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Marxist debates on the political economy of underdevelopment have centred on the question: can capitalism promote development? That is, can capitalism reproduce in Asia, Africa and Latin America the expansion of the productive capacity of human labour which it carried out in Europe, North America and Japan. In the English-speaking world, the terms of the debate were set by Frank's *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America*. He challenged Marxist orthodoxy on two points. Firstly, he argued that capitalism had underdeveloped Latin American economies and was incapable of developing them. It was not feudalism, but capitalism, that was to blame for the impoverishment and backwardness of Latin America. Secondly, as Fanon had argued in *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frank saw the bourgeoisie of the underdeveloped countries as accessories to imperial capitalism, unable to challenge the foreign control of the means of production, distribution and exchange and, in particular, of the monopoly of technology exercised by multinational corporations. Politically, the Cuban Revolution had shown Frank the way forward (a way previously charted by the Bolshevik and Chinese Revolutions). Only through a socialist revolution could a people take control of their national resources and develop them to their own benefit. Such a revolution required a popular alliance of workers and peasants in opposition both to the local bourgeoisie and to imperialism. No independent national bourgeoisie opposed to imperialism existed, or could exist within the framework of imperial monopolies.

These arguments are exemplified in the contributions to this special issue of the *Review* on Nigeria. We have reprinted a lecture given by Segun Osoba in 1978 in which he identified the 'deepening crisis of the Nigerian national bourgeoisie'. Nigeria's bourgeoisie has always operated as a junior partner, to British colonial authorities and commercial firms before independence, and to the imperial powers and their transnational corporations since then. As was recognised in a speech given to FESTAC* by General Obasanjo in 1977, most African countries are 'trading outposts', staffed by commercial, bureaucratic, technical and intellectual agents for their foreign imperialist principals. The inability of the bourgeoisie to create a relatively autonomous domestic capitalist order is the consequence of the structure of the world imperialist economy and the profitability of the Nigerian bourgeoisie's role as commission agents within it. In turn this generates contradictions within the bourgeoisie, exemplified by its need to unite as a national class, and its fragmentation into competing groups, as shown

*FESTAC = Festival of African Culture.*
by the politics of state creation and by the manipulation of religion, as well as contradictions between the bourgeoisie and the masses, the enrichment of the former and the impoverishment of the latter. These contradictions have undermined the authority of successive Nigerian rulers and explain the inability of successive bourgeois regimes, civilian and military. Osoba calls for the overthrow of the 'national' bourgeoisie and, to that end, the creation of a superior, people's revolutionary culture and its corollary, a people's revolutionary organisation.

Terisa Turner has analyzed the way in which the activities of multinational corporations reproduce the crisis of the Nigerian bourgeoisie. In Review 5 she analyzed the conflicts over oil policy which followed the 1974 price rise and culminated in the overthrow of the Gowon regime. She showed how the oil companies competed with one another for supplies by establishing relations with Nigerian middlemen with access to the state. She has also analyzed, in Africa Guide 1977, the 1974 cement scandal to show how foreign firms compete for control of markets. As Lenin declared in Imperialism '. . . monopolies introduce everywhere monopolist principles; the utilization of connections for profitable transactions takes the place of competition on the open market.' Turner argues that the forms of competition among multinational corporations and their local agents promoted political instability and prevented, at that period, the adoption of technically rational policies.

Opponents of Frank's approach, and of similar analyses of African countries, have challenged its two basic theses. Firstly, Cardoso and Warren (New Left Review 67 and 81) argued that imperialism could, and did, promote capitalist development in many underdeveloped countries. Secondly, in Review 8 Swainson (for Kenya) and Kennedy (for Ghana) argued for the existence of an independent class of local capitalists. Swainson showed how they used state power to expand their activities and were investing their commercial profits in industrial production. Colin Leys, in Socialist Register 1978, accordingly changed the view which he presented in his book Underdevelopment in Kenya of a 'continuing dependence of the African petty-bourgeoisie and auxiliary bourgeoisie on foreign capital.' Rather:

The essential function of the state was to displace monopolies enjoyed by foreign capital and substitute monopolies for African capital, and also to supplement individual African capitals with state-financed capital and state-secured technology, to enable them to occupy the space created for them in the newly-accessible economic sectors. . . . Its (the state's) initiatives reflected the existing class power of the indigenous bourgeoisie, based on the accumulation of capital they had already achieved.

These two lines of criticism do not necessarily depend on one another. If indeed imperialism does promote capitalist development throughout the world, then the development of capitalism does not depend on the existence of a national bourgeoisie opposed to imperialism; imperialism may create an auxiliary bourgeoisie as an agent of its own development.

The issues raised by Swainson and Leys about Kenya are clearly relevant to Nigeria, where many of the same phenomena had emerged even earlier. During the colonial period, a commercial bourgeoisie emerged which overlapped with the small professional class. In the 1950s, alliances of commercial, professional and bureaucratic classes, and in the North the office-holding aristocracy appropriated political power. They used it to accumulate money, finance their political activities, appropriate commercial opportunities, extend the areas of economic activity reserved to Nigerian businessmen and, together with foreign capital,
invest in import-substitution industries. Nigeria, with its vast population, extensive internal market, and oil revenues appears to command the resources necessary for its own form of capitalist development. Clearly we need to examine the development of industry and the relations of local to foreign capitalists since independence and, more particularly, since the 1974 boom in oil prices, to see how far one set of interests predominates, or whether, as Osoba suggests in his analysis of the local and foreign bourgeoisies, they are really compatible.

John Carlson has summarized much of the evidence from official sources on Nigeria's industrial development ('Industrial cooperation in the Lome Convention, the case of Nigeria' Centre for Development Research, Copenhagen). Since 1960 there has been a rapid, if uneven, increase in manufacturing output. The value added in manufacturing in Nigeria has increased in roughly the same proportions. However, these figures would look far less impressive if prices were calculated at world market levels, rather than taking the prices Nigerian consumers pay for highly protected products. Manufacturing is still dominated by low technology light consumer goods, with production of textiles increasing more rapidly than the original import-substituting industries — beer, mineral waters, processed food and tobacco. Engineering is almost non-existent and chemicals consist mainly of toiletries and household detergents. Value added is lower in high technology industries and the opening up of motor vehicle assembly plants and the expansion of chemical and metal products has led to an increase in the proportion of import costs in the output of manufactures. Consequently manufacturing contributes relatively little to the creation of local incomes and to the stimulation of production in the Nigerian economy. At the same time, it does provide an expanding and remarkably profitable market for metropolitan capital. In turn, this market is financed by oil revenues, whose expansion has meant that the share of manufacturing in Nigeria's gross national product is still below that of other African countries, like Kenya and Tanzania. Plans for a state-owned iron and steel industry and for several petroleum-related industries are designed to provide the foundations for industrial development using local raw materials. They will be expensive to fund and slow to recover their investment costs. They will not reduce dependence on foreign technology and will extend Nigeria's dependence on a single, and finite, resource, oil.

The spending of oil revenues has generated high rates of inflation while the government is able to maintain the high exchange rate of the naira. In 1976, real wages, as measured by the government minimum wage divided by the official cost of living index for the poor in Lagos, were exactly what they were in 1960, and declining. Yet Nigerian money wages are high by comparison with other African countries. Production costs are inflated by huge managerial, especially expatriate, salary costs, and the high cost and uncertain provision of transport facilities, electricity and water supply. This cost structure is sustained by protective tariffs and import licences, but prevents Nigeria from exporting manufactured goods. Indeed, Nigeria can be expected to provide an export market for industries situated in the Economic Community of West African States rather than the other way round. Those Nigerians who wish to emulate the example of the Brazilian 'economic miracle' might look closely at the political conditions which have made it possible, and at its consequences, namely vast foreign debts, impoverishment of the masses, falling real wages, atrocious living conditions for the poor, all sustained by an inflated security apparatus specializing in tortures and free-lance murder.
Freund, in this issue documents the consequences of the government spending boom: a consumer spending spree by those fortunate enough to appropriate a share of the oil revenues, price inflation which rapidly eroded the 1975 Udoji wage increases, fortunes made in commerce, contracting and real estate, huge increases in the profits of foreign companies operating in Nigeria, not to mention foreign salesmen of cement and numerous other commodities, a collapse of agricultural exports and an exponential increase in food imports. Since 1975, the government’s ambitious investments in transport and communications, agriculture and industry, together with increased spending on defence, education and housing have led to an increasing budget and foreign exchange deficit. It has been met by Euro-dollar loans, cuts in government spending, fiscal constraints and renewed rises in the production and price of oil. It is likely that deficits will be perpetuated by continuing commitments to government spending, accentuated by the need of civilian politicians to recoup their electoral expenditures and pay off their obligations.

