, to reassess its policy towards Eritrea and give its aid to the Eritrean people and their fighting organization. At present the intervention in Eritrean affairs of the Saudi Security Department, contrary to its stated aims, is blocking the establishment of a broad, national democratic front and delaying the attainment of victory. Its aid goes to groups who have no influence among the Eritrean people and no role in the liberation struggle.

The Congress recognized that, for a quarter of a century, the Sudanese people have been on the side of the Eritrean people, allowing their country to give crucial support to the liberation struggle. They have hosted hundreds of thousands of Eritreans who were forced to flee from their homes, defending them from the harassment of regimes who had had unfavourable stand on Eritrea. The EPLF warmly acclaimed this role of the Sudanese people and thanked the Sudanese parties who strive to popularize, in their own country, the just and legitimate struggle of the Eritrean people, and who work to influence government policy in a positive manner. It called on the Sudanese people and political parties to increase their support and on the Sudanese Government to provide aid to the Eritrean revolution and to the EPLF, intensifying its efforts for peace and stability in the region.

The Congress expressed its appreciation for the fraternal support of the Somali people and government and called on them to increase their support.

The Congress reaffirmed its solidarity with the democratic, national and multi-national movements of Ethiopia, the just struggle of the Palestinian people, the struggles of the peoples of Southern Africa, particularly those of South Africa (Azania) and Namibia, and the world-wide struggles for peace, justice, liberation and democracy.

Finally, the Second and Unity Congress of the EPLF and ELF-CL thanked the participating guests as well as the governments, parties and organizations and personalities that sent messages of solidarity.

Victory to the Masses!
19 March 1987

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THE MAKING OF A NAMIBIAN TRADE UNIONIST:

an interview with Ben Ulenga by Brian Wood, 19 March 1987

A revitalised sensitivity to the experiences in struggle of workers and nationalists in southern Africa can enhance socialist scholars' understanding of developments in that part of the world. This is especially true if scholars are abroad, detached from the extreme dangers and subtleties of the conflicts, and if the experiences are those of the new generations of young leaders whose political development itself
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provides a clue to the future. Radical scholars have, in recent years, begun to transcend the overly rigid categories and more sterile aspects of the structuralism of the 1970s, retaining some of the insights of the previous approach, but moving towards a more dialectical conception of the unfolding struggles. This is probably mostly due to the analyses offered by the new layer of intellectuals involved in leadership and service roles in the South African independent trade unions and community organisations, although another factor is probably that the intellectual appeal of Althussarianism has also lost much of its smug shine in Western academic Marxist circles.

The discussion of socialist strategies and tactics amongst South African intellectuals has reached a new intensity, fueled as it is by the mass struggles and by the new dialectical conceptions of class and community politics. However, the new problematic does not yet clearly address the question of worker organisation in the South African capitalist periphery as a whole, even though there are increasing signs that the most politically advanced workers in the southern African region see the political future of their class as somehow intimately bound up with the working class struggle in South Africa itself. It is probably only on the broader terrain that the complex answers to the relationship between workers' struggles and the interlinked mass nationalist struggles will be satisfactorily explored, a task now more urgent than ever.

The sub-region in African terms is relatively highly proletarianised in various ways, and, despite the virtual absence of secondary industry, the Namibian population is probably the most wage dependent of any national formation in sub-Saharan Africa bar South Africa itself. For this reason alone, socialist scholars supporting the struggles in South Africa should be eager to compare and contrast, and more importantly to explore the necessary political links, between the Namibian nationalist and workers' struggle and that in South Africa and the sub-region. The challenge for socialist scholars is surely not to broaden the intellectual canvas in an abstract and schematic manner, but to detail historically systematic differences and similarities to help forge the most realistic means of achieving workers' state power. It is particularly naive to believe that the latter would emerge in South Africa itself without vast social upheavals and working class support in the surrounding region.

For particular political reasons, this is especially true of Namibia, the *de facto* colony of the South African state, and the main 'laboratory' for that state's militarisation policies. It is here that Pretoria's elaborate constitutional tinkering to bolster white interests with a black collaborator class, and its soliciting of diplomatic connivance by the major Western powers, have been so long established. To what extent do these experiences provide clues to many of Pretoria's current manoeuvres in South Africa itself? What is the balance sheet so far of the Namibian nationalist struggle led by SWAPO, and its various worker, youth and other community components, in the face of this huge and elaborate military and political intervention by Pretorian politicians and generals? The relative absence of serious public discussion of Namibia by radical scholars in South Africa and abroad — one could contrast this with the life work of Ruth First — is surely blunting the efforts of socialist scholars to address relevant questions to assist in developing effective international solidarity and to help clarify the sub-regional dimensions of political strategy and tactics in South Africa itself.

Ben Ulenga's life illustrates the urgent need to re-explore the concepts necessary to
answer the above questions. When did workers in Namibia become 'Namibians' in the first place and what do they mean by this? Is 'partial proletarianisation' incompatible with 'industrial unionism' even in the absence of hostel accommodation? Is the character of a youth movement decisive in determining the nature of a worker-peasant political alliance in the context of widespread migrancy from impoverished rural areas? Is a successful anti-colonial (and anti-neocolonial) nationalism nowadays dependent on a sophisticated internationalism, especially where the workers movement is central? What is the best political relationship between rural-based guerilla struggle and socialist worker organisation in the various southern African class configurations? Under what conditions does a 'totalitarian' authority structure at the workplace, intense military control of civilian life and frequent detention and jailing of leaders not stop, but even intensify, socialist political development? Is the flexibility to shift from strong 'informal' worker organisation to 'formal' organisation and vice versa necessary for success under such police state conditions? Is 'Marxist' political economy unconnected with a more searching analysis of the dynamics of political culture simply incapable of providing answers to such questions?

Namibians, and Namibian workers in particular, have historically appealed, even before the formation of SWAPO, for international solidarity with their struggles. The testimony published here of one courageous activist of SWAPO and the National Union of Namibian Workers calls for a response from socialists abroad. Ben Ulenga has spoken out publicly at great personal risk in a way that should help socialist academics to find new ways of understanding Namibians' struggles and, perhaps, revitalising their conceptual effort. It is hoped that readers will respond imaginatively, highlighting the relevance of the Namibian struggle in their writing and their educational work, and that they will join with other socialists in political and trade union organisations to help raise material support for Namibian workers and their dependents in struggle in SWAPO and the NUNW.

NOTES AND REFERENCES:

1. The interview published here is an extract from a longer text, the result of three separate sessions in London between 19 and 29 March 1987. Ben Ulenga was on a tour of Britain and various Western European countries, appealing for support for the National Union of Namibian Workers from trade unionists in particular. Further background information and extracts from this interview on recent trade union developments in Namibia are briefly summarised in Brian Wood, 'The Battle for Trade Unions in Namibia' and accompanying interview with Ben Ulenga, South African Labour Bulletin, 12 (3), May-June, 1987.

2. For example, when conducting fieldwork in Zimbabwe in 1984 for my doctoral thesis on the post-1945 development of trade unionism in Zimbabwe, one group of worker committee representatives at a large modern factory said that the workforce couldn't take control of the factory because they lacked comrades with the necessary accounting, engineering and marketing skills whom they could trust but that, once these skills were widely available and if they were politically directed to workers interests, it would be possible in their view for many sections of the workforce to take control of factories — but only if armed forces were in their favour and only "...when Soweto is up."

3. The process of proletarianisation is not straightforward. See the useful introductory discussion in Sharon Stichter, Migrant Labourers (Cambridge University Press, 1985). Labour force statistics on Namibia suffer from official incompetence, but see the latest estimates in Reg Green, 'Namibia: Dependence, Destabilisation and Development', paper presented to the Oxfam Conference on Namibia, London, 11 May 1987. For references to the seminal works on Namibian workers by Richard Moorsom and Robert Gordon, as well as

4. Recent sparse writing on the politics of Namibia in the *Work in Progress* journal and *The South African Review* suffers from over-dependence on white South African press and, therefore, on South African Defence Force, 'reports' of actions against SWAPO, most of which are quite ficticious. SWAPO's own reports are extremely difficult to obtain in South Africa and its a dangerous job writing accurately about the Namibian war zones — one of the writers in the above publications had a broken bottle pushed into his face by members of the South African Police's Koevoet terror squad in Namibia — which is all the more reason why overseas scholars need to provide more imaginative assistance.

5. Ruth First's popular paperback, *South West Africa* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1963), now of course very dated, led to her arrest and exile from South Africa, but she kept up her practical commitment throughout her life, as witnessed by her constant demands for material from the SWAPO offices and her little-known papers on Namibia for the Mondlane University's Centre for African Studies. For a recent attempt to counter this neglect, see *Writing for Liberation* by Gavin Williams, published by NSC/ROAPE Publications, 1987.

6. This question is posed in recent work by Neville Alexander and Tony Emmett, see Ericksen, *op cit*

7. For the prevailing discussion, see Stichter, *op cit* chapter 5.

8. Nowhere in the writing on nationalism in Namibia and Zimbabwe is this theorised.

9. At attempt, more descriptive and liberal than conceptual and socialist, of the international dimensions of anti-colonial nationalism in the Zimbabwe case is by John Day, *International Nationalism* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967). The internationalism emanating from successful contemporary worker organisation is usually written about separately from nationalist struggles. See Peter Waterman (ed.) *For a new labour internationalism* (Hague, 1984), for an example of this detachment.

10. The evidence that is cited in the cruder versions of such arguments almost always excludes the Namibian experience. See, for example, Alex Callinicos, *Southern Africa after Zimbabwe* (London, Pluto, 1981) where Namibia is barely mentioned at all.

11. The structuralists' 'strong state' thesis needs to be questioned at this political cultural level as well as at the level of socio-economic processes. See, for example, John Lonsdale, 'The State and Peasantry in Colonial Africa' in Raphael Samuel (ed.), *People's History and Socialist Theory* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981).

12. It is possible that in semi-literate political mobilisation the simple use of the 'formal-informal' dichotomy does more to hinder analysis of the institutional dynamics than aid it.

13. An example of a recent attempt to more rigorously theorise political mobilisation, in particular populism and clientalism (but not unfortunately nationalism), in a comparative study which could provide some insights into how to conceptualise political cultures in southern Africa is Nicos Mouzelis, *Politics in the semi-periphery* (London, MacMillan, 1986).

14. Further information on campaigns to support SWAPO and the NUNW can be obtained from the Namibia Support Committee, P.O. Box 16, London, NW5 (Telephone: (01) 267 1941/2). A 'NUNW FUND' has been established to raise funds for a vehicle, much needed in Namibia because of the geography of organising.

**When and where were you born?**
Well, I was born in a village in Northern Namibia not far from Oshakati in 1952 so I'm nearly 35 years old.
What did your father and mother do?
My father was a migrant worker at the diamond mines at CDM (Consolidate Diamond Mines Ltd) and is retired now. My mother works at home in the countryside. She does peasant work.

Do you have brothers and sisters?
Yes, we are nine — I have three sisters and five brothers. Our first born also worked on the mines before going to Angola and joining up with the PLAN (People's Liberation Army of Namibia) forces of SWAPO. My second eldest brother also worked on the diamond mines, and he works with another company now. I am the third. The younger brothers, two of them, and one sister are with the SWAPO comrades in Angola. So four of my brothers and sisters are at home now and five, including myself, are actively involved in the struggle.

So would you say your family was a mining family, dependent on the wages from CDM?
Ya, actually dependent on wages from CDM on the one hand and again on the plot of land that we have; we are actually half peasant and half workers because of the migrant worker situation in Namibia.

Which would you say contributed the most resources to your living standards — wages or peasant production?
I think that the peasantry took care of the food. Clothes and those type of things we got from my father and my brothers but my father couldn't really provide us with enough to eat so everybody at home except those who went to the mines stayed at home and worked on the fields. My father has a small herd of cattle and we looked after it. During summer time in the rainy season we had milk from the cattle, except of course at times of drought when some cattle died and the milk was completely out.

Did you live in a village with other families?
Ya, I did. There was about 50 families.

Would you say that many of the other adult men or women were involved in wage employment?
Yes, almost from every family there must be either two or three or four people involved as wage workers; the problem is the situation that then prevailed and still prevails in Namibia is that although those people went to various migrant work, their wages were so low that the peasant, or the people in the countryside, didn't really depend on their wages. Well when it comes to clothes maybe and things like that. Sometimes when there has been a drought and there hasn't been enough from the fields, maybe they can buy some bags of meilie meal and so on. But mainly it's the fields and the herds of cattle that provided the bulk of what we needed for food and so on.