Nigeria has turned to the IBRD (World Bank)* to finance and direct twelve major development projects. They are designed to rehabilitate the production of forest crops — cocoa, rubber and palm products — for export, and in the northern and central states to increase the production of food for internal markets. In a way, the World Bank seems to be trying to re-establish the agricultural economy of the colonial period, but they are not looking to the smallholders who expanded production in the colonial era. Contrary to the World Bank’s hypocritical rhetoric about concentrating resources on small farmers and aiding the rural poor, their projects are designed to subsidise rich farmers and have created a class of absentee ‘overnight’ farmers to take advantage of their assistance. Small farmers are specifically discriminated against in the allocation of resources, or are unable to meet the cash costs of participation, as in the case of the cocoa rehabilitation scheme or the Federal Government’s own Kano River rehabilitation scheme. The Bank’s integrated rural development projects are explicitly aimed at ‘the application of advanced farming techniques which are particularly adapted to larger farming units either group or individually operated’ to cite a Bank document. On the Funtua scheme, for example, the Bank provides farm surveys, fertilizers and improved seeds to ‘progressive’ farmers to grow maize, which is not a staple food in rural areas, for urban markets. Progressive farmers turn out to be rural traders, investing in land and labour-power (often female and cheap) to take advantage of subsidised inputs. A smaller class of ‘master’ farmers (army officers, civil servants and urban businessmen) are offered even more — enormous bank loans, tractor units and even their own extension workers to manage their farms. Nigeria’s ‘green revolution’ is expensive and inefficient. It is vulnerable to unreliable delivery of fertilizer (by the Federal Government) and rain, and will lead to deterioration of soil fertility and marginalization of poor farmers. Its beneficiaries can then increase their profits from trading in scarce food.

The Federal Military Government has made its own huge investments in rural construction projects, such as the Kano River irrigation scheme. These have enriched foreign and local contractors, encouraged capitalist investment in irrigated farming, and (as work by Wallace and Palmer-Jones cited in Jackson’s

*These comments on the World Bank in Nigeria are based on work done by the Canterbury Group, an informal group of socialist scholars from Britain and America. We would like to exchange information on the activities of the World Bank. Correspondence to G. Williams, St. Peter’s College, Oxford.
bibliography shows) disrupted local food production to produce wheat and tomatoes for urban markets and foreign firms at astronomical cost. Agricultural investments have extended the sphere of capitalist profit-making but have neither solved the food crisis nor ameliorated the condition of the majority of the rural population.

Ostensibly, the indigenization decrees were designed to extend national control of the economy. Foreign companies have issued vast numbers of shares to Nigerian managers, civil servants, military officers and businessmen, often paid for out of loans from foreign and government banks. They have moved out of such areas as wholesale trading and transport into manufacturing, and, as Hoogvelt shows for the case of Kano in a paper which will be published in a future issue of this Review, have made their Nigerian distributors directors and share-holders. The decrees have institutionalized the patron-client relations of foreign capitalists to Nigerian merchants.

The origins of the comprador merchant bourgeoisie in Northern Nigeria are traced in this issue by Shenton and Freund. Surplus labour was commuted into cash and commodities through which surplus value could be appropriated by metropolitan capital. Colonialism transformed Nigerian producers into a dependent peasantry, subjected them to indebtedness and commercial monopolies, and increased the vulnerability of producers to the effects of droughts, which colonial capitalism turned into famines (this is the subject of a paper by Watts and Shenton which will appear in a future issue of the Review). The colonial era was marked by a series of booms and slumps, both of which were used by foreign capital to entrench its domination of the Nigerian economy — as, according to Freund’s paper, has the recent oil boom.

Sam Jackson examines a brief strike by Hausa women living on the Kano River irrigation scheme against the incredibly low wages paid them by BUD, the international agri-business firm. She questions the applicability to rural Hausa society of notions of the peasantry based on an ideological notion of the household as a single unit of production and consumption under the single authority of a male head of household. Such a conception blithely ignores the activities and social position of women, and fails to examine either the relations of production or the relations of consumption of rural Hausa families. Through this particular incident, Jackson is able to explore the contradictory social and economic position of women in rural Hausa society.

Lubeck examines the development of class relations (among men) in Kano City. State government officials, often from aristocratic families, have reduced the powers of local government and of the office-holding aristocracy. Merchants of commoner status have increased their influence in Kano, and may be merging with the aristocracy into a single class, dependent on state oil revenues and on their relation to foreign capital. Lubeck examines the consequences of the oil boom and the resultant speculation in land for the expanding Kano working class. Since 1971, workers have become familiar with trade unions and have organized collectively to improve wages and to limit managerial control over their labour-time and to curb arbitrary dismissals. The workers’ political consciousness is that of the talakawa, the commoners, based on a common populist ideology of equity and justice.

Waterman examines political attitudes, and trade union rivalries and activities
among a very different group of workers, employees in Lagos of the National Ports Authority. Trade unions have a long history in the ports, and militant action has been used effectively to force concessions from management. This has not given rise to any explicit class consciousness. Workers do not identify any visible friends, or enemies, of the portworkers. Port unions have acted together with other unions in the public sector. Neither they, nor their members, have collaborated with the privately-employed dockworkers, with whom the portworkers share a common site.

Lubeck argues that, in Kano, the formation of the government-sponsored Nigerian Labour Congress will extend trade union organization. In the ports government fiat has replaced the old competing unions with a single, new one. Union leaders have been reduced to bargaining for positions in the new set-up; workers have been merely spectators. It is clear from several strikes in 1978, for example in the Volkswagen assembly plant in Lagos, that the military government has used the NLC as an instrument to control union activities at plant level and to victimize strike leaders. Whether the new civilian government will be able to use the NLC for these purposes is another question. The continued erosion of wages in government employment makes it unlikely that the civilian government will be able to avoid a review of public sector wages and salaries. On past evidence, workers will demand the extension of pay rises throughout the private sector. This will bring workers back into the centre of a political arena from which electoral politics excludes them.

Joseph, in a concise survey of the current (May 1979) electoral campaign, examines the class politics of the military government and the five parties contending to succeed it. Socialist parties were excluded from the electoral arena and socialist academics were victimized in the aftermath of the students' campaign against increased charges in 1978. Further, trade unions are barred from financing or participating in political parties. Ideological debates have been pre-empted by the politics of ethnic alliances and the ‘vertical cleavage networks which facilitate both class domination and class subjection’. This form of politics is exemplified by the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) which had organized itself as an alliance of state-based interests and which ‘regards itself as Nigeria’; natural party of government, and with good reason.

This editor was surprised to receive, in Oxford, England, a glossy election brochure ‘with the compliments of Michael Rice and Company Limited for Nigeria Media Services Limited on behalf of the National Party of Nigeria.’ Though that party is clearly concerned with the goodwill of foreign academics, its foreign policy appears at the end of its election manifesto and makes no reference to Southern Africa. The liberation of Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa has been of central concern to the present military leadership, in pursuit of which they have shown themselves willing to take action against British interests. It is a matter of great concern if Mrs Thatcher and other imperialist friends of ‘Zimbabwe-Rhodesia’ can expect an easier passage from one of Nigeria’s major political parties.

Most of the contributions to this volume argue within the framework of the theory of underdevelopment and confirm its expectations regarding the limited nature of Nigerian industrialization, the bourgeoisie’s continued dependence on foreign capital and the continued battle among the bourgeoisie to appropriate the largest possible share of national resources. Beckman contests this approach
in his review of this editor’s Nigeria: Economy and Society in Review 10. He argues that neither corruption and sectional conflict, nor even the violence and disorder have, historically, prevented the development of capitalism. Indeed, in the USA corruption, state and private violence, ethnic rivalry and civil war have all been ingredients in the development of capitalist society. On the other hand, it is not clear that the interests of imperialism are best served by a weak government, riddled with factional rivalries, though imperialists will, of course, profit from the opportunities which this affords them. Multinational corporations now seek to invest jointly with governments, and sometimes with local capitalist interests who meet part of their investment costs and ensure the safety of the remainder. They require efficient administration and provision of water, electricity and other services as well as effective assistance in controlling their workers. An improvement in local productive capacities will, as Turner has pointed out, enable foreign firms to withdraw from direct investment to the international marketing of services and commodities, ‘developing new lines of business in the provision of technical advice and support’ as the Chairman of Shell put it. Nigeria is of major importance to the imperialist powers. Hence the continued concern of the World Bank with its affairs, and the continued involvement of the Bank, through its project loans, in Nigeria’s development policies and programmes.

As Anne Phillips pointed out in her critique of the concept of development, in Review 8, the issue is not whether capitalism promotes ‘development’ (of what? — of capitalism!). Rather, as Beckman puts it, phenomena such as those outlined by Freund show us ‘how capitalism, in its particular neo-colonial variety develops and about its impact on the people’. That it enriches the few by impoverishing the many should occasion no surprise; that, as Marx pointed out in Capital, is the nature of capitalism and not of the lack of capitalist development. As socialists we need to understand the specific forms taken by international capitalism, the better to oppose it. That understanding can only be achieved by empirical investigation, and not by theoretical speculation. Politically, as Beckman says and as Osoba demonstrates, we need to identify the ways in which ‘Imperialism enhances the contradiction between the Nigerian people and the neo-colonial state and its supportive classes, local and foreign.’

Gavin Williams

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Observant readers may have noticed that the Review has changed its address. This change brings to an end our two year association with Onyx press who have been handling all our administration. We should like to express our thanks to Onyx for carrying our administrative burden over this period and wish them well in their future publishing ventures.

Katherine Levine a director of Onyx Press and a founder member of the Review and its administrative mainstay in its early years, is ending her editorial association with the Review for personal reasons and also that she can devote more time to Onyx Press. We should like to take this opportunity of thanking Katherine for all the work she has done for the Review over the past 5 years. We wish her well.
The Incorporation of Northern Nigeria into the World Capitalist Economy

Bob Shenton and Bill Freund

Recent historical writing on Northern Nigeria has celebrated African entrepreneurship and even an alleged 'bourgeois revolution'. This paper offers an alternative account of the way in which Northern Nigeria was incorporated into the world capitalist economy. A merchant bourgeoisie has been important to this process, and proved incapable of initiating autonomous capitalist development. This paper examines the social relations of production and the forms in which surplus was extracted from the producers in nineteenth-century Hausaland and in colonial Northern Nigeria. It presents the era of colonialism as a period of transition to peripheral capitalism. The surplus was transmuted into cash and commodities from which surplus value could be extracted.

In recent years, an imperial history that concentrated on the pioneering achievements of European entrepreneurs and denigrated African cultivators as superstitious traditionalists has given way to a new school of thought celebrating the economic achievements of Africans in the colonial economy. With reference to northern Nigeria, examples can be found in the recent work of Ibrahim Tahir and Jan Hogendorn. Tahir has argued for the concept of a bourgeois revolution in twentieth century Islamic society in Nigeria. The driving force behind this revolution would be the merchant class, which emerged from its relatively modest position vis-a-vis the ruling aristocracy to blossom forth under colonial rule. Hogendorn's work on the cash-crop groundnut revolution is adorned by a descent of praise for the initiative of African peasants and entrepreneurs of the colonial period. Both writers are broadly consistent with an uncritical phalanx of economic historians and development economists, such as W.W. Rostow and W. Arthur Lewis, who have tied the economic development of the Third World to continued integration into the world capitalist system. Over the past decade especially, the failure of 'take off' to begin in country after country has strengthened the need for new perspectives by historians as much as by economists.

Celebrating a bourgeois revolution in Nigeria must neglect the various salient features which distinguish Nigeria from advanced metropolitan capitalist societies: the continued impoverishment and low productive capacity of the mass of the population, the enclave character of a limited and largely foreign-managed industrial plant, the continued dependence of the state on economic and political forces beyond its control and the evident failure of planners, despite the oil boom, to lay foundations for a self-sustaining development of productive forces. Celebrating this can only help to reproduce and build further ties of dependence.
This paper attempts to suggest the outlines of an alternative understanding of capitalist development in Nigeria that we believe can and should be criticized, extended and related to the general problems of underdevelopment. This requires progress in two directions. First, an understanding of historical process in twentieth century Nigeria demands that this process be situated in the history of the twentieth century world capitalist system. The incorporation of Nigeria into this system was part of the expanded reproduction essential to the workings of the capitalist mode of production. Faced from the late nineteenth century with falling profits at home, increased foreign competition, and periodically threatened thereafter with collapse in the wake of severe crises, British capitalism had no real alternative to expansion.

Second, the process of incorporation meant for Nigerians a break-up and reorganization of existing social forces. Historians must examine how merchants, among others, became subordinated to the new commercial system as part of the overall creation of a peripheral capitalist social formation. Within the development of this formation, a major role has been played by a merchant bourgeoisie which has proved historically incapable of transforming society and served as a fetter on the development of productive forces.

It is precisely because indigenous capitalist development has been blocked, because much in current class relationships represents a disarticulated continuity with the past, that we begin by examining the social formation before colonial rule. Because of the direction our own research has taken, we wish to concentrate on only one section of Nigeria, the Hausa-speaking heartland of the central west African savanna.

The specific economic form in which unpaid surplus labour is pumped out of the direct producers, determines the relations of rulers and ruled, as it grows directly out of production itself and in turn reacts upon it as a determining element. Upon this, however, is founded the entire formation of the economic community which grows up of the production relations themselves, thereby simultaneously its specific political form. It is always the direct relationship of the owners of the conditions to the direct producers . . . which reveals the innermost secret, the hidden basis of the entire social structure, and with it the political form of the relation of sovereignty and dependence, in short the corresponding specific form of the state . . .

In essence, Marx was developing in this passage (from Capital, Vol.III) a means of analyzing the fundamental character of a society through examining the social relations of production and the forms in which surplus is extracted from the producing population. While our own understanding of the economy and society of pre-colonial Nigeria is informed by the current debate over the concept ‘mode of production’ and the fundamental nature of non-capitalist class-based relations of production, we hold that Marx’s own writings on the subject, though profound and suggestive, do not provide a classificatory system for sorting out modes of production. Indeed Marx’s whole project militates against such a formalist project. Nor are we satisfied with the uncritical adoption of European feudal terminology in the work of M.G. Smith or its dismissal in terms of the grocery list criteria of Jack Goody. At the same time, the revival of the notion of an ‘Asiatic’ mode of production, while immensely stimulating, has as yet failed to provide a sufficiently coherent and concrete general analysis. In the following pages, we seek to re-interpret the concrete features of state and society on the Hausaland plain of the central African savanna using terminology from the Hausa language itself in the belief that it will perhaps bring forth the hidden basis of the entire social structure.
Pre-colonial Social Formation

The fundamental productive unit in most of the area held within the Sokoto caliphate, which controlled most of the plain in the nineteenth century, was gandu. In its most attenuated form, it consisted of a nuclear family with unmarried sons. It could embrace far more extended relations, barori (clients) and slaves. Gandu production was situated within the gida (household), the basic unit of reproduction. The mai gandu (household head) took charge of the organization of production and distribution for the purposes of consumption and division of the surplus. Within gidaje (pl.gida), secondary agricultural production, trade and craft production could take place outside the gandu framework on the part of individuals.

Gidaje were generally associated in garurwa (s., gari), communities with a mixed rural and urban character centre in walled towns. Garurwa, through the agency of dagatai (village heads) controlled untilled land and dagatai had the right to approve or disapprove of land sales. Masu gida (pl. mai gida) might well join forces to engage in cooperative labour (gayya) or rent land through a system of mutual obligation (aro), some of the relationships which linked village households. However, the gari and subordinate villages did not organize production or distribution as a whole. It was the gida, not the gari, which paid taxes. In the nineteenth century, the gari was primarily a political not a productive unit.

This scheme covers up very real regional and sectoral exceptions which require much further historical research. One which must be mentioned at least is the presence of important transhumant pastoral communities with a strongly developed lineage organization. This included some, but by no means all, of the so-called Fulani. A considerable proportion of the socially defined surplus of cultivators was expropriated by a ruling class (holders of office = masu sarauta). Office-holders received territorial jurisdictions from the emir, who was himself appointed by certain masu sarauta. This class was composed of important titled individuals at the highest level as well as the subordinate officials of provincial towns. Although some masu sarauta had ancient and hereditary jurisdictions and single families were often able to monopolise others, jurisdictions remained generally in the gift of the emirs. These jurisdictions functioned above all as tax-farms. The talakawa (commoners, poor) were subject to a complex taxation system, based ultimately on a valuation of productive activity, of income, paid in kind and in cash. These taxes were collected by the agents of the tax-farming masu sarauta, the numerous class of jakadu, who in many districts represented the emir directly, and lower level officials, who all appropriated a share of the surplus as taxes passed through their hands.