What experiences in particular made you conscious of oppression and what made you determined to fight it?
Since childhood I lived a life, let me say a fatherless life. My father had always to be away. He used to come home for one month or two months a year and then he would go back again to the mines and the main thing that he came back with really were sweets, sometimes some clothes for us and, you see, it wasn't very much that he brought back. Sweets were quite a big thing in our lives then. But then we had to live with my mother only and we had to take care of all those things. We had to help my mother in the kitchen. We were a big family and the first of us were all boys and
traditionally its the women or girls who do kitchen work and that sort of thing but we had also to be involved there because my mother didn't have girls as first children. So we had to attend to the cattle and to the kitchen and the bringing of water. Its a very dry area that we live in. We had to attend to the fields. But the absence of my father was always on my mind and I couldn't understand why it was like that. It's only when I grew bigger and when I had to go to school that I realised what was going on. Sometimes I wrote a letter to my father to help me with my school fees and clothes but my father couldn't help me in that. So later I started asking myself questions, like why was my father really working and why, if he works, can't he provide us with the things that we needed. And of course there were other problems in other fields also. At school there were some clubs, student organisations that we organised. My eldest brother got involved in these and he was arrested, although these were not really political organisations. These were local school groups and so on. And of course in the early 1960s SWAPO was just coming up as a movement and we came to hear more and more about them. My father used to tell us about SWAPO and some of the prominent people who were involved like Toivo ja Toivo and so on — and what they were all about — about the migrant labour situation and all these things and gradually we were becoming more and more aware of the situation concerning our country.

**What kind of school did you go to?**
I first went to a day school. These were first missionary schools but later they were turned into government schools. After South Africa became a republic they came and took over all the schools and only a few schools remained still in the hands of the churches and the missionaries. So I was lucky enough to be accepted at a church school, which is a private school of the Evangelical Lutheran Ovambo-Kavango ELOK church, and I finished my secondary education there.

**Were you involved in student organising at all at the school?**
Yes, more or less. Not really at any high level. I was sometimes the secretary of the Student Christian Movement and then later we had a SWAPO Youth branch at the school. I was sometimes also the secretary of this.

**Was that the SWAPO Youth League?**
That's correct. I joined SWAPO while I was still at school in 1971 and I became a member of the SWAPO Youth League. We weren't really very active then. There were some issues. I remember those years when the International Court of Justice was still debating the Namibian issue. We got involved in writing some pamphlets protesting about the treatment we were having from South Africa and there was the time, I think in 1972, when we had go and meet some United Nations officials — a representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations. So it was that type of thing that we got involved in. And of course there were times that we were harrassed. I was arrested once, first for a day for interrogation by the South African police. I didn't even sleep there, but it was a very big thing for me then.

**You were a school student then?**
Yes, I was.

**Was that in 1971 or 1972?**
It was in 1972.

**The end of 1971/72 was the time of the general strike in Namibia. Did that affect your ideas about politics?**
Yes, very much so. We could see at close quarters the involvement of the workers,
especially the importance of the working people in the Namibian politics. I remember in between 1971 and 1972 I went to Windhoek for holidays and the Sunday evening that we arrived there was actually the eve of the big strike. The next morning, Monday, all the workers, most of them were staying in the hostels in the compounds, didn’t go to work and I remember the South African army and police coming with armoured cars and surrounding the hostels. You could see them everywhere. Well I felt very intimidated then but as time went on the strike went on. It was never broken and we came to see what was happening more closely and the determination of the workers struck us very deeply. We felt that every Namibian, especially the youth, should get actively involved in campaigning and working actively for independence.

Who were the organisers of this strike?
At that time there wasn’t any organised union or such thing. SWAPO members I think were quite involved but you find that the whole thing was really a sort of spontaneous workers’ upsurge. It just started. I think conditions had remained very oppressive for too long. The workers just started. I think most of the organisational work was done by the workers in Walvis Bay who were working in the fishing industry there, the fish factories and so on. But then there were some people campaigning amongst the workers in Windhoek too. It caught just like fire from hostel to hostel in the whole country. The miners from the North at Tsumeb, TCL (Tsumeb Corporation Ltd) and then CDM in the South and in Walvis Bay and Windhoek of course.

So would you say SWAPO activists were centrally involved in this?
Ya. You find that right from the beginning when SWAPO, even before SWAPO as SWAPO was formed or evolved in 1960, the situation of the migrant workers had always been central to the whole issue, to the whole question of Namibia’s political status. You find that these people, the migrant workers, were experiencing most of the difficulties of the oppression. And SWAPO actually started as ‘OPO’ then, which was primarily catering for the migrant workers. So the SWAPO structures were, actually, they went around the hostels. You find that the committees, the first local SWAPO committees and branches were in the hostels. They were from the migrant workers. So, the workers themselves link up everything that they do very closely with SWAPO. You find that the people who were involved here were entirely SWAPO people, although they were doing it now as workers.

Was your father involved in this strike?
Yes, my father was involved. My father was working then at the mines at CDM and they got kicked out of the job; they got deported to the countryside, to the North as a result. So he was involved. He came home and it was about a year before he could go back. He didn’t go back immediately even when the strike was later resolved, or broke, he didn’t go back immediately.

What was your first work experience, if any?
I would say that as a student starting from 1969, I was always going to Windhoek. I had an aunt there and I had always gone there and tried to look for a job in the holidays. Now there was this problem of passes. You had to have a pass. It’s a paper that permits you to be in Windhoek. There was not this freedom of movement where you could go to one part of the country from the other. You couldn’t just come to Windhoek and look for work unless you had some papers with you. But it was very difficult to obtain these. So I used to go there without a pass and I was about 17, 18, 19 in 1969, 1970 and 1971 — all the major holidays. I used to work with a certain
company, which is still in Windhoek now, they sell building materials. So we had to load and reload and take some orders, you see, to the various places where they were building in Windhoek and the one experience that I still remember, that I still have with me, was the treatment that we were getting from some people there. Generally white employees, people who were not really involved with us directly. They were not our bosses, they were not people who were our superiors, just people working in the same yard. I remember one day I was sent by our superior to go direct to the manager's office to deliver some message. I came in and I found some of these white fellows standing there. Of course they were very much older than I was. So I went in and asked in Afrikaans whether I could see the manager and this fellow just turned around and said 'who are you to see the manager?' and just kicked me right in my back and pushed me outside just like that. I couldn't understand why he was doing it. At the school we had white teachers and my experience of white people there was quite different from what I was starting to see here now. That particular person just kept pushing me around, beating me up. Sometimes just if he happened to pass me he would just maybe give a slap. And it just happened like this. It was something that was generally happening but I found it very strange that this is what our people were experiencing all the time. So later, it became impossible for me to work there because they became very strict on passes. So after school at the beginning of 1973, I came here (Windhoek) with my brother who was formerly in the mines who was now working here. He was working with some exploring group. I tried to get some work with them. I couldn't. So I went back to my old place. But then I got arrested because I didn't have a pass. I was, so they say, 'staying in Windhoek illegally', and I was sentenced to three months imprisonment. So I went to prison and we were later deported to Ondangua, because I couldn't stay in Windhoek without papers.

You were deported where?
I was taken back to the countryside, to the North where my parents live. So I later found work with the Ovambo Administration at Ondangua — that's the local 'homeland' administration. So I worked there for almost a year and then in 1974 in the middle of the year, just after the coup in Portugal, I left the country through Angola and went to Zambia.

Would you say your experience is fairly typical of the youth in the north of Namibia — not being able to find jobs, becoming involved in politics?
Yes, actually it was typical not only of the youth in the North. When I was in Windhoek, especially in 1972/73, at the beginning I thought it was the people from the North only who were victimised like this. But now in 1972, December, I think, I remember one day walking along a street and there came a police van. There was some youngsters, who one could clearly see from their features were from the central parts. Some of them were even, I think, 'coloured'. So the van just stopped there and rounded them all up, bundled them into the ground. You see they were just saying 'where's your pass', 'where's your pass', and then they were picked up and bundled into the van and we had to run in order not to be arrested ourselves. So I was actually shocked. You see my experience, my understanding, of the whole situation, was a bit limited then. I didn't understand that this was happening to every black person in the country. So this, especially now, I can say that this was more or less happening, and was the lot of each and every Namibian youth. That's why after 1974 so many youthful people left Namibia to join the SWAPO forces either in Angola or in Zambia.
So when you got to Zambia what happened then and when did you return to Namibia?
Well I went for military training with the PLAN forces and in 1975 I was back and we started operating as part of the PLAN fighters. So I was first in the East of the country, operating from the Eastern front and later, after Angola became independent, came to the North. And I went into the country and after roughly one year, in the middle of 1976 I was wounded in battle and I was picked up by the enemy forces.

Where there many 'contracts' with the South African army and police in your unit?
Ya. The contacts were very frequent. We always had contacts. But then, this was my first time that I was wounded. I was never wounded in a contact before.

What were the nature of your wounds?
My left leg was broken. I was in fact shot twice through the left leg and hit once in my left arm and I had some shrapnel. I still have some on this side of my right temple. They were using these shrapnel bullets; they split after some distance and I was hit by the shrapnel.

So were you then held in detention and interrogated and put on trial?
Yes. First I went through interrogation in the North of the country at Grootfontein at an army base and then later I was transferred to Windhoek. I was later charged, tried, sentenced and sent to South Africa to serve my sentence in prison.

Was that on Robben Island?
Ya. I was taken to Robben Island.

Were you tried along with other SWAPO members?
Not actually. I was tried alone but there were others also involved. So the day of my sentence, there were also others sentenced. So we were five in all when we left for the Island.

What date was that?
On 15 July 1977. That was the day of our sentence. But we stayed for another month before they could take us to the Island.

Did they inflict any physical or psychological violence on you when you were in detention?
Yes. Before the court. To me it was actually when I was still under interrogation in Grootfontein at the military base. They used to come regularly for about 2 1/2 months. They were coming and we were tortured. Electric shock was applied and I was generally beaten up. Though I say, maybe because I was wounded, they were sticking these needles as they were giving me injections (because of the wounds) and then the others were using these very same needles, sticking them in here between my nails and, well, asking all sorts of questions about our movement, operations and missions. And then after that I was very ill. I think for two or three days they didn't come to ask for anything. But then as I became better they came again for about three weeks. It was regular interrogation and regular torture and so on. And after that I thought they were finished with me because they actually told me that I would go to court later and I would get the death sentence. But then later they captured another comrade of ours and, well, we were together before I was captured. But our stories were very, very, completely different. They were trying to get our stories to coincide so they brought us together and then they started all over...
again with the tortures because they realised that maybe we were lying. So that was the time we were physically tortured.

**Was this done by white officers?**
Yes, white and black police and army. Actually the people who interrogated us were from the South African security police and from the military intelligence of the SADF.

**Did you get legal support for your trial?**
Yes. When I was charged, we succeeded in contacting the SWAPO people outside — that's in Windhoek — and they arranged some lawyers for us.

**So which lawyer defended you?**
I was defended by somebody called Robert Johnstone. He died last year.

**So when you were sent to Robben Island, were you sent there with these other SWAPO comrades?**
Yes, we went together with them. Actually we were accompanied by some South Africans also because, after leaving Windhoek, we didn't go directly to Robben Island. We went to a transit prison just outside Pretoria. And there we were joined by some other South African comrades of the ANC and were taken together to the Island. So we were eight in all the day we arrived on the Island.

**Did they continue to torture you?**
Not physically. Well it has happened to others on the Island but I was never physically involved in such an experience.

**How would you describe Robben Island prison?**
I would say that, after the initial adaptation, I found it quite normal as a prison. Before going to prison I imagined all sorts of things. It must be underground. It must be dark. But it wasn't underground. It wasn't dark. The cells of course were very damp. The climate of the region is very damp. It's not like Namibia. So I had probably to be adapted to that. And then the warders at that time were very unfriendly. The health care was again very, very insufficient. But, as we stayed, things were slowly improving I think. At the time of our arrival there we used to have a once-a-month chance to see the doctor. So if you had a complaint, you had to give in your name and then it was listed. And then you wait for the day the doctor arrives. And if the list is too long, and if you had entered your name later than most of the others, then you would have to wait for another turn. Right now I think people can see a doctor once every week. So there has been that type of change. Although, just as we left, there is still this situation where, if somebody got suddenly ill in the cell after lock up time, there is no way that he can be saved really because it takes about an hour and a half to two hours to summon — to have any response — if you alarm the prison warders. You find that everybody always goes off duty. There are only some security guards around the prison and if there is any alarm they have to report to the warder settlement, the prison officials officers' settlement, and this is about two to three kilometres away and they generally take their time coming! So somebody would come and see what's happening — just look through the window. And they do a report — and then they have to go back again and get some other people to come. So usually it takes about 1 1/2 — 2 hours before you really can have the help you require.

**Were you kept in a cell by yourself?**
No, I was kept in a communal cell. The Namibians, or most of them, were staying in
one section and we were about 24, sometimes more than that. But never up to 30 in our communal cell. The others of course were staying in the other cells.