Masu sarauta possessed private estates on which they lived, augmenting their tax-farm proceeds. These estates (gadayen sarauta) were worked by slaves, barori and yan kodago (wage labourers). Agricultural labour on the gadayen sarauta was defined in terms of the household. The very terminology of these farms — gandu — and the labour applied to them — gayya are drawn from the world of the household and the village. The inhabitants of these estates were also called upon to provide military levels for the armies of the emirs.

The masu sarauta and their emir controlled the means of coercion in society, but also intervened directly in the productive system. Their rule provided protection for cultivators and travelling merchants. It organized defence and
social labour projects, notably the construction and maintenance of walls, and organized redistribution in times of need. After the jihad of 1804 triumphed, establishing the Sokoto caliphate, the state justified itself primarily through protecting and sustaining the Islamic community of believers (umma).

The state extracted surplus from the peasant household in three forms: labour rent, rent in kind and money rent. Labour rent consisted of corvee labour on community projects, military obligations and work on the farms of the masu sarauta. Rent in kind was collected primarily in the form of the zakkat, a grain tithe which in theory supported the teaching of Islam and the charitable requirements of communities, but was frequently put to other uses. It also included tax in livestock, industrial crops and craft goods. Some of the rent in kind collected by the state ultimately became commoditised and found its way to the market. Money rent was widespread and although it did not replace rent in kind, money rent was frequently demanded in place of it for crops other than staples and especially for craft production. In addition, money rent could be paid in commutation of the performance of labour duties. The development of money rent illustrates the extensive commoditisation of the surplus.

The prevalence of slavery was a significant aspect of social production and surplus extraction. From an early date, a class of men and women lived in the central savanna who had been ripped from the ties of a village community and made directly subject to the ruling class, whether as agricultural labourers on the estates of the masu sarauta, as professional soldiers or as trusted agents of the ruler and themselves part of the class who lived from the production of others. Their presence enabled a ruler to evade too great a dependence on dignitaries who could develop a local base of power and wealth and enabled the ruling class as a whole to find a labour force more directly exploitable than the free masu gida. Slaves were generally able to work their own plots and engage in craft production. Y.B. Usman has suggested that, at least in the eighteenth century, slaves evolved within a few generations into freedmen, a point which requires further corroboration. It has been put forth that slavery developed on a bigger scale and more systematically in the nineteenth century as commodity relations strengthened, but there is little evidence of change in this regard. The claim made by P. Lovejoy that the Caliphate evolved a plantation style economy in the nineteenth century seems without justification to us. While slavery was very important in strengthening the authority of the ruling class as a whole, it remained clearly subordinated as a productive system to the relationship between the free talakawa and the masu sarauta.

Craft production, especially of cloth and iron tools was a general activity in Hausaland on a scale that went well beyond the satisfaction of limited local needs. Most craft production emanated from the household, whose subsistence production made it possible and was carried out during the long dry season during which the demand for farm labour was low. However, the existence of a sizeable stratum of craftsmen, divorced from agriculture and made up of clients, slaves and wage labourers enables us to note the existence of commodity production as a distinct but subordinate sphere of production. Petty commodity production was greatly facilitated by the use of cowry currency through the entire Caliphate. One result of this commodity production was that certain areas, notably the environs of Kano, depended on a regular basis on the import of foodstuffs.
As a result, a significant portion of the social surplus was appropriated by merchants, active not only in the famous long distance kola trade but also dealing in cloth and foodstuffs. Philip Shea, whose study of the nineteenth century dyeing industry is so far the only one to concentrate on craft production indicates that most of the profits in this industry accrued neither to dyers nor the owners of dye pits, but to merchants who did not own the means of production but controlled the supply of cloth. Although some wealthy merchants did invest in estates and slaves, merchant capital as a whole did not function in such a way as to transform the relations of production and remained dependent on the patronage and close support to the office holding class for access to land, slaves and the enforcement of credit obligations. The presence of merchant capital and commodity production has been seen by some historians to point towards the development of capitalist relations of production. Yet taken within the context of the social relations of production as a whole, they no more point to a capitalist revolution than similar developments in ancient Babylon or Rome. The alienability of private estates and town houses and the presence of a slave labour force might appear to be an attack on the integrity of household farms and the village land rights. Yet for several reasons, including the availability of land in many areas and the tendency of Maliki inheritance laws to militate against the long term accumulation of private property, no conflict seems to have been evident between private land ownership and the free cultivators’ rights in land. Rather conflict centred on the issue of the level of surplus appropriation by the office holding class and the state. This conflict was characteristic of nineteenth century society and played a role in political change and violent social upheavals. Those who saw themselves as oppressed expressed their views by supporting or opposing the jihad, in the commitment to the coming of a new Madhi, by choosing sides in dynastic quarrels or in the creation of a new Islamic brotherhood. Tyranny was largely understood in terms of the exactions of a particularly unreasonable ruler or in the violation of Islamic norms, not as a class reaction aimed at breaking the hegemony of the system as a whole.

To summarize, the economy and society of the Sohoto Caliphate in the years immediately preceding the British conquest was neither stagnant nor traditional. Rather the possibilities offered by the social relations of production were continuing to unfold and had not necessarily been exhausted. Despite the presence of merchant capital, slavery and wage labour, Hausa society cannot be seen as capitalist nor is there much evidence to support the teleological position that a bourgeois revolution was immanent.

The Penetration of Capital

In the second half of the nineteenth century, several noteworthy developments took place that reflected growing penetration of the territory of the Sokoto Caliphate by Western capital. There seems to have been a significant commercialisation of the Nupe economy in this period through a heightened commoditization and expansion of the slave system as a result of extensive commercial contact with Europeans on the Niger. The trans-Saharan trade came under the control of European finance and expanded greatly, exporting notably hides and skins and importing cheap European textiles. Tin was sold in considerably increased quantities to the Niger Company posts on the Benue.

This penetration was only a prelude to the social and economic consequences of the British conquest at the opening of the twentieth century. What followed
was the beginning of a political transformation and economic incorporation of Northern Nigeria into the British empire. The change was structurally very different from the one that established the domination of the capitalist mode of production in metropolitan Europe. The existing productive forces were not smashed but extended and encapsulated to meet the requirements of metropolitan capital, in such a way as to block transition to autonomous capitalist development. Analysis of this process requires a consideration of the forces in operation within British capitalism, which ultimately powered the conquest and provided the framework in which colonial development took place.

The Great Depression of 1873 marked the end of Britain's spectacular and easy dominance of world capitalist production and trade. In the following years, prices, profits and trade fell off drastically. A high rate of unemployment was coupled with pressure from the burgeoning trades union movement on British manufacturers. Britain was faced with effective competition and protectionist legislation from newer and sturdier capitalist states. The critical issue for British industry was realisation of profits. As a result, there was an extended and aggressive search for new markets while older markets were held, where possible, through extra-economic coercion. This drive went hand in hand with an concomitant push to procure steady, cheap and abundant supplies of raw materials, which in turn reinforced the trend towards the expansion and maintenance of markets. Nowhere were these tendencies more manifest than in that traditional industrial mainstay, cotton textiles, an increasingly uncompetitive trade. By 1880, according to David Pandes (Prometheus Unbound), 82% of all British textile exports were sold outside the metropolitan capitalist countries.

Merchant Capital, Finance & Mining

The incorporation of northern Nigeria into the world economy was mediated through the agency of merchant capital, ultimately at the service of industrial capital. As Geoff Kay has stressed in his Development & Underdevelopment, merchant capital did not seek to transform productive relations, it rather sought to batten on existing social and economic relations while relying on the expansion of imperial control to provide favourable conditions for the maximum extraction of a surplus. There is a striking parallel with the impact of European merchant capital overseas before the industrial revolution, especially in Asia. Here too, European capitalism had made its initial impact through the use of force while expanding a trade network in the interests of primitive capital accumulation.

When the armed force and economic weapons of the commercial firms proved insufficient to exclude European rivals, commercial interests turned to the British state. During the first decade of the twentieth century, the British imposed their rule on northern Nigeria with increasing effectiveness despite the very small number of men at their disposal. The principal thrust of imposition lay in the destruction of the political and economic autonomy of the ruling class. The unity of the Caliphal structure which bound the emirates together was shattered and constituent emirates were administered separately. Emirs and other officials who failed to cooperate with the policies of the colonial regime were deposed and replaced. Some learnt very well how to survive in the new system while others were eliminated.

In the initial years of colonial rule, British officials simply went to the emirs
and demanded a large share of tax income. This system of plunder in Katsina encouraged the emir to increase taxes so as not to eliminate his own income. As a result, tax gathering parties required an armed guard of several hundred men to proceed through the countryside. From 1907 onwards, the British began to systematize a lump sum taxation system, based on village assessments that were made by the village heads and court messengers. Taxation was to be maintained at least at previous levels and to be collected in cash, an effective change being made in 1910 in many areas. High taxation was justified on the grounds of being more regular and predictable than the previous system. While conceivably the exactions of some individuals had been checked, the mass of producers had probably benefited from the flexibility of the old system, which had provided some relief in time of need. The new tax system was also seen by the colonial government as a spur to commodity production.

In order to control the population and facilitate the creation of a colonial economy, the British developed a system of indirect rule. The principal office holders were transformed into District Heads, responsible for local law and order and tax collection. Social relationships were systematized into a mock-feudal bureaucratic structure under colonial supervision. The dismissal of the jakudu and the abolition of slavery struck at the economic base of the mam sarauta and pushed them, if only by default, into the bureaucracy, as hopes of effective resistance faded.

The systematization of colonial rule reached fruition with the deliberation of the Northern Nigerian Lands Committee of 1910, which met on the eve of the establishment of the legal structure of indirect rule. The Lands Committee hearings were convened during the governorship of Sir Percy Girouard. Girouard, having studied the system of land tenure and taxation in India firmly believed that cultivators should be made to pay an economic rent for the privilege of tilling their fields. This economic rent was to accrue in its entirety to the state to support the administration. Despite a wealth of conflicting evidence, the Committee chose to consider that the ownership of private property in land did not exist in northern Nigeria. Going back to William the Conqueror for justification, Girouard maintained that Britain owned all lands in northern Nigeria by right of conquest. The office holding class was to be transformed into an aristocratic bureaucracy. On the legal basis established in 1910 were constructed the Native Treasury system and the Native Authority bureaucracy and further refinements of the taxation system.

British hopes to make over northern Nigeria into a major cotton lint supplier proved abortive at first, but European commerce grew slowly and steadily in the protectorate. When hopes of great profits began to flag, the colonial regime kept them alive with the promise of a railway in the north, built with funds from southern Nigeria, which would sound the death knell of the trans-Saharan trade and firmly establish European merchants as the dominant commercial force in the area.

In 1912 the rail line reached Kano and firms such as John Holt, the formidable Niger Company, and other lesser known concerns quickly followed suit. They were joined by representatives of the banks, especially the Bank of British West Africa administered by Sir Alfred Jones, the magnate who dominated West African shipping through his Elder Dempster line. Following the demonetization of local currency, the Bank imported coinage from Britain into the country to
finance the needs of the firms for commercial capital. They were a necessary appendage to the penetration of British merchant capital. British merchant capital was able to seize upon the expansion of northern Nigeria's first viable cash crop, groundnuts. The Groundnut Revolution was a response both to the steady insistence of the regime for tax payments in British colonial currency and the energetic intervention of indigenous commercial agents and bureaucrats.

The Groundnut Revolution faltered during the famine of 1913 and World War I, but then gathered new strength, and secured a vast expansion in the produce trade. This provided both salaried District Heads and commercial agents with an opportunity to develop their incomes through the spread of an usurious advance system. Well before the harvest, commercial agents were lent considerable sums by European firms. These sums were in turn advanced directly to the producer who pledged his crop to the agent or paid the producer's tax obligation to the District Head with the same end in view. Some District Heads were keen enough to reverse roles with the middlemen and pay the peasants' tax themselves in order to confront the commercial agents with a monopoly of supply during the produce buying season. Interest rates of up to 100% ensnared cultivators in a permanent debt trap.

After the First World War, ground nut exports, based on intensification of cultivation, increased by leaps and bounds. Cultivators expanded their yields primarily through a process of agricultural involution. Through careful intercropping, yields per stand (if not per hectare) increased and the surplus which had once gone to the pre-colonial state in the form of grain was extracted in the form of cash derived from the sale of groundnuts. Between 1915 and 1919, exports averaged 41,000 tons; between 1925 and 1929, the average was 117,000 tons and there was a further increase during the Depression years. Cotton for export also developed considerably in the 1920s.

The colonial state was fundamental to the establishment of British mining capital on the Jos Plateau. It destroyed with considerable brutality local resistance to the penetration of miners, it made land available to the firms on leasehold to the Crown for a nominal compensation fee as well as imposing taxes in cash which pushed labour to the mines. The mines used the labour of Plateau indigenes and a vast pool of migrants who came from many parts of Northern Nigeria and beyond its borders. The District Officers and the Native Authority system were instrumental in directing labour there. Generally speaking, the labour force was recruited from areas which were not suited to the production of groundnut or cotton for export. The Niger Company, which stood to profit from its half-share right to mineral royalties as a result of the deal between Goldie and the Colonial Officer in 1899, did the most to establish the mining industry. City capital began to move in from 1910. At the end of the year, the Treasury agreed to fund a light-gauge railway, crucial for mineral export on a big scale. By 1928, the mines had an average monthly employment of 39,000 workers. Heavy machinery was introduced only slowly to the minefields; at first, tools and techniques were much as they had been before the conquest, except that now the surplus went to the European companies who alone had the right to export tin. It was Nigerian workers who made all the important discoveries in the first generation of the industry. Since the government closed down indigenous smelting, capitalist tin mining was in part technological de-industrialisation. Between European bosses and labourers there intervened Nigerian contractors
who were often responsible for securing gang labour and who held their gang in debt to them.

The tinfield provided the main source of wage employment in colonial Northern Nigeria. A small minority of the workforce consisted of clerks and artisans but, as in government service and on the railway, they were largely from the south. Tin mining was the strongest force pushing the peasantry in the direction of proletarianisation, but before World War II, this process moved slowly. The technical character of production, dependence on migrant labour and the relationship of gang-workers to contractors sharply diluted the development of capitalist social relations.

The food and firewood needs of the Plateau immigrants were immense and helped to power the expansion of the production of the staple grains as cash crops, a development which affected the areas which provided little migrant labour on export crops. A general subordinate effect of the new transport system was the expansion of inter-regional trade (kola, cattle, dried fish) in which indigenous merchants played a significant part.

Each crisis in the world trade cycle brought in its wake a business re-organization that pushed in the direction of further concentration and centralisation of capital. In the midst of the post-World War I recession, Lever Brothers took over the Niger Company while a host of rival firms had come together to form the African and Eastern Trade Corporation. On the eve of the Depression, both firms were combined into the United African Company, a merchant outlet controlled by Unilever, a multi-national corporation that controlled margarine and soap manufacture and retailing units in both Britain and Continental Europe. Through the 1920s, cotton for export was all sold to the British Cotton Growing Association, a trading company controlled by British textile interests. In 1928-29, Associated Tin Mines and the London Tin Corporation became the largest forces on the minefield. Both were formed by the Anglo-Oriental Trust based in Malaya, which wanted to bring Nigeria in line on world tin pricing and output. The unified successor, Amalgamated Tin Mines of Nigeria, became for a time the largest single tin mining company in the world. Anglo-Oriental was integrated with one of the two big world smelting combines.

Class Formation & the State

Concentration greatly strengthened the position of Western capital in Nigeria. Closer integration with industrial capital made possible and enhanced control of supply requirements on a steady basis. It was possible to consolidate a policy of low wages and low prices for export with high prices for import goods. While even the Asiatic market for British textiles was shrinking by the 1920s, Nigeria was a steady and growing customer, protected from competition by other capitalist states after the institution of imperial preference in 1932.

Between 1912 and 1945, the foundations of a dependent economy were laid in northern Nigeria. The most successful indigenous traders stood at the apex of a network of credit and clientage that rested on the shoulders of the village middlemen and moneylenders. Their wealth and prestige increased markedly in proportion to that of the masu sarauta, signified by their increased role in the patronage of Islam, which could no longer serve as the cementing block of the state. However, the merchant class and their Levantine competitors thrived only
in the interstices of an economy dominated by European firms. Their autonomy as a social force was truncated.

A parallel incorporation limited the real authority, if not the power to influence and punish, of the Indirect Rule bureaucracy. There was little incentive for either class to engage in operations beyond widening their commercial networks and the scale of moneylending. British refusal to permit the legal purchase of land helped to militate against capital accumulation in agriculture. Investment in productive activity, could not compete with the returns available from the investment of capital in trade or usury.