**Were you allowed out every day to do things?**

No. There was a time when people could go out to work. Sometimes it was only a few who were allowed out. Sometimes, again, there was a demand that everybody should go out. So it kept on changing like that. Sometimes we had to build roads on the island. Sometimes chop wood. When I came there I think they went out — maybe its a very few times that they went out — to work in the quarry. But then the quarry simply died out. There used to be a stone quarry in the olden days. But when I was there there was a chalk quarry. We had to go and dig some of this white chalk for the holes and so on. So that was sometimes the job that we did. Sometimes we had to go to the sea and pull bamboos, sea bamboos, out. Seemingly they had a contract with Japan, or one of these countries, where they export these bamboos. So we went to pull them out. The waves were bringing them onto the shore, and then we used to pull them out of the water and then leave them there to dry. And then later we would come again and collect them and load them up into lorries and so on. And then they would be loaded up in the boat and they would go for export. Then there are some people who are building the prison.

**So would you say you had physical exercise everyday of some sort?**

Ya.

**And you had social contact with other prisoners everyday?**

Yes. In my case it was like that. We had some problems in that regard also because we asked the prison authorities to allow us to meet with the other prisoners in the other sections. There was a time when this was allowed, but then someone simply came in, the Commissioner of Prisons, and this was taken back again. As we left they seemed to be moving in that direction again.

**Were all the Namibians SWAPO members?**

Yes. They were all SWAPO members.

**And were you in contact with the SWAPO leaders who had been there since 1969?**

Comrade Andimba Toivo ya Toivo was kept separate from us. He was kept together with people like Nelson Mandela and all the other leaders of the ANC and so on. So we could rarely meet without the authorisation of the authorities. But of course we had our own ways and means. But it was not allowed.

**But nevertheless you were able to talk politics with your comrades there?**

Yes. Nobody could stop us from doing that. I mean we were staying in the cells alone and we discussed whatever we liked.

**When you look back at your training in Zambia and Angola, as well as the discussions you had in Robben Island, what were the main political conclusions you had come to at that stage about the struggle for Namibia's independence?**

Well, first of all, the necessity of the armed struggle because one slowly realises that it is only when there is real pressure on South Africa that anything can be done. And the armed struggle is an essential part in all this. And then of course as much pressure as possible from the outside world. We found, especially on the island, that the South Africans — you know, they are very, very sensitive about what the other people in the other parts of the world are saying. Sometimes we heard statements
from the apartheid leaders to the country. But I've seen that, with the general supporters, for some of the warders that we were staying with on the island, anything that comes from America, they will almost immediately feel they will have to talk about it and comment on it. So international pressure is also very important. And of course the people themselves must get involved both in Namibia and in South Africa. Whenever people stand up and do something you find there is a response from the outside world in forms of pressure and so on. The one thing that we really tried to do on the Island is to keep ourselves updated on the events. It was very difficult of course. We didn't have any records to use at the beginning. No papers, no radio. But later we tried — we even had to undergo organising other structures — and then later we won that right of getting papers and reading. So we had to keep ourselves updated. We had to improve our political understanding, awareness because only when one has that, is one able to continue in the struggle and always be able to understand the situation.

Later when you were released you were quoted in The Namibian newspaper as saying 'The workers' struggle for the advancement of their interests as a class can only be part and parcel of our wider anti-colonial national liberation struggle'. I wondered whether you and other comrades in SWAPO were discussing politics in these terms when you were in PLAN and when you were in Robben Island?

Yes, that's the general feeling. From my involvement in SWAPO initially before my arrest and on the Island, these things are always discussed. For example, take the national liberation movement as a whole — what kind of phenomenon is it? With us the conclusion is always that in a colonial situation you find that you have a whole community politically oppressed by a foreign power and in this oppression you find that the transnationals (companies) always play a very important role — sometimes not very obvious, sometimes only behind the scenes. But you find that there is a direct link between what's happening politically in a colonial society or country and the economic involvement of all these people. So you find that the struggle of the workers, actually you find that, in the struggle of the workers in a colonial situation, their problems cannot be resolved outside the general victory of all the people in the country against colonialism. So it was in that light that I made that statement.

Presumably these socialist-kind of ideas you must have discussed and read about in PLAN but what do you think the main influence was? Was it the political commissars in PLAN, or literature, or was it ideas you picked up in Namibia before you left, or were they things you discussed and read in Robben Island?

Maybe it came gradually. When I left the country I could remember the links between the 1971/72 strikes and the struggle as a whole. I could remember, for example, that one of the main causes of the strike was the migrant system. There was a contract system according to which people had to be controlled. There was some labour organisations, labour recruitment organisations such as the South West Africa Native Labour Association and these were part of the general system of colonialism. You find that this was part of the general system of obtaining cheap labour and so forth. So step by step, I think I was becoming aware of these things. And, of course, when I came to PLAN we had a greater chance of having political discussions. At our military training we always had, as part of our training, political training. We had to discuss all these things. We had to try to understand what was happening in Namibia at all levels and how all these things link up with the struggle for national liberation. And again, on the Island, of course, although we didn't have
such able resources, we were again always involved in discussions of that nature.

Did you get newspapers, or were you allowed to listen to the radio, when you were in Robben Island?
We started being allowed to have newspapers in 1981. That is after I had been there about four years. I was actually, at one time, captured outside the prison grounds and sentenced for having broken out of the prison because we had to go and look for papers at the dumping grounds outside the prison grounds. We were doing this quite frequently! But then, of course, this time we were a bit unlucky and we got arrested. So we were always trying to get newspapers even though we were not allowed to get them. It was a hell of a job trying to circulate information on the island but we did it. People were doing it. There was always this communications system. And later, of course, we were allowed to have papers and we started ordering papers through the publishers and so on.

Did you get visits by relatives or letters?
Yes. Theoretically the prison authorities allowed us to have letters, some letters a month and some visits. But in our case it was almost impossible. In our situation as Namibians we were imprisoned in a foreign country. It was very difficult for our people to come and pay us visits there. A prisoner was allowed to have sometimes up to two visits. In the case of 'lifers', those sentenced to life imprisonment, they could have up to three, I think, per month. But then, in our case, it was almost impossible, for example, for my mother to travel to Cape Town by plane. She can't even understand how these people that ... she doesn't ... I mean to go to the airport to arrange all these things. It was almost impossible for her. Later the International Committee of the Red Cross started to help us in this regard. But it was generally difficult. So you find that there were Namibians who had been there for more than 18 years without having any single visit from their people — and no letter either! But in my case I think I had three visits from members of my family and I frequently received letters.

So would you say, just to sum up, that the SWAPO comrades and the ANC comrades on Robben Island are very well informed about political affairs and what's going on in the world?
Yes, and they very eagerly follow what's happening. They always analyse the situation and try to ... you see they always have an understanding of the situation based on this close following of the events outside.

I believe you were sentenced for 15 years but you were released after 8 years. Is that right?
I was released after about 8 1/2 years. What happened was that, since 1984, seemingly the South African authorities or government started to change their opinions regarding our imprisonment. There were I think some factors, several factors, involved. First of all, the international pressure that has always been applied to them in this regard was becoming too much for them. They had this situation inside South Africa also to look at and so maybe they just felt that, just to relieve themselves a bit from the pressure, they had to do something regarding Namibian prisoners. So in 1984 there were these talks between South Africa and SWAPO in Lusaka and, just before on the eve of the talks, Comrade Toivo was released and a short while thereafter, all the people, the Namibian prisoners on the Island who were doing 20 years in prison, were also released. So that left only those who were doing life imprisonment and some of us who were not doing life but who were actually ex-guerillas from recent fightings captured in the mid-70s. So in 1985
— and of course this was partly also to give some credit to the new MPC (Multi-Party Conference) puppet government in Windhoek — we started reading in the papers that South Africa was going to allow the MPC to release us in their name; or South Africa was going to release us in the name of the MPC rather. And, as it happened we were transferred to Windhoek. Actually some of the MPC people, the so-called justice minister, Kozonguizi, came to see us once — although we rejected his visit and we didn't talk to him. But he came there, and later we were told by the prison authorities that now we are free people. So I think South Africa was moved really by two main issues there. First, to relieve the world pressure on South Africa a bit and then to give credit to — because it came as if we were released by — the puppet government in Windhoek.

So, when you were released in Windhoek, what did you do between then and April 1986 when the Steering Committee of the National Union of Namibian Workers was elected?

Well, there are SWAPO structures in Windhoek. The people are still very active, especially at the branch level. So I joined up. First we looked at the situation now, and tried to see where I could fit in. And of course the SWAPO Youth League branch, or the Youth League wing of the branch, took us in. We started with the youth, altogether with these comrades, and then it remained like that. I took part in a few meetings, some of which were disrupted by the police. I was actually also arrested at some of these. But then we started with this committee which was established to get the NUNW on its feet again. And that is how I came to be involved with the workers' committees.

What did you know about the NUNW before that?

I knew, for example, that on the Island we were trying to get all the information that we could get on trade unions in Namibia. We read about the NUNW, we heard about all the harassments that had been there. I knew for example that they had an office in Windhoek in the late 1970s and then, at one time, the office was closed by the police there and some of their office furniture, material facilities and so on were confiscated and some officials even had to leave the country. The others were detained. So I knew that there was general harrassment against the NUNW and we didn't hear much since 1980. You see they were dormant, they had gone down a bit after the harassment. So one of the things that we thought about was the organisation of the workers because it was, I think, after those initial attempts in the late 1970s, very quiet on the labour front.

Did you find that out through newspapers or just through passing on the word?

You mean in prison? The Namibian situation was our concern. There was nothing much to talk about. We had to talk about what was happening at home, what was happening in this field. We were sort of studying the situation almost every day. So this was a natural part of our discussion in prison. So what was coming to us through the newspapers was always analysed. What was coming through the radio — that's now after we had permission to listen to these things — was always analysed. And then we thought also about what maybe one could do in that situation.

Were you inspired by the unions mobilising in South Africa?

Maybe that's also a part of it. You find that in South Africa they got off the ground quite early and we know that the organised workers in South Africa are quite a solid part of the struggle there. Of course the situation tends to differ from the situation
prevailing in Namibia but the Namibian people, workers themselves, also have that long history of workers' action.

Even though they haven't been in trade unions as such? Ya, exactly.

Were there other inspirations. For example, I know that the miners' strike here in this country, Britain, was publicised in southern Africa quite a lot. Did you hear about those things?
Yes, we followed what was happening in, I think it was 1983/84 or 84/85. Yes, we were trying to follow quite closely. The one thing that really surprised us at that time regarding the miners' strike here was the steps taken by the government against the miners. It was almost like it was South Africa or Namibia. We didn't really expect that now the government in Britain could go as far as confiscating union funds and all those things. We thought unions in England were entirely free and workers could do what they felt were in their interests. But of course we were quite surprised to see some of these things happening. We were following the situation and it was very sad that, although it was a very long dispute, at the end there were I think very many problems.

I wonder if you could describe the new resurgence of the NUNW from April 1986. What are the main developments?
As I have already mentioned, we had a meeting and some of us were arrested. This was a Youth League meeting on 26 January 1986. So, most of the people who were arrested were actually miners, workers. There were some from the Outjihase mine just outside Windhoek, there were some others, and then there were people from the Youth League and several others. So after our release, we had a meeting. We were discussing the general situation in Namibia and what we could do. And then the question of the NUNW dormancy came up and we started to discuss the main causes of why there wasn't much being done on the labour situation. So from this meeting there was some suggestions that we follow up later and we called another meeting where a committee of people were elected. Most of them were the SWAPO branch, some of them were workers. Of course all those from the SWAPO branch were workers also, but I mean there were also people who were directly involved in SWAPO. So a committee was elected to start reactivating the NUNW inside the country. And then from this committee again, a smaller committee was elected which contained basically field workers and I was made head of the field workers' group. So that's how we started. There was one car that we obtained. Somebody was using a car and of course there were some agreements and we decided to use it for labour. We started to go out to some companies in Windhoek and the surrounding. We found that at some of these places, the workers had their own workers' committees still going on. At some places you had committees initiated by the companies and these were quite useless and workers were very unhappy with them. And at others again you found that there were workers' own committees, selected by the workers themselves. Of course they didn't have any links with committees outside their workplaces. So what we did was, we had discussions with these people. We would, for example, come there and start talking about the situation of the workers there. We would discuss what they usually do if they are faced by problems. Lets say, all of a sudden, a worker didn't get his wages or his wages were cut. Then they'd discuss what they would do normally. Sometimes, they'd discuss it in their committees if they had them. Sometimes again you'd find a person would stand up on his own and demand what happened to his wages — and of course he
will be dismissed, sometimes even fired from work. And then we went on to discuss the appropriate steps that workers could take in order to change the situation. And of course the workers generally agree that some sort of organisation was necessary. So we started organising illegal meetings because we had to have meetings on the sites, on the premises, without having approached management. But it went fairly well until we had quite a few committees in Windhoek and in the surroundings.

Was that the middle of 1986
Yes, that was April, May, June until August let me say.