The rural masses were hooked into an increasingly commoditised economy. At favourable moments in the world trade cycle, cash income exceeded tax payments considerably, but the rapid increase of imported commodities, especially cloth and medical goods in rural areas, fed into the cycle of rapidly inflating prices for bride payments, naming ceremonies, and other socially vital exchanges and built into the chain of indebtedness. This in turn posed strains on the cohesiveness of the household, which became smaller, less embracing in function and less able to shield individuals in crises. Younger males left the unit earlier when household heads could not meet their obligations to help provide bride payments. The rapid growth of the institution of female seclusion, and the consequent removal of women from agricultural labour imposed further strains on the household unit. Craft production, especially textiles, may have continued to expand somewhat until 1945, but with the growing commoditisation of agricultural produce, became more peripheral and more detached from the agricultural base. As settlements became more dispersed, village cohesion declined. Food deficit areas became much larger and more susceptible to the vagaries of the natural environment. Population increases began to eliminate fallow and uncultivated land in some regions.

What Polly Hill has termed ‘the myth of the amorphous peasantry’ is not entirely mythical. The colonial economy transformed the world of the *gidaje* into a dependent, poorly articulated peasant society. The onset of drought or the ravage of locusts could place even a prosperous household in the clutches of the advance system and permanently ensnared it in cyclical debt. This was a small localised tragedy compared with the general onslaught of the Depression in 1929. The Depression brought about catastrophic declines in the prices of export commodities. Groundnut prices barely enabled the peasants to pay their taxes. The tin work-force fell off drastically in size and the wages of labourers was cut to unprecedented depths. In part, the peasantry responded by returning to food-crop production and traditional crafts. However, it is also striking that they exhibited what bourgeois economists have termed a ‘perverse’ reaction by increasing the groundnut crop to make up for price falls; despite the fall in tin wages, men clamoured for work on the plateau. This ‘perversion’ actually represented the effectiveness of the incorporative process that had been at work for over thirty years.

The sharp fall in wages and groundnut prices were not solely a consequence of the Depression; they reflect in large measure the oligopolistic control of Unilever and ATMN in their respective spheres. The situation was further compounded by the ‘merchandise agreements’ through which Unilever and a handful of others controlled both the supply and the price of cloth, salt, and other necessities of life. Similar conditions prevailed in many other areas of West Africa, notably the
Gold Coast, and it was here that conflict flared between European firms, African peasants and the middlemen with an intensity which the Colonial Office could not ignore. The result of the 1938 Gold Coast cocoa hold-up was the creation of the first of a series of commodity marketing boards for virtually all agricultural export crops throughout British West Africa, including northern Nigeria.

The events of the Second World War solidified state intervention. The necessity of maintaining sources of supply of tropical products after the loss of much of the Asian Empire to the Japanese led to a closer marriage of interests between the Imperial government and the European firms. Unilever and Anglo-Oriental officials were brought into the Ministry of Supply where they set policies governing buying operations and pricing of export crops and made policy concerning manufactured goods imports. Increased state intervention caused an important shift in the position of the major actors. Initially, the European firms became the Licensed Buying Agents of the Marketing Boards; later under pressure to Africanise, this role was handed to indigenous businessmen, many of them former company agents. During this period European business moved more heavily into the import sector, particularly into the sale of goods to the state for ‘development projects’ such as heavy construction and road building equipment. By the 1950s Marketing Board surpluses filled the coffers of the regional governments of Nigeria.

At first these surpluses were supposed to be used for price stabilisation. However, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development report for 1954 characterised these surpluses as ‘idle funds’ which could and should be used for ‘development’. Thus the coffers of peasant surplus were opened and ‘development’ became synonymous with the distribution of political favours in the crucial period of party politics preceding independence. The position of the peasantry was made even more untenable as the class alliance between indigenous businessmen and bureaucrats solidified into the ruling class of neo-colonialism. Cooperatives, created and often headed by businessmen and bureaucrats, were yet a further form of oppression, while ‘development’ projects provided new opportunities for the aggrandizement of the new ruling class.

Conclusion
To return to the central argument of this paper, the era of colonialism is best understood as a period of transition to peripheral capitalism in Nigeria. The surplus no longer took the form of a surplus product; it was transmuted into cash and commodities from which surplus value could be extracted. Two closely interlinked forces shared it; the colonial state and European business acting as merchant capital in the service of the industrial capital of the metropole. Social relations among Nigerian producers altered in such a way as to make household units more isolated, weaker and economically more dependent on the world conjuncture. However, capitalism did not transform the material character of production to any significant extent. The peasants still relied on their own tools and techniques of cultivation and as a result became increasingly more vulnerable to more efficient foreign competitors. Only to a very limited extent were producers deprived entirely of their own means of production. Since independence, Nigerian society has been plunged into the age of ‘development’. On the one hand, international capital has required a new means of capital reproduction, which it sells as ‘development’. On the other, a class alliance of Nigerian businessmen and bureaucrats has assumed the political reins and
prepared an inventory of needs and ambitions which it purchases as 'development'. This class alliance constitutes a dismal parody of similar alignments in the metropolitan capitalist world. We hold that the characteristic system of production and forms of surplus extraction have not altered fundamentally in the last twenty years. The expansion of petroleum exports since 1957 has not fundamentally altered the social relations of production. Rather it has drastically accelerated the process of capitalist reproduction. The major consequence of this reproduction has been the collapse of agriculture and its currently threatened takeover by the World Bank.

So long as structures which promote dependence and poverty are not examined critically and historically, they can still be regarded as an unalterable, if regretted, given. This paper in presenting a broad, structural, if at times superficial, view of the forcible incorporation of one part of Nigeria into the world-system and the consequent disarticulation of the existing productive forces, intends to contribute to the examination.

**Bibliographic Notes**


**OPPOSITION IN MALAWI**

Dr Attati Mpakati, National Chairman of the Socialist League of Malawi — the leading opposition party to the dictatorship of Hastings Banda — was recently sent a parcel bomb by agents of the Malawi government. The bomb maimed but did not kill him. This was not the first time that an attempt has been made to silence this dedicated man. Two gunmen went sent to Zambia to kill him in 1976. (They were unable to intimidate him into silence then and this recent attempt has also failed.) A leading nationalist in the 1950s, he was imprisoned and on his release studied abroad, gaining degrees in three European countries. During this time he began the difficult work of organising an opposition in exile (see report in RAPE No.4). A committed internationalist, he returned to Africa in 1976, working for the United Nations Institute for Namibia in Zambia. He later moved to Mozambique, where he is making an important contribution to building that country’s transition to socialism. (Inspired by his indefatigable spirit many more Malawians are joining the opposition movement.)

*Barry Munslow*

**RESEARCH AND INFORMATION CENTRE ON ERITREA (RICE)**

Among the several forces stacked against people of Eritrea in their struggle for liberation is the dearth of information about it that is made public. Their rights as a nation, the nature and circumstances of continued Ethiopian rule, the accomplishments of their struggle both on the battlefield and on the community, and now the facts of Soviet and Cuban involvement are given scant attention, both in Africa and in the west.

Now a Centre has been opened in Rome to repair this deficiency. It is able to pass on the information it receives to news agencies and publications and, in the form of a monthly newsletter, to interested individuals and organisations. Funds are also needed from sympathisers to sustain their work and to finance a related research project. For information and donations write to: RICE, Via Dogana Vecchia 5, I 00186 ROMA, Italy.

**OTHER PUBLICATIONS**


To be published soon

Williams, *Neo-Colonialism in Nigeria (a Political Economy)."

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have undertaken the distribution of the Review of African Political Economy in Nigeria. Contact them for purchases or subscriptions in local currency.
Hausa Women on Strike

Sam Jackson

A strike by Hausa women of Northern Nigeria in 1977 raised a number of interesting questions. How is it that these subordinate Muslim women could undertake and carry off a strike for better wages? How useful are the categories of ‘peasant’ and ‘landless labourer’, which are the cornerstones of generalizations about rural rebellions, in explaining the particular situation of Hausa women? Why is it that women went on strike as a response to exploitation by a foreign capitalist enterprise but are incapable of such action in their relations with Hausa peasants? Finally, in a comparison with a strike by women packers on an estate farm in Senegal, I raise the problem of how women’s labour is valued.

The Hausa people number several million and live in an area of Northern Nigeria which cuts across Kano, Zaria and Sokoto states. The particular location of this study was an area lying 50 km south of Kano city where a large scale irrigation project was established in 1971. This scheme, the Kano River Project (KRP) was seen as a way to increase agricultural productivity and produce primarily wheat (but also tomatoes) which would help meet the growing demand for bread from the urban centres of Kano State and indeed Nigeria as a whole. The area into which this scheme was introduced has a very high population density (463 per square mile) and an economy based on millet and sorghum as the main food crops and groundnuts as the main cash crop. During the long dry season farmers engage in a wide variety of other occupations such as tanning, weaving, dyeing, potting, trading of all sorts, temporary wage labour and religious activities like Koranic teaching and learning. Although there is little full-time specialisation, some farmers continue these other occupations all year round in addition to their farming, e.g. butchers and blacksmiths.