How many workers’ committees had you organised by say August?
Oh there were many I think about 40 in all. But then there were about 28 committees all of which belonged, or were involved with, the food industries. There were people from the diary industries, the breweries, the Coca Cola plant, the meat industries, and from the hotels. So we organised a meeting. We started a meeting of people from various committees who decided to come together. At first we had church facilities, especially the Catholic church in Katutura which helped a lot. If we wanted to have a meeting they would give us their hall. So we started having these meetings between committees of the various places. People were discussing generally what they should do, proposals came, and it was decided now that there would be a big congress of the food industry workers. And of course at some places you find that some commercial people who sell food and some other things, and workers from wholesalers, also got involved in this because we also had committees there. Then in September there was the launching congress of the Namibian Food and Allied Union. That’s how it was organised, more or less. The committees that we organised were not all food industry committees. There were municipality workers involved, there were miners, there were transport people, railway workers and so on. But most of the committees were from the food and related industries. That’s how, that’s why, the Namibian Food and Allied Union was established. It was the first union to be created.

Would you say that the workers’ committees were shop floor organisations or were they compound-neighbourhood organisations or both?
No, we didn’t really go to organise on the compound level or neighbourhood. We went directly to the work places. We had some discussions before that because we looked at the way the NUNW started to organise in the late 1970s and they did it more or less at the SWAPO level. Actually they went to the hostels and they organised workers and this resulted in a situation where workers felt very strong when they were all together in the hostel. But they didn’t do much at the workplace. So, what we started in 1986, was to have a firm basis at the workplace.

Were these committees elected by the workforce in each place?
Ya, exactly, that’s what happened.

And were the workers’ committees almost like shop steward organisations which elected their own leaders?
Yes, they were elected by the workers themselves. One thing is, of course, that you find there is not very much as far as we are concerned regarding basic trade unionism. We still need to cover a lot in that direction. For example, what was happening was that we’d go to the workers in Outjihase, which is a mine. They have a hostel there, so all the workers work in one mine. We didn’t go to the workplace, to the mine; we went to the hostel because here all workers are from the same workplace. So we had a meeting with several of them. Not all of course. Some were
on duty, some were doing some other things. We met with about 200 out of 500. We started discussing generally about the situation and everybody agreed that there were lots of problems going on and something should be done. And then the ideas were coming up. Some workers were coming up with proposals. We were also coming up with proposals. It was suggested that they elect at the meeting some committee. And then the committee was elected. And at that time, when the committee was elected we proposed that now the committee should direct the further organisation of the workers. They should talk more about their problems. They should even try to get membership already at that time. These were not members before. At that time we had NUNW cards; people had cards in those days. We didn't think that normally the NUNW should have cards. But then we had these cards and we started to use them at that moment. So a person felt he belonged as a member of the NUNW. So that's what happened. And it was only later that we started talking about shop stewards and that every department on the mine had to have its own committee. Wherever a team went out alone to work, we had to organise at that level too. And we have right now, as miners, started organising at this level, the Mineworkers Union of Namibia.

When was this formed?
That was formed after the Namibian Food and Allied Workers union — the NAFAU — that was on November 23rd last year.
Debates

ON SEGMENTED AND NATIONAL LABOUR MARKETS
Jay O'Brien

It is encouraging to see activist-scholars seriously addressing the problems of the structure and dynamics of the agricultural labour force in Sudan as Abbas Abdelkarim has done in ROAPE 34. In particular, he raised important questions concerning the development of class consciousness and collective organisation among Sudanese agricultural workers which have too long been neglected. I am also happy to see a debate emerge around the propositions I formulated concerning recent and ongoing changes in the Sudanese labour force (see ROAPE 26). These involve central issues of key importance in the popular struggle for democracy in Sudan. I fear, however, that Abdelkarim's critique of my analysis does not advance our understanding very much and that it contains basic misrepresentations of my arguments and unsound uses of 'data' that require sorting out if the issues to be debated are to remain clear.

Abdelkarim addresses my characterisation of the structure of the agricultural labour force in Sudan in the 1950-75 period and transformations I argued were occurring after 1975. He appears to endorse my characterisation of the pre-1975 labour force as highly segmented in ethnic terms, with boundaries maintained through an elaborate system of labour recruitment and marked by substantial wage differentials between tasks associated with different ethnic groups. What he objects to is my suggestion that there has been any substantial change in this structure since 1975. He also seems to have some problems with my explanation of the earlier ethnic segmentation, but his position on this is less explicit. He concentrates on the presentation of my arguments in a short article in ROAPE 26 and implies that my analysis in a longer work (1980) is less defective. This is curious, for the arguments in both places are identical, the only difference being that the later article is a brief summary of the larger work which necessarily omits much of the detail of documentation and highlights central patterns at the expense of secondary variations. The answers to many of Abdelkarim's questions about my 1983 analysis are in my 1980 analysis.

In brief, I argued that the ethnic segmentation of the labour force was beginning to break down by 1975 under the impact of spreading cash needs and rapid inflation in rural Sudan at a time when capitalist expansion had thoroughly penetrated the
countryside and placed peasants and pastoralists in competition with capital for land and other resources. Rural producers increasingly approached labour markets as maximisers of returns to individual labour time rather than as members of ethnically defined patterns of social reproduction. If the old pattern had involved family group work in a low-paying job, more able-bodied members of the family had to move individually into more highly-paid, though often more strenuous, work. On the employers' side, as wage bills rose, efforts to eliminate elements of the cost of labour were made. Since the old structure of the labour force entailed expensive recruitment and transportation of workers over long distances and payments in kind (especially food) not linked to the productivity of the workers, employers felt pressures to reduce these costs and convert wages from a largely fixed cost into a fully variable cost directly correlated with productivity.

Pressures from both workers and employers thus worked together to undermine the framework of the ethnic segmentation of the labour force. Long-distance recruitment practically disappeared and transport costs became a factor in workers' calculations of their wage incomes. Wage differentials corresponding to ethnic boundaries began to change. These and other changes I characterised in terms of a shift from a system of ethnically segmented markets to a national labour market stratified on the basis of other social factors such as age, sex and nationality, plus location.

Abdelkarim takes me to task for four major errors which he sees as leading me to the mistaken conclusion that a fundamental transformation of the labour force was significantly underway: 1) changes in wage differentials have not occurred as I predicted; 2) employer recruitment of seasonal labour persists; 3) women do not play the altered role in the labour force I predicted; 4) my account of labour's social reproduction is theoretically inadequate. I shall take up each of these points in turn.

Wage Differentials

Borrowing estimates for wage rates in the Gezira Scheme and Gedaref in 1981/82 from 1984 ILO/UNHCR study, *Labour Markets in the Sudan*, Abdelkarim shows that the differences in these rates are even greater than the stable fifty per cent differential that I claimed characterised the primary division between cotton-picking and sorghum and sesame harvesting before 1975. Moreover, the differentials are substantial across comparable tasks, such as weeding, as well as between very different tasks. He takes these marked differentials as evidence that separate labour markets exist in Gezira and Gedaref and that a national labour market can therefore not be said to exist in any meaningful sense. This argument not only misconstrues my analysis but employs a peculiar notion of national labour market. My central contention was that ethnic segmentation, and wage differentials based on it, were breaking down. That wage rates in cotton-picking were rising more rapidly than those in sorghum and seasame harvesting in the late 1970s I cited as preliminary evidence. I did not predict that wage differentials would disappear, but that they would shift to a new basis. Abdelkarim offers no indication that the observed differentials in 1981/82 correspond to ethnic differences, and the fact that the differentials extend to such comparable tasks as weeding suggests that their basis must lie in more general differences between Gezira and Gedaref than crop selection or ethnicity. An apparent exception is the differential between settled and migrant labour within Gezira which he correlates with ethnic differences. Here, however, we find that 74% of settled 'labour' is involved in sharecropping
arrangements (p. 51), which certainly results in differential incomes, but hardly seems pertinent to a discussion of wage differentials. The validity of ethnic categories employed by Abdelkarim in defining labour market segments within Gezira, such as 'westerner' — which embraces heterogenous populations of Sudan's western provinces as well as temporary migrants and permanent settlers from several countries extending as far west as Nigeria and Mali — is dubious at best.

As I noted in the works Abdelkarim reviewed, and have amplified elsewhere since (see Ali and O'Brien 1984; and an article on Famine in ROAPE 33), a national market, even in a large central capitalist country such as the U.S., does not display internal homogeneity and complete internal mobility of labour. It does involve a uniform price and cost structure in the more limited sense that labour mobility across boundaries of regional markets can be expected when differentials in real wages exceed transport costs, etc. Workers do not normally undertake long-distance commuting toward markets of higher wages unless the differentials compensate them for the transport costs involved. There are other complications as well, but the basic result is that regionalised wage structures evolve around centres of employment, but always subject to adjustment in response to wage and price movements and shifting labour demand in other regions.

Thus, to claim that real wage differentials for comparable work between regions show that there is not a national labour market is to idealise capitalist markets and fail to grasp the regional structure that characterises national labour markets everywhere. The figures for wage rates and other information on labour market conditions cited by Abdelkarim suggest that the differences between Gezira and Gedaref arise from regional, not ethnic, differences. If the large wage differentials between them reported in the ILO/UNHCR study persisted over long periods it would, however, suggest that these regional markets were bounded by non-economic factors. This would represent a change from the pre-1975 ethnic segmentation of the labour force, but a different outcome than the regionalised national labour market I predicted would emerge.

Abdelkarim's data are, however, highly problematic and do not give us an adequate basis for deciding the issue. The most serious limitation of the data is one emphasised in the ILO/UNHCR's presentation of it — wage rates are estimated only for one season and a few operations in the next. We are thus not in a position to judge whether these figures represent any sort of pattern, or simply momentary fluctuations. As the report cautions (p. 52), 'Unfortunately the absence of time series data on real wage rates in Habila and in the Eastern and Central regions makes it impossible to do more than make plausible guesses about changes and trends in the supply of migrant and refugee labour.' The authors' guess is that my prediction about the weakening of non-market criteria in determining this supply was coming true in the early 1980s (pp. 11-12).

There are many other problems involved in the estimation of wage rates in Sudanese agriculture generally and in the reported figures in particular. The reported rates are for daily wages, though wages are generally paid on the basis of piece rates and/or partly in kind. There is considerable variation in the composition of the wage and in the intensity and duration of work. In my own research I found some workers who would work at phenomenal intensities for as much as 20 hours a day, earning thereby daily wages two or more times the average. Of course, they
also burned themselves out in a week or two and had to return home to recuperate before returning for another spell of work. Elsewhere, I found women working alongside men at similar rates of output, but for shorter hours due to their domestic responsibilities which took them home to prepare the midday meal an hour or two before the men left the fields. Some of them also missed the afternoon period of work altogether, staying home to brew beer for evening consumption or for sale. Comparison of the daily rates of pay for these women with their husbands' would be very misleading.

There are similar difficulties generally in comparing daily wage rates between workers paid entirely in cash and those paid mostly in kind, especially when employers pay substantial transportation costs and where reasonable estimates of the relative productivity of the different sorts of workers are lacking. Moreover, as the ILO/UNHCR study Abdelkarim cites observed, daily wage rates — no matter how carefully estimated — do not directly represent the aspect of wages which matters most to seasonal workers. They are much more concerned with income earned over the entire season. Cotton-pickers can generally earn wages for more days each season, both because the picking season for cotton is longer and because employment is more continuous and they are consequently less subject to periods of unemployment during the peak season. The ILO/UNHCR study estimated that 69 per cent of the Gedaref workforce surveyed experienced periods of from one week to one month of unemployment during the peak season (p. 58). In the context of seasonal labour markets such as these it is obvious that the number of days of work available and the costs of enduring extended periods of unemployment must be taken into account in estimating differentials in real wages.

Additional differentiating factors have been introduced or enhanced in the last decade through mechanisation and related policies which have altered the seasonal distribution of labour demand to concentrate it ever more in harvest operations and have introduced technical differentiation of tasks. Thus, for example, workers who feed mechanical threshers earn much higher wages than those who cut the grain. Such changes introduce new variables which must be taken into account in conducting survey research on wages, especially when the samples are as small as those on which the data under discussion are based, and the possible bias in their results arising from the difficulties the investigators had in overcoming the fears of workers that talking to them about their circumstances might lead to police harassment of employment problems (p. 53).