The rural population lives in nucleated villages (often of more than 2000 people), in hamlets as satellites of these villages, and in isolated farmsteads. Within the village, walled compounds contain either a single household or groups of households who eat separately but live together under the authority of an elder brother, a father or some other male relative. The household here means the group of people eating from a single pot. I shall discuss below some of the problems that arise in the use of the term ‘household’ (see also Wallace, 1978). The vast majority of Hausa are Muslim and the practice of wife seclusion (kulle) is universally subscribed to, although in practice it is far from universal.
The Kano River Project and BUD

When the decision was made to irrigate the area it was decided that the land could not be purchased and the peasants turned into tenants because this area has long had high population densities, intensive land use and individual rights in land that may be bought and sold. To appropriate the land would have involved great expense and would certainly have aroused fierce resistance from the peasantry. As an alternative, the government registered land ownership, installed the infrastructure of canal irrigation, then reallocated the land to the farmers. Thus an individual farmer received, in exchange for his non-irrigated land, the same amount of irrigated land (less about 10% for the canals, roads, etc.) in a similar location, usually with the same neighbours and without any consolidation being forced on him. Some land was appropriated to be used as a state farm but this was a small proportion of the area. The scheme management provide credit for the first two years to purchase the necessary inputs but thereafter the farmer is expected to have accumulated enough to finance the costly business of dry season irrigated agriculture by himself. In theory the management provides mechanised land levelling, fertiliser, seeds or seedlings and water to the farmer, at a cost, and once the crop is grown the local trading networks handle the marketing.

Into this situation in early 1977 came BUD, a Brussels-based holding company which grows vegetables in various underdeveloped countries to supply the winter European market with green beans, sweet peppers, melons and the like. Susan George has described the way such agribusinesses operate;

Essentially the system calls for contacts with satellite farmers who are to produce perishable goods to company specifications in exchange for payment (for top quality produce only) at a fixed price. The company handles both inputs and distribution; the farmer is left to cope with such boring details as the weather and other unpredictable elements of farming. (How the Other Half Dies, Penguin, 1976)

BUD would supply the seed on credit to farmers who would grow the crops on their own land and sell them to the company after harvest. In addition BUD was allocated a large part of the state farm on the project on which to grow green beans in 1977. The relationship between BUD and the KRP management was in the nature of a probation period at this stage. BUD encountered problems in both their enterprises — with the ‘independent’ peasants growing beans for them to market, and with their attempt at estate farm type bean production although here I will only describe the latter.

The KRP has transformed the process of production; the range of choices available to the farmer has been reduced, as to what to grow and how to grow it. He has become dependent on the KRP management for inputs to irrigated agriculture, certain land has acquired a relatively high value, there is progressively more renting of land and so on. Although the area has been integrated into a market economy for many years there is little doubt that the KRP has accelerated certain trends and initiated others whereby the region is becoming further and further integrated into the world capitalist system. This is not a unilinear pattern — there are cyclical sub-patterns, temporary reversals and variations for particular groups of people. BUD was a new element for farmers because the bean production involved growing a crop that had no place in the local diet or trade, unlike the wheat and tomatoes which the KRP usually produced, which although largely destined for consumption by the inhabitants of cities such as Kano, Jos
HAUSA WOMEN ON STRIKE

and Lagos, still these crops are familiar to Hausa peasants and a certain amount of the wheat and tomatoes are eaten by the producers and traded locally for local consumption. In addition, the crop was to be exported to Europe instead of merely to Kano and involved longer chains between producer and final consumer. Finally, the marketing and distribution of the crop was to be handled by BUD — the scheme management had never interfered in this aspect of wheat or tomatoes — which meant a further dependence for the farmer.

For farmers wives generally, the KRP has meant increasing seclusion and their progressive withdrawal from most agricultural tasks — with the exception of wheat harvesting. However, the specific way in which women have experienced this irrigation scheme depends on a variety of factors; age is an important one, for older non-secluded women have found a variety of wage labouring opportunities now available to them. Another important factor is their location relative to the project and the type of settlement they live in; those living in isolated farmsteads off-scheme have a different relationship with the project to those living in nucleated on-scheme villages. And in addition to variations in the direct effects of the project on women, there are those which result from the different effects of womens husbands and sons. But for all of them the bean harvesting for BUD was a purely contractual relationship in which they sold their labour in return for a wage.

Green beans were planted on the part of the government farm, that had been allocated to BUD, by using groups of women recruited by two redoubtable old ladies, Mairo and Lami. They are the 'headwomen' employed by the KRP to coordinate and supervise the relatively small core of women who regularly plant, weed and harvest various crops grown on the government farm. The BUD management used Mairo and Lami to go with them in their truck to various villages near to the farm and to go around calling together groups of women to work on the bean harvest.

BUD required about 300 women but started work with only half that number, although numbers improved later after the strike. Why was this? The practice of wife seclusion is very widespread and affects the women of the childbearing years most strictly i.e. from marriage at 12 years to menopause at about 50 years. It is interpreted more and more strictly with the increasing prosperity of the husband and is an ideal which many men are able to achieve on the irrigation scheme, where incomes can rise very suddenly. The patterns of seclusion practices are also associated with different settlement types — people living in dispersed farmsteads generally do not seclude women to the same extent as those living in villages, and of the latter larger villages have smaller proportions of non-secluded women than smaller villages. As farmstead dwellers on the KRP have been resettled in nucleated villages to facilitate irrigation, this too has encouraged stricter seclusion of women. So generally women living in nucleated on-scheme villages suffer stricter seclusion that the off-scheme women and this is one reason why BUD found it difficult to recruit female pickers. As will be seen later, however, in some circumstances women supposedly in *kulle* do come out and harvest, but this is only with their husbands permission, and as womens' incomes are used mostly for their own personal needs there is no reason why a husband should give this permission, and plenty of reason why he should not, i.e. the shame of having his women out in the fields. There is also a different attitude held towards working for husbands or brothers or male kin of any sort.
from that of working for the government as the BUD people were identified, which inhibits some women from this kind of work. The women that did work on the bean harvest were therefore the older women, of over 45, many widows, with grown or no children, who neither are in the kulle years nor have an authoritarian husband whose interests must be considered.

They worked from 8 a.m. in the mornings till 2 p.m in the afternoons, during which time a woman would pick 20 to 24 kilos of beans for which she would earn 30 k to 36 k per day (1N = 100 K = £0.83). Just as a point of comparison, the scheme management rate for male labour of the same duration was N 2.20 per day!

The Strike
After about a week’s work, with numbers falling off somewhat, one of the senior staff of the scheme management wanted to attract women to harvest a few acres of beans that he had grown on his private rented farm and offered 3 k per kilo. At this the headwomen Mairo and Lami called a strike demanding higher wages. BUD refused their request and made an attempt to simply recruit other women. They went over to the village of Garum Malam, an off-scheme village about 5 miles from the government farm and asked the village head to organise women for the harvest, which he did. The Garum Malam women were brought over and the harvest resumed. However, within a few hours, Mairo, Lami and parties of striking women were in the beanfields exhorting the Garum Malam women to refuse to work. This they did. Confronted the prospect of their beans growing too large for the European market, BUD gave in and agreed to a new wage of 2½ k per kilo. The women were now earning 50 to 60 k per day and numbered about 300.

How far are these events predictable from the literature on Hausa women? Certainly the stereotype image of Hausa women as totally submissive, obedient, lacking in power and oppressed by an Islamic ideology which specifically devalues women is somewhat at odds with the way in which these women organised their strike, refused to give way to either the threats of losing their jobs or the vision of truckloads of women, apparently willing to work for the wage they had rejected, arriving to start work. The ability of these women to take such action is no doubt partly due to their special features, for they cannot be said to be a random group of Hausa women, for example they were mainly older women who are expected to be more opinionated than younger women, and who are more influential and demand more respect than the latter. This group were also largely village dwellers and had had close experience of the KRP for some years. These were significant factors in their ability to organize and execute this strike but there were also certain general features of Hausa women which will be elaborated below and which were fundamental to their ability to organize effective resistance.