There are also indications that the peculiarities of the seasons in which the surveys were carried out influenced the results in ways that distort long-term patterns. The rains in 1981 were good and Gedaref employers in particular had to offer high wages to attract labour for the season surveyed for the ILO/UNHCR study. The following season was the first of the drought, with crop failures and shortfalls common among peasants and serving to drive many of them out in search of wage work. For the same reason, the area cultivated in Gedaref mechanised farms was substantially reduced that year, reducing labour demand at a time of increasing supply. Labour glut and high unemployment in Gedaref in 1982/83 should make us sceptical of claims that real wages there stay vastly higher than those in Gezira, or at least lead us to identify factors which could maintain the differential in a time of drought when unemployment entailed severe hardship. My inclination under such circumstances is to doubt the validity of such questionable data.
Recruitment
Abdelkarim reports that most seasonal labour in Gedaref is 'self-recruited', but that strong non-market mechanisms of recruitment were still operating in Gezira as late as 1983. I suspect that this reflects a real contrast between the two regions, but one that has a somewhat different significance to that assigned it by Abdelkarim. As I noted in 1980, The Gezira Scheme, founded in 1925, is much the oldest scheme in Sudan and is the slowest to change. Over a period of more than two generations many tenant families have built up intricate networks of relationships with families that have provided them with seasonal labour, through intermarriage and credit particularly. Where such longstanding and deep personal ties bind labour and tenants there is much more resistance to the depersonalising effects of the market. Where such relations persist, they generally serve to maintain a high proportion of wage payments in kind, especially in the forms of food and employer provision of transport to and from the scheme combined with lower piece rates. Such complex and enduring relationships are rare outside Gezira and are by no means predominant within it. But their persistence there suggests that labour markets in Gezira will probably continue for some time to differ markedly from those in the rest of the agricultural sector. This in turn suggests that studies contrasting Gezira with any single other scheme in the country will most likely fail to reflect directly the trends and patterns prevailing at the national level.

There is also some confusion in the way Abdelkarim addresses my treatment of the recruitment issue. The contrast between 'self-recruited' and 'employer-recruited' labour does not capture what I argued was occurring in job allocation. The core feature of the old recruitment system which I emphasised and argued was breaking down was the practice by employers of contracting workers in their home villages and transporting them at employer cost to the work sites. Generally, such recruitment efforts were centrally organised by scheme management or committees of tenants or investors and often paid for through advances from management. While noting that this central organisation and financing have virtually disappeared, Abdelkarim characterises job allocation in Gezira in terms of the persistence of such non-market mechanisms and employer-recruitment. Here we seem to have six of one and a half dozen of the other. In both Gezira and Gedaref, as elsewhere, most workers increasingly finance and organise their own travel to the scheme areas, where they congregate in smaller or larger market centres and meet and negotiate with potential employers. From those points they may be trucked to the actual fields in which they will work by their eventual employers. Differences in the way this process is carried out in Gezira and Gedaref arise from the differences in spatial and social organisation of the two sorts of schemes. In Gezira, tenants live clustered together in villages surrounded by their fields. Work in their small fields (5-10 feddans (= 5 acres approx.) per crop), especially in cotton-picking, is episodic — a few days of picking alternating with a few days of watering before more picking is done. This pattern of labour demand in individual plots gives rise to cooperation in labour hire by tenants, so that a given group of workers alternate between the fields of two or more tenants.

In Gedaref, by contrast, the fields are 1,000 to 1,500 feddans each, most of which is planted in sorghum. A group of workers can be employed continuously for much longer periods in such fields. Moreover, the investors do not live near their plots, but congregate in large towns where they or their agents contract workers in a much larger market place than is generally the case in Gezira. This difference in the size and characteristics of the physical labour market may have some of the sorts of
effects on worker consciousness and organisation — and ultimately on wage rates — that Abdelkarim suggests, and therefore merits further study. Nevertheless, the contrast cannot accurately be characterised in terms of 'self-recruitment' versus 'employer-recruitment' or market versus non-market mechanisms of recruitment.

I do not think that the apparent lack of labour mobility among different schemes reported in the ILO/UNHCR study and cited as significant in this connection by Abdelkarim indicates persistence of non-market constraints either. In the late 1970s I found much such movement, which I took as evidence that ethnic segmentation was breaking down. In retrospect, this appears likely to have been a transitional phenomenon arising from the attempts of people to find better incomes as they felt their earning power in familiar work declining. Once they had established new patterns based on a regionalised national wage-price structure, they would no longer have needed to move about in this way.

The Changing Roles of Women in Seasonal Labour Markets

Abdelkarim's comments on my analysis of the patterns of female participation in agricultural wage labour seem based on a serious misreading of what I said. He seems to take my point as being that women as a category are excluded from work in rainfed sorghum and sesame farms and cites Affan's (1978) report that 30% of the sorghum-harvesting workers in Habila in 1976 were women as his primary evidence against this view. What I did argue was that cotton-picking was increasingly, becoming the work of women with small children and old folks, while able-bodied men and women without young children were pressured to seek the higher individual wages generally available in sorghum-and sesame-harvesting. In confirmation, I cited a census of cotton-picking labour in Gezira in 1973 that showed an age-sex structure of that workforce virtually identical with that of the national population and indications that women, the very old and the very young were beginning to be over-represented by the late 1970s. Since then, Aricanli reports that a survey of cotton-picking labour in Gezira in 1980 showed women to comprise the overwhelming majority of the workforce.

In practice, this sort of structure would tend to result in very few women working in the sorghum and sesame harvests, for the simple reason that their most able-bodied years are generally virtually coterminous with their child-rearing years in Sudan. Affan's findings, mentioned above, were special for two reasons. First, Habila is located in Southern Kordofan, a province in which women played a much more central role in village agriculture than they did in most of central Sudan and where, consequently, more women have engaged in similar work for wages since such employment became available. Even there, however, men generally predominated in the sorghum and sesame harvests. In 1976, as Affan notes, a large part of the sorghum-harvesting workforce came from an area of central Kordofan where village crops had been destroyed by locusts. Entire villages, including women and small children, had travelled to Habila in that year to avoid immediate starvation. Most of the women found by Affan came from this source, had not been to Habila before, and were not likely to return except under similar duress.

With the narrowing of circuits of seasonal migration one could expect that larger numbers of women — to some extent even women with young children — who live very near to rainfed schemes would begin to work in those schemes rather than travelling longer distances to pick cotton. This is especially likely where — as in parts of the Gedaref area — sorghum threshing is done mechanically and manual workers are left with the less arduous task of cutting the grain from the stalks.
The Problem of Social Reproduction

The most serious criticism of my analysis Abdelkarim makes is a theoretical one which goes to the heart of my explanation of the structure and dynamics of the agricultural labour force in Sudan both before and after 1975. He asserts that my account of the reproduction of the labour force would 'appear strange to Marx' (and presumably therefore wrong-headed) because it explains wage differentials in terms of 'the level of needs of workers' themselves' (p. 50). He clearly implies here that I treat workers' wages as being determined by sets of needs they themselves decide upon and impose on their employers. This is a curious misreading of my analysis, indeed. My understanding of the process of the social reproduction of labour power is that it involves an interaction between labour and capital which, when successful, leads to labour's return to the capitalist workplace for a new round of labour after completion of each period of work. For Marx, as Abdelkarim notes, this involved not only ensuring the physical maintenance of the worker and/or provision of a replacement, but also involved a historical or social element which is the outcome of class struggle. Thus, to explain the existence of systematic wage differentials one must ask why employers must pay a higher wage to attract one type of labour than they can pay another type.

Abdelkarim's answer to this question is that the more highly paid workers obtain their higher wage as the result of their more advanced class consciousness and their (automatically?) consequently greater level of collective organisation. Where do these come from? According to Abdelkarim, they arise from the greater heterogeneity of the Gedaref workforce, its fuller dependence on wages to subsist, the concentration on larger numbers of workers in a single market, and their greater exposure to a variety of employers and other workers' experiences. All of these factors undoubtedly play roles in the formation of class consciousness, and Abdelkarim has done a service in drawing attention to these factors in Sudan. By themselves, however, they are insufficient to provide anything more than a mechanical sort of explanation of worker consciousness and organisation. Abdelkarim seems to portray consciousness as arising directly out of material circumstances without ideological or cultural mediation, or, indeed, any creative thought on the part of workers.

Abdelkarim's evidence that Gedaref workers have more developed class consciousness and collective organisation consists of their higher wages, their usual participation in larger work groups than those of Gezira workers, and their more frequent group confrontation with employers. I have already raised doubts about the evidence that Gedaref workers consistently earn higher wages than do Gezira workers, but even if they did it would be tautological to argue on that basis that they enjoyed a higher level of class consciousness unless one could point to the mechanisms of its realisation in struggle. They do often participate in larger work groups, but do not necessarily have any enduring or significant relations with others working for the same employer. In Gezira, whole kin groups often move to the scheme together, living in the same or adjacent labour camps in greater concentrations and thereby potentially having leverage as groups over larger numbers of employers than Gedaref workers can affect. Abdelkarim's contention that Gedaref workers have a record of more frequent and larger-scale confrontations with employers is given only anecdotal support and I find it highly speculative. Indeed, there is a documented history of trans-ethnic group collaboration among seasonal workers in Gezira against tenants to enforce labour contracts or extract higher wages which dates at least from the 1950s (see O'Brien
Both areas lack any sort of formal trade union organisation among agricultural workers, but in Gezira there was at least a strong, if short-lived, movement to organise seasonal labour in one union with tenants in the 1950s, and ‘sheikhs of migrants’ — members of the workers’ home communities — for a long time acted as leaders and representatives of comparatively large groups of workers (even if sometimes sacrificing group interests to their own benefit). There is certainly no evidence that workers in Gedaref enjoy any substantial long-term advantage in bargaining power that can withstand the effects of annual fluctuations in peasant yields or the more serious drought of the mid-1980s. The ILO/UNHCR study, in fact, concluded that the employers in Gedaref enjoyed a stronger bargaining position (p. 51).

In addition, there has been a new factor, especially at work in Gedaref, which has undermined class cohesiveness among seasonal workers in ways which Abdelkarim does not consider. This is the rise in the employment of Eritrean and Ethiopian refugees as aliens deprived of the rights of Sudanese and stigmatised as foreigners. These refugees made up 19% of the workers surveyed for the ILO/UNHCR study (p. 59). Contrary to Abdelkarim’s suggestion that this element introduces more advanced forms of worker consciousness and collective organisation, the pattern of settlement and regulation of refugees has clearly introduced — or extended — a key dimension of stratification of the workforce. Many refugees in the Gedaref area occupy settlements not equipped with land for cultivation, and those enjoying access to land have very small plots and insecure tenure upon them. Their cohesiveness and collective action, rather than representing the seeds of proletarian unity, represent a defensive adaptation against the general hostility and discrimination they have faced in Sudan — dramatically illustrated by the burning of an entire refugee settlement on the fringes of Gedaref town a few years ago. Their internal solidarity thus reflects in large part government’s manipulation of nationality as a wedge driving sections of the agricultural working class apart.

Class struggle is certainly central to the dynamics of the labour force, and is undoubtedly uneven in its manifestations, in rough correlation with the unevenness of capitalist development in Sudan. So far in Sudan’s rural areas it has generally taken the form of the sorts of small class struggles E. P. Thompson emphasises — largely in the absence of articulated class consciousness and formal organisation. Until 1975 these worked themselves out within a framework defined by the seasonality of employment and the necessity of capitalist expansion in forms compatible with the maintenance of village production to meet most of the subsistence requirements of the workforce. These conditions imposed constraints on capital as well as labour in that incorporation into the wage labour force had to be compatible, in the main, with the maintenance of the core social relations organising village production and reproduction. This is why the structure of the labour force was primarily ethnic in form, and this is what provided the central axis of variation in patterns of wage work in terms of the roles of women in village production. Groups in which women and children could participate in cotton-picking could be made to accept lower wages. Groups which excluded women had to be paid higher wages if their labour was to be obtained and village production perpetuated. What has changed since 1975 under the impact of inflation, proliferating cash needs and increased competition between capitalist farming and peasant and pastoral production is the ability of family group cotton-picking wages to sustain a family and the ability of men alone to sustain families in which women
are excluded from wage work. These are the central facts which must be accounted for and which define the space within which current class struggles are waged. My predictions, which on the whole seem so far to have been accurate, represented projections into the future of the trajectories, from among the conceivable possibilities that these struggles were actually taking at the close of the 1970s. I suggested that these struggles would take increasingly direct class forms, but seemed likely to be mediated by regionalisation of class confrontations and mystification over the nationality issue. Abdelkarim poses some questions which can potentially help focus our investigations of this transformation and anticipate additional dimensions to the struggle, but gives little compelling reason to believe that it is not occurring.

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Reviews


Any attempt at producing an introductory text to a discipline runs four major risks: a) inadequate treatment of the subject matter; b) over-generalisation; c) failure to develop (or present) the 'right' theoretical perspective; d) finally, relating to the last point, a non-thematic presentation.

With regard to the first point Foster-Carter has succeeded in producing a fine and easily read introductory text to a discipline that is usually shrouded in technical jargon that renders discussion of the sociology of development one grand soliloquy. After an introductory chapter consisting of definitions and a descriptive taxonomy of underdeveloped societies, Chapter Two deals with theoretical issues. Despite brief analyses of Warren's Imperialism: Pioneer of Capitalism and Barrington-Moore's 'routes to the modern world', the reader is left with the impression that sociological theories of development are either of the modernisation or dependency varieties. In succeeding chapters meticulous attempts are made to verify the relevance of both perspectives with regard to such issues as: industrialisation, urbanisation, rural development, demographic change, health; education, and women and development. For example, in Chapter Three, entitled 'Industrialisation', we are told that 'the "stagnationist" thesis of dependency theory — i.e. Frank's extreme view, that no further progress is possible anywhere in the Third World — has been definitely disproved by the experience of the NICs (New Industrialising Countries).' (p 32) In the discussion on the chapter on health a similar verificatory conclusion is arrived at, except that this time it assumes the form of a balance sheet:

My own view is probably clear enough from the foregoing discussion: the Third World's lop-sided, 'cart before horse' acquisitions of Western-style curative medicine without its preventive complement is a rather good example of the sort of thing dependency theory is on about ..... The onward march of such statistics as rising life expectancy and falling infant mortality testifies to global progress .... from this broad picture, modernisation theory might draw some comfort ... (p90).

On the point of over-generalisations, Foster-Carter's work points to the specificities of various Third World formations. For example, not only are there the 'four little tigers' (Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong and South Korea) which, in terms of contribution of industry to GDP, are more industrialised than some First World nations (Warren); but there are industrial giants such as India (among the top ten
industrialised nations), Brazil and Argentina. Various cultural differences such as religion and the status of women are noted. For example, Africa, which is often treated as a monolithic-cum-primordial formation, is shown as heterogeneous, and at different stages of development. Thus he observes:

In many parts of Africa, women traditionally had more power and status than was the case in much of South and East Asia, or even in Europe. They had major socio-economic roles, as farmers, producers of craft goods, and traders. Also, women often participated in political decision-making through their own organisation. Some societies had female chiefs (p107).

The problem with the monograph stems from Foster-Carter's attempt to explain the rapid industrialisation of the NICs, especially his 'four little tigers'. Foster-Carter's abandonment of Marxism (see p. viii), leads him into a neo-Weberian explanation of the rapid industrialisation process in South Asia. Thus, the common Confucian cultural heritage of the 'four tigers' has led to the articulation of a 'Confucian ethic'. However, as was promptly noted in the text, this kind of explanation does not take us far, since it cannot explain the 'Brazilian Miracle' in a society dominated by catholicism.

Any viable explanation of the industrialisation process of the NIC will have to be premised on the internationalisation of capital. It is not the 'Confucian ethic' that attracts capital to the 'four tigers', it is the fact that capital can move into these formations where labour is cheap (thanks to Draconian labour laws) in order to augment profit. As Foster-Carter notes, quoting from Diane Elson and Ruth Pearson's work on the 'world market factory', surplus value from the 'four little tigers' is appropriated at the expense of the material subordination of women as a gender group. A point which can hardly be accommodated in any analysis of the 'Confucian ethic and the spirit of dependent capitalism.' Despite these theoretical and thematic criticisms, the author, it must be said, has succeeded in producing a most invaluable introductory text for those in further education pursuing 'A' levels, or first year degree courses, or those who are looking for brief insight into the labyrinth known as the Third World.

A.B. Zack-Williams

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Angola to the 1990s: The Potential for Recovery by Tony Hodges, Special Report Economic Intelligence Unit NO. 1079, January 1987. £85 (25% academic discount)

The EIU's regular reports on Angola have gained a general reputation not least among Western businessmen and bankers as the best, and often indeed the only, source of reliable information on the country's current economic and politico-military situation. Last year their author, Tony Hodges, was able to make his first return visit to the country since October 1975, when as a journalist in the frontier area with Unit Forces he 'scooped' the headline news of South Africa's first major invasion. During his recent visit he was able to interview senior government officials, collect unpublished statistics from economic ministries, and renew his own impressions of the country and its people. Reading his special report after having recently worked two years in Angola, I found it pulled together a lot of information about situations and developments which I had observed but about which I had no generalised knowledge, given the almost complete lack of economic data and analysis published within the country. This is not for any 'paranoid'
security reasons but because of a lack of felt need and a shortage of economists and administrators able to produce such data. The Report therefore represents a very useful addition to our knowledge and understanding of this Frontline state.

The Report assembles a wealth of information about the production situation in various sectors of the economy, especially the oil and diamond mining industries. It makes a probing analysis of the country's balance of payments and foreign debt position. But regretfully it omits to say anything about the availability and level of skill of the Angolan workforce. Two dominant themes underlie the data presentation. The first is that Angola has enormous potential for economic development, notably in its foreign-currency-earning oil industry and its food-producing agricultural sector. The second is that, apart from the well-defended enclave oil industry, Angola's production has been badly affected and its trading network disrupted by South Africa's repeated invasions, incursions and commando raids and by Unita's attacks on mines, factories and power lines and its landmining of farming areas and major road and rail links between industry and agriculture as well as between seaports and the hinterland economy. Once peace is secured, but only then, can Angola's prospects be described as excellent.

The Report's assessment of the MPLA government and Unita is quite clear — and important in view of its business readership: the MPLA runs the country and, confident of final victory over aggression, will not compromise its national independence; in contrast Unita, while having a terrible capacity to destroy, thanks to South African and U.S. logistical support, exercises virtually no administrative control, has no political programme other than racialism and is discredited as the surrogate of apartheid South Africa.

Overall, the Report makes a positive assessment of independent Angola's development in face of extreme underdevelopment and military destabilisation. The main conclusion it draws for its target audience is that favourable opportunities exist for Western firms in the field of export sales, particularly of oil industry equipment, and foreign joint-venture investment. This certainly shows better judgement of where Western business interests lie than the Reagan Administration's ban last year on U.S. export credits to Angola, its pressurising of U.S. oil companies to cease operations there, and its renewed supply of military equipment to Unita in an effort to destroy the Angolan economy.

The Report also relays a fair amount of rather unanalytic information about new policy measures adopted last year to raise the extremely low levels of agricultural, mining and manufacturing production. Developed over the last couple of years, they primarily affect foreign investment, pricing practice and relations between the state and the private peasant farming sector. Since the 'target audience' of this review is likely to be particularly interested in Angola's economic development towards socialism which is the proclaimed goal of the MPLA government, I want to look more closely at this new economic policy — such as it is.

In agriculture many of the state farms have proved unviable with low levels of output and in need of subsidy. Peasant farmers for their part have more or less reverted to subsistence with some local sales. As a consequence, and despite the country's rich agricultural potential, large amounts of food for the town and the bulk of primary materials for industry have had to be imported. The reasons for this are understandable: the mass exodus of Portuguese farm managers, traders and consumers, combined with South African and Unita attacks on farms, road and rail
links to the towns. The situation, however, was also tolerated to a certain extent because of an ideological commitment to state farms as socialist enterprises — and because oil revenues were available for financing substitute imports. Now, however, in order to improve agricultural production and marketing, the government has begun to hand over many of the state farms to peasant families and cooperative associations and is setting up sales-and-technical-advice centres for servicing them. It has also increased the availability of farm implements and consumer goods for sale to peasant farmers, largely through increased import allocations, as an incentive to them to increase their surplus produce and sell it to the state.

In mining and manufacturing, production has dropped substantially below pre-independence levels and the government has therefore decided to seek greater foreign investment. The diamond mining industry which has been badly hit by Unita attacks both on the mines and on the vital road supply link with the port of Luanda — and where output is now a bare five per cent of the pre-independence level — is being reorganised into separate concessions, similar to those in the oil industry. It will be offered on contract to foreign mining companies on the basis of production-sharing agreements. This year too the government is holding an international donors’ conference to invite participation in the rehabilitation of production in south-west Angola in accordance with the regional development plan. Various other possibilities are being explored in other areas of the economy.

In the complex area of pricing policy, the main problem, given the severe shortage of goods, is an extreme disparity of prices between the ‘official’ — state and company — sector, on the one hand, and the ‘parallel’ — private, unincorporated — economy of peasant farmers, market traders and artisans, on the other. In the official sector, prices are fixed at a low level, chiefly in order to subsidise essential consumption; while in the private sector it is virtually impossible to impose price controls. In this situation the latter bears the full brunt of inflation caused by persistent and frequently large budgetary deficits which are mainly due to the extensive subsidising of production and employment in state enterprises. The resulting price disparities — for example, between the low wages of state employees and parallel market prices, or between state purchasing prices and peasant producers’ preferred selling prices — not only impede the exchange of goods between the two sectors but also cause labour and goods to be diverted, legitimately or illegally, from the official to the parallel economy and encourage the growth of inefficient barter trade. (Anecdotally, the situation is fascinating!). The government has therefore taken a decision to scrap price controls except in a few essential cases and to end subsidies to state enterprises under the 1987 budget.

Because of a similar substantial disparity in the value of the national currency and the dollar to which it is aligned, the government has also decided in principle to devalue the kwanza with the primary aim of encouraging non-oil exports.

How should these policy changes be evaluated? Do they promote the socialist option or do they yield to neo-imperialist and nascent capitalist pressures? Does the dismantling of state farms mean the abandonment of socialist agriculture or is it rather a realistic recognition of the need to switch land and export-revenue resources to the vast mass of non-‘kulak’ peasants in the reasonable expectation that this will enable them to increase production and will, very importantly, incorporate them in the state trading network? Does the attempt to expand foreign investment mean a surrender to neo-colonial exploitation or is it a realistic
recognition of the urgent need, in a situation of severe shortage of foreign exchange, to employ foreign capital and technology under the firm control of the state in order to restore production levels? Do the price measures mean the adoption of IMF-type pricing and exchange rate policies that will on the one hand raise the basic cost of living for Angolans but on the other increase the supply of cheap raw materials and minerals to the industrialised countries or is it a necessary adjustment of prices to reflect costs, as is happening in many established socialist countries?

Questions such as these about the direction of economic policy, which is ultimately determined by the socio-economic impact of specific policy measures, are important in trying to assess progress towards socialism in a particular country and the current 'balance of forces' between the two world systems. In the case of Angola it is not yet possible, in my opinion, to come to any final conclusion about the new trend of policy. This is partly because many decisions are still in the process of being implemented or in many cases are still awaiting implementation — as in the crucial area of pricing policy which fundamentally determines relations between worker and peasant, state and private sector, and the national and international economy. After all, 'the proof of the pudding is in the eating' not in the recipe — though in fact even recipes may still be under debate in policy-making circles.

The difficulty in reaching a conclusion also stems, however, from a lack of sufficient information on overall economic strategy. More Soviet-style 'glasnost' — i.e. better provision of information for public discussion — would be helpful here! In fact, Angola has an annual National Plan, unpublished, and is preparing a two-year plan as a component of a long term development strategy for 1987-90, and also has regional development plans for Cabinda province, unpublished, and for south-west Angola (for which sectoral studies have been published by Dar Al Handasah Consultants/UNDP). It should therefore be possible for the Angola planning ministry to produce a coherent, comprehensive statement of its overall development strategy as a framework in which to judge the new policy measures. Such a statement would provide some indication about what plans exist, for example, to improve the performance of the key state sector or to promote industrialisation on the basis of the country's rich oil and gas resources as essential foundations for development of the national economy towards socialism.

However, even though the new economic policy is not yet fully explicit, there are certain fundamental factors in Angola's position which strongly suggest that the MPLA government will maintain its socialist option. First and foremost, the Angolan people suffered bitterly from colonial exploitation and have fought long and hard to defend their national independence. In this respect, the government's principled decision to accept Soviet and Cuban military assistance against South African and neo-imperialist aggression has been and still is crucial to its ability to resist. Secondly, the government has resolutely avoided incurring a high level of indebtedness to Western bankers which could lead to the imposition of IMF policies restricting the import of much-needed goods and services even when oil export earnings have fallen, as in the early 1980s and again now in 1986-7. Finally, the government retains state control of the country's resources, not least its vital oil revenues. Moreover, there certainly does not appear to be any evidence of a class potential for capitalist development within the country (though clearly the development of a working class is also very weak).

It would nevertheless be wrong to ignore the heavy pressure on the Angolan economy caused by the cumulative effect of military destabilisation and the present
serious loss of hard-currency oil export earnings owing to the halving of the oil price last year. Nor should one underestimate the efficient business practices of Western multinationals (including 'creative accounting' and bribery) designed to impose their own conditions of exploitation in return for their investment.

What is very clear is that, if Angola is to develop its rich economic potential and if it is to develop towards socialism, it needs peace which ultimately depends on the overthrow of the apartheid regime in South Africa.

Jenny Warren

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Industrial Relations in Developing Countries: the Case of Nigeria By A.K. Ubeku, (Macmillan Press, London, 1983)

For the purpose of this review the whole book will be assessed under three headings — descriptive, comparative and evaluative. This follows the categories used by the author himself. His main task in writing the book was 'to trace and analyse critically the development of industrial relations in Nigeria and specifically to determine what system has developed in Nigeria and to evaluate its prospects' (p.xvii). He achieves this, to a large extent, by describing the evolution of an 'integrative' industrial relations system in Nigeria from its inception in the British imposed voluntary system, in which the main actors, employers and employees, were 'free' from government intervention to bargain over wages and other conditions of employment. But as this alien 'Anglo-Saxon' model never really worked in Nigeria, the government formally decided in 1975 on a new labour policy which gave up the role of the State as a referee and sought instead to become an active "partner-in-progress" for the development of our country'. The author compares this new 'partnership' approach with similar models elsewhere, especially 'co-determination' in West Germany which he contrasts with the totalitarian State controlled communist model of the USSR and finally the hybrid models (with elements of both voluntarism and State control) forged in most developing countries.

At the descriptive and comparative levels, the book is useful (even instructive) as an introductory textbook. Further, I think it achieves the author's basic objective which was to see 'whether a new system of industrial relations had developed in Nigeria or not'. But it is at the evaluative level that the book begins to run into difficulties. Some of its explanations of events and actions, e.g. those of the actors or participants (unions, employers and government) in the new integrative system, are questionable. His less explicit assumptions and interpretations are also open to criticism. For example, his analysis of industrial conflicts clearly reveals a managerial bias just as the whole corporatist system which he 'discovered' and described as 'integrative' reflects his faith in the institutions of collective bargaining to accommodate and resolve industrial conflicts. This arrangement is in fact very close to 'institutional pluralism'. Perhaps, more offensive, from the workers' point of view, is his silence on such crucial issues as the effects of technology on industrial relations, the influence of foreign and domestic capital and capital's primary motive of extracting surplus value from labour. His omission of these issues is understandable, being himself the managing director of one of the transnationals operating in Nigeria (Guiness Breweries Nigeria Ltd). Hence his liberal reformist approach inevitably assumes 'eternal capitalism' and accepts the
normal’ division of labour along mental/physical and management/employee lines in Nigerian industry.

**Descriptive Critique**

The evolution of the Nigerian industrial relations system can be usefully divided into two main periods: the colonial and the post-colonial. The colonial apparatus required domestic labour to service expatriate colonial officials. British merchants also needed porters, warehousemen and some middlemen to facilitate their business transactions. Such workers were readily recruited from the ‘reserve army’ of unemployed and propertyless, previously ‘displaced’ by the social dislocation caused by slavery and its abolition. These first recruits into the colonial service had no property of their own, were stripped of access to the traditional means of production (land) and had been deprived of the traditional protective kinship system. They were the first Nigerian wage-labourers (initially constituting a semi-proletariat) and as such constituted the forebears of the modern urban industrial proletariat.

This general pattern was repeated in other parts of West African colonies — the Gold Coast (now Ghana), Sierra Leone, Gambia, etc. With the increasing need by colonial administrations for specialised labour, the previously amorphous mass of workers became differentiated into clerks, constabulary, railway workers, etc. These were the nucleus of the future civil servants.

The first formal unions to develop were the Civil Service Union, founded in 1912, followed by the Nigerian Railway Native Staff Union in 1919. Exactly how these came to be founded is not analysed, although Ubeku contests the theory ‘that experience (elsewhere) e.g. in Sierra Leone, greatly influenced the development of trade unionism in Nigeria’ or that they ‘were formed just to conform to what workers in Sierra Leone had done’. He contests, rightly I think, this externalist theory and posits an internalist one,

that in an attempt to protect themselves against the uncertainties of employment, the workers in a number of government establishments started to form themselves into associations... that they were formed for the protection of the interests of their members and the word “native” is clearly indicative of the implied struggle against the foreign employer (pp.59-60).

What was the response of the employer (i.e. the colonial government) to all this? Surprisingly, it was one of confirmation and encouragement. As early as 1930 Lord Passfield was advocating the recognition of trade unions in the colonies to the British Parliament. Ubeku paraphrases him, ‘the advances made in the economic and social conditions in the colonies had created a situation favourable to the development of unionism’ (p.60). The 1938 Trade Union Ordinance was subsequently passed not for this reason, however, but because the alternative to union recognition ‘will be their being swallowed up and converted to political uses in a wider demand for self-government and independence’ (Tudor Davies Commission Report, 1945). Thus, the fear of the combined forces of nationalism, and workers’ resistance was serious enough to provoke a positive reaction from the British Parliament. At one stroke, union recognition brought trade unionism under the control of the colonial government and, by the familiar argument of keeping industrial relations separate from politics, effectively deprived the nationalist movement of a base of mass support. Ubeku, however, fails to grasp such implications of British recognition of the early Nigerian trade unions. His own interpretation persists in taking things only at face-value.
The immediate effect of the 1938 Ordinance was a rapid growth of trade unions in Nigeria, most of which at this early period were spasmodically organised bodies of workers which came to life to claim a cost of living allowance and vanished immediately after gaining an award. There was no such thing as collective bargaining in the sense of a negotiation and agreement over wages and other conditions between the employers or their representatives and trade union officials. That belonged to a later stage.

The unions' instrumental attitude culminated in the first General Strike in Nigeria in 1945, which after 45 days secured for the workers their immediate economic goals. This event also brought all the unions and workers together for the first time and its success drove home the need for solidarity. Consequently, several attempts were made to forge a centre for all the disparate unions in the country.

Occasionally, events occurred which prompted a temporary unity. One involved the colonial police shooting 11 striking miners in Enugu coal mine in 1949. A second was the death of a prominent Nigerian labour leader in 1974 (J.A. Oduleye), whose burial ceremony occasioned warring labour leaders resolving to bury their differences and unite 'to form a single national centre which shall defend, protect and promote the interests of the workers' (Apena Cemetery Declaration, 1974). The NLC (Nigerian Labour Centre) was formed in 1975 as a result of the merger of the four existing trade union centres. In the even, however, it collapsed soon afterwards.

This brings us to the second stage of the evolution of the Nigerian system of industrial relations. It will be recalled that the stated aim of Ubeku was 'specifically to determine what system has developed in Nigeria and to evaluate its prospects' (p.xvii). However, before turning to this it is necessary to examine briefly what the new system developed out of, what is being replaced and by what.

We have seen how the colonial government granted a legal recognition to trade unions in 1938 in order to control them. Subsequently, such collective bargaining structures as arose tended to be routinely by passed when tribunals or commissions of enquiry recommended the awarding of COLA (Cost of Living Allowances). Indeed throughout the colonial period and for some time after formal independence this method of doing industrial relations, i.e. through the institutionalisation of 'wages and salaries' commissions, seemed to be the unique way of conducting industrial relations in Nigeria. Thus, voluntarism in this realm never became established in Nigeria. Instead, a new system was formally established in 1975 which Ubeku describes as an integrative approach.

**Evaluative Critique**

As mentioned previously the most contentious part of Ubeku's book is that offering an interpretation of the Nigerian industrial relations system. Even its description as an 'integrative approach', smacks of value-judgement. Ubeku clearly approves of the arrangement by which labour is integrated with capital through the help of the State. He argues, at several points, that the new labour policy of 1975 which established government's active participation and various institutional frameworks constituted an attempt to minimise conflict and encourage economic development, 'to harness the efforts of all citizens in the overall development of the country for the benefit of all', or 'to develop practical patterns of industrial relations that can stand the strains of rapid industrialization' (p.191)
His unitary perspective, favouring 'the promotion of labour/management cooperation' (p.191), leads him to view industrial conflict as a harmful, pathological occurrence 'capable of destroying society' (p.191). Though conflict may not be eliminated, at least it may be contained by some 'suitable institutional frameworks for the effective prevention and expeditious settlement of labour disputes' — through such devices as compulsory arbitration aided by the Industrial Arbitration Panel or the National Industrial Court. Thus, for him the Nigerian 'system of Labour Courts designed to integrate all parties in the industrial relations system' is 'opposed to the former dysfunctional approach in industrial relations' (p.187).

Again, Ubeku sees things from his managerial viewpoint:

the reorganisation of Nigerian trade unions and the establishment of National Joint Industrial Councils (NJICs) for industry-wide collective bargaining, the government monitoring and regulatory role, evidenced by its incomes policies, etc... can be considered positive and appear clearly to provide a more stabilized system of industrial relations in the country (p. 192).

Quite apart from the larger issue raised by an attempt to integrate or incorporate workers into a system that functions only to exploit them, and/or the question of thereby preserving and perpetuating a system of structural inequality, it is questionable whether the new method of institutional tinkering can achieve the goals they are set up for, except perhaps in the short run. Periodic capitalist economic crises and accompanying social strife, experienced even in those industrialised societies with well established 'institutional frameworks' so admired by Ubeku, are evidence of the futility of liberal reformism. Both pluralism, which Ubeku dismisses and the integrative approach which he commends, are incapable of reconciling the inherent contradictions which give rise to conflict in modern capitalist societies. At best, institutional frameworks provide only temporary relief, through partial amelioration of the conflict that continues to threaten the stability of society.

As Ubeku himself asserts, behind the Nigerian industrial relations system is a 'need for increased investment, increased productivity and most importantly, a stable political and industrial relations climate'. No mention is made of the needs of the workers who generated the capital/profit for such investment which may not be for increased productivity, but rather personal growth and social and psychological fulfilment at work and in society at large. Although Ubeku recognises that 'there is no guarantee that the government economic strategies, aims and objectives will always coincide with those of labour' (p.192), he goes on in the same paragraph, to describe workers' aspirations and opposition to the alienating conditions of modern industrial (factory) production, as a 'problem' on which the government ought to clamp down. He sees a danger in the newly centralised and 'strengthened' Nigerian trade unions as being capable of using 'their power to thwart the achievements of government objectives of economic growth' (pp.192-3). Trade unions are therefore portrayed not as organisations of workers with different, but equally legitimate aims, objectives and aspirations as capitalist enterprises. They are instead portrayed as potential wreckers of government policies and as an irresponsible force in society. It is Ubeku's view that they must accordingly be controlled by the government.

In a typically managerial vein, Ubeku says that 'the assessment of success or effectiveness of the trade unions in Nigeria should not be based solely on how much pressure they bring to bear on the government to make changes in social, economic
and political spheres, but rather on how much influence they are able to bring to bear in the process of economic growth and development' (p.193). Further, 'the role of trade unions in Nigeria, especially during this period of rapid industrialisation, should be to cooperate with the government in its efforts to improve the lot of all interest groups in society' (p.193). Ubeku places no such demands on the other side of industry. Yet, it is precisely the employers (or the managerial class) who, through their collusion with foreign capital, are responsible for the drift abroad of resources essential for the development of Nigeria.

Curiously, having praised the virtues of the new 'integrative approach' and having rejected voluntarism as unworkable in the unique socio-cultural environment of Nigeria, Ubeku ends up supporting the employers' demand (through NECA, Nigerian Employers Consultative Association, in January 1981) for a restoration of free collective bargaining, arguing 'that employers and trade unions [be] allowed a free hand to negotiate within wide parameters predetermined by governments' (p.195). And 'that such predetermined frontiers of collective bargaining' should be set with public interests and government economic policies in mind. What is needed, therefore, is some form of regulatory measure which, in the Nigerian circumstances, must be preferred to a laissez-faire approach. 'Determination of wages and salaries cannot be left entirely to the outcome of free collective bargaining' since 'inflation can be aggravated by uncontrolled wages' (p.194). The confusion and contradiction is endless.

One idea, however, is clear from Ubeku's muddled reasoning. It is that since the 1975 reform (involving the reorganisation and centralisation of Nigerian trade unions), Nigerian trade unions, according to Ubeku, suddenly acquired the 'ability to negotiate on an equal footing with employers' (p.192). Such a laughable illusion of parity of power between capital and labour must be unique to Nigeria. For elsewhere the enormous gulf between capital and labour is a reality which even the best organised and the most centralised trade unions cannot forget or ignore. The power of capital to call the tune, to discipline labour and even to erode or destroy the whole basis of trade unionism (through such strategies as monetarism, redundancies, etc. that lead to high rate of unemployment, and the movement of investment capital to non- or weakly unionised countries is a well recognised phenomenon.

Comparative Critique
Ubeku compares the Nigerian industrial relations system with those of a number of countries, especially West Germany, which he regards as effectively containing the strains of conflict. Nigeria he suggests, can learn much from the experiences of other countries, including the compulsory arbitration method and legally enforceable collective agreements, as practised in the USA, Australia and elsewhere. His admiration for legal mediation, as part and parcel of State intervention in industrial relations generally, stems, as we have seen, from his basic, sometimes patronising attitudes towards trade unions whose leaders and membership he regards as needing training and education along corporatist lines in order to function properly. The State and its coercive apparatus (the police, the judiciary, etc.) are in turn seen as necessary to enforce a measure of integration of labour into capital.

Ubeku has written an introductory text of the system of industrial relations in Nigeria. His description of the system is useful, his comparison with other systems
is relevant but of limited utility, since none chart any new path for the betterment of the conditions of the working people in Nigeria. Ubeku's assessment and evaluation of the system of labour relations in Nigeria is a logical conclusion of his bourgeois outlook. Perhaps one can expect no better from the Managing Director of Guiness (Nigeria) Ltd.

Tunde Arogundade


This volume, it is claimed, is the first 'comprehensive book on the politics, economics and society of the Marxist regime in Ghana' (p.v), which has been the cause of a 'great deal of mystery and confusion amongst analysts, (p. xi). Donald Ray attempts to lift the veil by explaining the coming to power of Flight-Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings and the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) and reviewing the regime's policies between 1981-86.

A central argument of the book is that the PNDC has been a vehicle for various civilian revolutionary organisations. From late 1982 it was dominated by the New Democratic Movement (NDM), following the ousting of its main rival, the United Front (UF) of the June Four Movement and the People's Revolutionary League of Ghana which wanted 'to establish full socialism immediately'. However Rawlings and other 'pragmatic' Marxists have been content to take the revolutionary path slowly and surely and owing to appalling economic conditions to adopt a version of the Soviet Union's 1921 New Economic Policy (NEP), implying a grudging acceptance of internal capitalists, private agriculture and external financial assistance in the form of IMF/World Bank loans. Set-backs have nearly stymied the regime's ability to conduct progressive policies. These have been put in abeyance until such time as economic recovery takes place. Whilst the acceptance of the IMF 'heresy' was the subject of 'intense' debate within the PNDC and without, no serious threat to the stability of the regime has developed and, by implication, the popularity of the regime remains high. Consumer goods have reappeared in the markets and economic conditions for 'ordinary' people have eased, whilst 'considerable efforts' have been made to address problems. Ray asserts that it is the PNDC's challenge to see if it can use private business to promote growth at both micro- and macro-levels, as well as to facilitate social justice for the 'rest of the society'. Whilst the situation remains fluid, the December 31st revolution has provided room for manoeuvre and experience in governing 'for those concerned with social justice', although the goal of socialism remains distant (pp. 153-56).

Within the book, then, lie two separate if related arguments: first, that post-revolution Ghana is a 'moderate' or 'pragmatic' Marxist state and second, that apparent government proclivities to trim revolutionary goals have been due to a combination of economic disasters, slower than expected political advance and a shortage of reliable political cadres. That Ghana is Marxist Ray justifies by allusion to pre-December 31st political developments and specifically to the galvanising effects of Rawlings' first period in power between June-September 1979, when he was the head of the populist Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). Ray asserts that this period was the first chance for the 'organised left' to taste power since the overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah in 1966, and the catalyst for revolutionaries to move from relative isolation into active political movements. In
this process 'Marxism... gained ideological ascendancy', whilst the AFRC government served as an example of 'what revolutionaries should and should not do when exercising power: the possibility of state power thus dangled like a tempting apple before the left...' (pp. 39-40).

Elsewhere in the book, however, he claims that when the December 31st action took place the Marxist proto-parties were ill-prepared and unable to exploit the conditions (p. 153). This apparent confusion may be illustrated by reference to several factors which Ray is determined to downplay in his attempts to portray the PNDC as a civilian Marxist regime. The first and most important is that the action which propelled the PNDC to power was a military coup in which civilian input was relatively slight. Although the seven-person PNDC included three civilians — only one of whom was a political radical — this did not reflect the alleged influence of the left so much as Rawlings' desire to build a broad-based coalition. Given that the coup had overthrown a democratically elected civilian regime which had ruled for little over two years and whose legitimacy and popularity had not reached rock-bottom despite many failures, it was hoped that the intended coalition would attract substantial support. Secondly, the objective conditions necessary for socialist revolution were absent. The process of class formation was incomplete and inherent contradictions necessary to form a basis for the socialist option had not sharpened sufficiently, whilst the lack of a deep rooted and widespread socialist tradition within Ghana's individualistic society meant that even the recognition of the need for structural reform which revolution would bring was missing. Finally such had been the economic deprivations of the 1970s under two military regimes that most people were less concerned about the ideological direction of any government than with the establishment of a regime in which the leaders were honest and prepared to listen to people's grievances and, above all, to deliver 'the goods' — by improving living conditions insufferable for nearly everyone. The dominant emotions were weariness and cynicism amongst the population. With these factors present it was not realistic to expect socialist revolution, least of all led by a mere 750-1000 predominantly Accra-based urban radicals out of a national population of some 12 million, three-quarters of whom lived in the countryside. If Rawlings and the other coup-makers did not act because of the power of the revolutionary forces, why then did they take over the government? The answer (which Ray partly acknowledges) was that they acted when they did to forestall further personal repression at the hands of the security forces. These individualistic motives could not conceal the lack of a revolutionary programme, timetable, cadres and notion of a desired revolutionary end-state beyond a series of vague allusions towards creating a better society. Nor could they conceal the absence of links with the peasants or labour, beyond a few disgruntled Accra unionists. Power came from the armed forces' weapons and this was no substitute for a revolutionary movement. Thus the PNDC did not come to power as the leadership of a socialist movement. The revolution was not won. Yet Ray predicates his analysis on just this occurrence. He demonstrates this by attempting to show that the revolution is in the national-democratic stage prior to the establishment of socialism, that civilian marxists have dominated the revolution and that an economic U-turn in early 1983 was a tactical move reminiscent of the Soviet Union's NEP. To these points I will now turn.

Ray claims that Rawlings' 'National Democratic Revolution' was reminiscent of Mao's 'new democracy' (p.19), implying the liquidation of the old production relations, the establishment of political power representing a broad social spectrum
under the hegemony of the working class and the creation of an ideological and legal framework corresponding to the social changes that would/should be taking place. Significantly, however, Rawlings and others wanted not a class-based NDR, which they saw as divisive, but an essentially broad-based 'social transformation process', characterised by mass national mobilisation and the reorientation of all human resources for the advancement of a 'national democracy' devoid of social injustice. In Ghana the NDR would be achieved by 'national integration' through social harmonisation rather than through the socialist millenium. The social polarisation of differentiation which a socialist revolution would entail would thus be avoided.

Ray, however, accepts a socialist orientation for the NDR, apparently believing that because Rawlings used radical rhetoric this necessarily implied a commitment to a socialist end-state. Ever since the coup, however, Rawlings' moralist-populist philosophy was a major impediment to the development of a working relationship with the socialists who clustered around the PNDC. This dichotomy was exemplified in the dispute over the people's Defence Committees. Whilst both radical and pragmatic elements agreed on the desirability of Defence Committees — in both communities and workplaces — the fundamental (and as it turned out unbridgeable) divide on this issue typified the schism over politico-economic direction which characterised 1982, and led to the PNDC's appearance as a dilatory government devoid of purposiveness direction. Rawlings and the pragmatists in the PNDC wanted the Defence Committees to be organisations of all the people which would eventually form the basis of a 'People's Parliament', whilst the socialists wanted them to be the vehicles of the working class, petty bourgeoisie and peasants, with others excluded. Rawlings likened the Defence Committees to the grupos dinamizadores in Mozambique, which had been Frelimo's support-building vehicles following the winning of the revolutionary war in 1974 and were specifically the focus of mass political attitudes to consolidate the politics and practice of Frelimo. In Ghana, however, they were not 'substitutes for a real party organisation... the material out of which a revolutionary party would be formed' (p. 68), as Ray claims, but following the ousting of most of the socialists in late 1982 increasingly became communal work brigades renamed Committees for the Defence of the Revolution in late 1984.

In addition to the Defence Committees, Ray locates other constituent parts of the 'ruling movement' in the eight 'Marxist' political movements he identifies which 'for the sake of brevity ... is referred to as the PNDC or the December 31st revolution' (p.31). However an examination of Ray's own descriptions of these movements finds that only two claimed to be influenced by Marxism, whilst the others were variously pan-Africanist, Nkrumhaist or social democratic in orientation. By calling all identified movements 'for the sake of brevity' the 'December 31st revolution' or the 'PNDC' he is able to avoid problems relating to the political orientations of these movements and to ignore crucial differences between the groupings which would undermine his classifications.

Similar classification problems dog his explanation of the PNDC's economic U-turn in early 1983 which, in order to locate within the PNDC's 'Marxism', he calls a Ghanaian version of the Soviet Union's NEP. During 1982 the PNDC had repeatedly claimed that it would not seek the assistance of the IMF because of the types of policies it would recommend including currency devaluation, worker retrenchment and reductions in price subsidies. Eventually, however, economic pragmatism won
the day and the IMF/World Bank began to provide loans to the export sector from 1983 following the PNDC's agreement to their conditions. Ray argues that this was a tactical move, 'thoroughly Marxist-Leninist' and in line with the PNDC's aim of achieving socialism (p.63). The point here, however, is that the acceptance of IMF loans does not prove a state's socialist orientation as this dallying with imperialism has been a feature of many radical and not-so-radical regimes, from Angola to Zaire, from Mozambique to Sierra Leone, and merely reflects the experience of the world capitalist system and peripheral states' integration within it, which often places insurmountable constraints on developmental attempts, be they socialist or capitalist, civilian or military. For Ray to argue that the PNDC's espousal of the IMF road was necessarily a socialist tactical manoeuvre or that the PNDC had a choice whether to 'reform or transform' the economy (p.58) is to ignore both these realities. Since the marginalisation of the left progressively from late 1982, there were fewer ideological problems encountered in accepting the changed economic direction within the PNDC as Rawlings' nationalist-populism held sway. In short by 1983 the regime was firmly 'pragmatic', ideologically flexible, and unsurprisingly for a regime with its roots in the military, increasingly intolerant of dissent.

Given Rawlings' — and over half the PNDC's — roots in the military and the numerous coups which emanated from dissatisfied sections of the armed forces since early 1982, it is surprising that Ray does not investigate and analyse their by and large continued support for the regime which has been crucial for its survival. That he does not do so is a result of the necessity he feels to characterise the PNDC as a broadly civilian, socialist regime with its own support bases — the New Democratic Movement and the Defence Committees. He is silent, however, on NDM opposition to the regime from late 1984, on a number of issues including the dissolution of the Committees' guiding body, the National Defence Committee, and the downgrading of their status to depoliticised work brigades, currency devaluations and economic liberalisation, and the growing domination of the political process by forces of the old order. This opposition from the PNDC's closest civilian ally mirrors more widespread societal disquiet which has been manifested in demonstrations, strikes and calls for the PNDC to stand down.

Ray, however, asserts that a 'serious threat to stability did not emerge’ (p.138) following the IMF loans, when it is clear that anti-PNDC actions and a loss of faith in the regime have come about following the economic U-turn. The regime is now without any solid base of civilian support while the people have by-and-large reverted to pre-coup cynicism and apathy. Policy failures have embroiled the regime in the same kinds of conflicts and against the same opponents (labour and the left) which confronted its predecessors. This has forced the PNDC to rely increasingly on policy by diktat rather than by consensus and on repression to remain in power. Beset with severe economic conditions the chances of rebuilding popularity seem slight.

Despite these developments Ray is content to argue that the Ghanaian 'revolution' is part of a new pattern of revolution in which the leadership 'has been inspired by dialectical and historical materialism' (p. 152). He locates the 'revolution' in the 'fourth period' from 1979 onwards-following the establishment of the Soviet Union in 1917, the Asian and European socialist states between 1939-58, and the third period revolution between 1959-79, which mixed 'nationalism, anti-imperialism and Marxism' and were exclusively in the periphery. This fourth period is marked by the characteristics of 'national democracy and national liberation' (p. 151) and a
realisation by revolutionary leaders that the 'objective and subjective' conditions are not conducive to the creation of socialism, and here he quotes both Fidel Castro and Nicaragua's Interior Minister Tomas Borge. Whilst Ray does not cite any states other than Ghana as being in this revolutionary stage, which makes it difficult to compare with others, it is clear that the most obvious 'objective and subjective' conditions in Castro and Borge's analysis were the common proximity of the USA which, given that state's rabid anti-communism and the forces at its disposal, would indeed preclude any overt attempts by states in its 'backyard' to establish socialism. Castro argues that the aim should be national liberation within a pluralistic politico-economy and this does seem to be a useful assessment of the Ghana experience, although hardly Marxist in orientation or objectives. Ray, on the other hand, opines that the PNDC is indeed seeking socialism, although the struggle is slower than expected given the economic conditions and the lack of revolutionary cadres or 'experienced political personnel' who have yet to emerge, though from where it is unclear.

What does emerge from this monograph is the author's hope that the charismatic, superficially Guevara-like Rawlings can somehow drag Ghana from the mud: 'if the PNDC does not succeed, the future ... is grim' (p.156). In reality the non-emergence of any kind of people's involvement in decision-making, growing social dissatisfaction and increasing numbers of coup attempts, coupled with the regime's apparent lack of idea how to proceed, mark the PNDC as a vulnerable regime which might fall at any time. Ray is clearly an admirer of Rawlings, and in common with other analysts in the past, this leads him to a myopic assessment of the regime which does little to lift the 'mystery and confusion' concerning the PNDC. In writing a book riddled with misconceptions and incorrect analysis (in order to incorporate it within a 'Marxist Regimes' series) he has not only done himself an injustice — the book is well-written and enough emerges tantalisingly which could form the basis of a useful descriptive text — but has also pandered to those in the USA and Europe who see a communist behind every attempt at national liberation in the periphery. In the process he has done nothing to help Ghana in its crushingly difficult attempts at political and economic regeneration.

Jeffrey Haynes
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