In spite of the fact that these were not a typical cross section of rural Hausa women, is it not surprising that these women who lack any real formal public power should be capable of such action? In Hausa society women are legal minors all their lives, are expected to defer to men in all things, possess few rights, even over their own bodies, for husbands may control the very physical freedom of wives and on marriage obtain rights to all offspring. The image of Hausa women as obedient, dependent, vulnerable and irresponsible exists in the rules, laws and customs of Hausa society as well as in the minds of Hausa men.
and in most written accounts and description by researchers. This stereo-type is clearly in need of revision, for although the strike may be partly explained by the rupture of what Wolf has called ‘the integument of custom’, in the way in which the bean pickers relationship with BUD was a purely contractual buying and selling of labour, it is also because of certain characteristics of Hausa women that this strike was possible. But before going on to these something must be said about our ideas of what constitutes a peasantry and in particular about the peasant household for these both underlie some of our confusions and are important in understanding why women have only been able to resist exploitation in certain situations.

Peasantry and Women
Hausa women are not part of the peasantry as it has usually been defined and reluctant as I am to go through the well-worn path of peasant definitions again it seems unavoidable. I will try to point out briefly the difficulties of using the three most common ideas of what is a peasant or a peasantry in dealing with Hausa women. Firstly there are the very general definitions of peasants as rural cultivators who own land, and from this point of view rural Hausa women are not peasants for they do not generally own land nor do they farm — in the sense of making production decisions. One might expect that this exclusion of half the rural population in the many areas where women do not farm would have provoked comment in the long exchanges on peasant definitions, but it does not appear to have.

Another definition which has wide currency is that based on the peasant household as a joint production and consumption unit. Whilst descriptions of peasants at the level of individuals may be unsatisfactory, this definition which rests on the concept of the household generates another set of problems. How far is the very notion of the household applicable to Hausa society? Is the household a production and consumption unit in reality? What other functions does the household have? The degree to which relations between men and women (and indeed children) of the same household are commoditized must cast doubt on the value of ‘the household’ as a unit of analysis in this situation. For example a woman who is a groundnut oil maker may use the money given her by her husband for soup ingredients to buy oil from herself for the soup that she will herself consume that evening. Likewise, women often sell the grain that they obtain in various ways to their husbands, they lend money to their husbands, they expect to be rewarded for agricultural work they do and so on. Money plays an extremely important role in the relations between husband and wife.

The household is also constantly changing in its composition and this mitigates against it achieving a corporate identity. Not only does the high divorce rate mean that women are moving around from one household to another, but also men move out on permanent migration, young men go on various sorts of temporary migrations, others may be added for the dry season, boys go off on tours with their koranic teachers, wives go to their natal homes for some months on the birth of a child and also frequently run off for a few months after a quarrel, mothers seem to float in and out of households as do sisters who do their three month period of continence necessitated by divorce at the father/brothers compound, children are fostered in and out, there is a very high infant mortality rate and so on. The household may be a readily identified empirical reality but this should not obscure either the importance of extra-household co-
The household is not a sacrosanct, indivisible unit and should not be treated as a behavioural whole for it is partly this that has made women invisible and has obscured their role in the process of production.

The household is not production unit either, in the sense that not all members are part of a work group that together provide the sustenance for the unit. Women do agricultural work of certain kinds and at certain times in their lives but there are better thought of as a set of exchanges between household members rather than as a production unit. Women are not part of the farming unit and are not named as such in enquiries. The farm work they do is usually rewarded with a proportion of the crop harvested. Women to the great majority of domestic work and it seems better to consider the household a consequence of the exchange of domestic services from food than as a corporate production unit. It is not only from the point of view of women that the household and the production unit are separate for there are many ways in which men farm together that are not bounded by the household. Although women need children to enable them to sell their prepared foods this is a private production for the proceeds do not go into the household coffers and furthermore a woman without children can still operate by hiring brokers to sell for her.

As a unit of consumption 'the household' fares a little better but much of what is consumed by members comes from private incomes rather than the household granaries, in particular mid day snacks. The gifts of food which are given to visitors, beggars, sent around the village to friends and so on are often drawn from a woman's own resources. Although the household is defined here as a group that eat together, this is a far from complete description of the consumption patterns which often appear very little like a unit with pooled resources that are used to support all members.

Could we perhaps define the peasant household as the unit of reproduction? Edholm, Harris and Young (1977) have distinguished three meanings of reproduction: social reproduction, reproduction of the labour force and human reproduction. By social reproduction is meant the reproduction of the conditions of production both in the economic instance and the ideological realm. Land is obtained in several ways, inheritance being the most common but rented, bought, pledged and gift farms make up a significant proportion of total cultivated land, and these are not predicated on the existence of the household. Some other inputs to agriculture such as seeds and fertilizer may be either provided from within the household or purchased and others such as tools are always purchased. Farm labour is obtained partly from the household but there are several other ways of obtaining labour, of which wage labour is only one, but these have been neglected because of the fixation with family labour. M.G. Smith in his study of the Hausa domestic economic in 1952 estimated that of the total consumption of a sample of 90 households, only 46% was directly produced by the household (Smith 1952) so clearly the reproduction of labour power as a condition of production is only partially provided by the household. So the household does ensure the material conditions of production to some extent for men. Less can be said for women whose means of production do not include land, and who may continue to work at their occupations even if they have no children to hawk for them, and for them the household is not necessary to reproduce their material conditions of production.
However in the reproduction of ideological structures the household is important. Olivia Harris (1976) has suggested the reason for the ascendancy of the household lies in its value to male peasants and to non-peasants in perpetuating a particular sexual division of labour. The second kind of reproduction, reproduction of the labour force, includes domestic labour and the allocation of labour to particular roles in production and here too the household can be seen to contribute to the reproduction of the conditions of capitalist production, as others such as Meillassoux have pointed out. Finally, of course, the household is the locus for biological reproduction. The notion of the household must be reconsidered and its ideological underpinnings recognized and for this we must emphasize its primary function is as a vehicle of social reproduction.

To return to the problem with using peasantry to describe Hausa women, there remains the ‘part-society’ definition to be discussed. Here the peasantry is characterized by certain relationships to the wider economy and the problem is the implied homogeneity and autonomy of ‘the peasantry’. William Roseberry (1978) has criticized the notion of a peasant economy for obscuring the ways in which peasants do not control their means of production and are in fact alienated. It has also been pointed out by many that the peasantry has considerable internal differentiation which means that the relationship between different parts of ‘the peasantry’ and the state will vary. Similarly women are in a particular relationship with these wider structures of society that cannot be subsumed under the idea of a ‘part-society’.

To leave aside the household then and look at the community of women, the occurrence of a successful strike stimulates the question of how far Hausa women can be seen as a class? The question of the existence of classes generally in Hausaland has received some attention and I do not intend to take up the debate here, but at least all writers agree that male Hausa society is characterized by great inequalities in terms of the size of land holdings, number of granaries owned, incomes and power differentials. In contrast to the highly stratified nature of male Hausa society, the divisions within the world of Hausa women are relatively unimportant. M.G. Smith recognised this when he wrote ‘politically and legally women are an internally undifferentiated collection of individuals, none of whom are full social persons’. (Smith 1955:13) Certainly there are variations in female status but these are based largely on age, and not on differences in economic relationships. Women are excluded from authority of any kind and lack public roles. They do not have titled offices, (although in the past they did, I was told by Renee Pittin); they do not become religious leaders or alkali’s (judges) and do not become officials of the modern state in any way, such as teachers, extension workers, dispensers and the like. There is no system of hereditary, intermarrying, ranked occupational groups, such as Smith describes for Hausa men, in operation in the womens world. Apart from these ‘traditional’ divisions, women also have been shielded from the direct predations to the modern state to some extent, so that the differentiating effect on women of capital penetration has been minimal compared to men. Village women show a uniformity which is as remarkable as the inequalities which characterise Hausa men. It must be noted that there are a few relatively wealthy women that are to be found in large cities such as Kano but even they remain incomparable with male traders and usually enjoy altogether exceptional circumstances. In the context of dispersed settlements, nucleated villages and substantial villages of Kura and Rano Districts of Kano State where this study was carried out there
are some clearly wealthier women but they are just this, wealthier women, no
more. That is, their social relations of production remain the same as their less
prosperous sisters.

Rural Hausa women engage in petty commodity production and petty trade,
services of various sorts and certain agricultural tasks as well as domestic labour;
for example a woman may make fried bean cakes for sale in the village by her
small children, make millet balls for sale in the same way, spin cotton into
thread, sell kerosine in small bottles, harvest groundnuts and of course do all of
the cooking, and domestic chores of the household. Women have multiple
occupations at any one time and take on others in certain seasons. There are
discernable threads connecting the bewildering variety of goods women produce
however. Their activities in production are almost wholly confined to the
local economy i.e. their raw materials are produced locally, and the goods are
exchanged and consumed locally. Women work alone, generally, or in loose co-
operative units without any formal or enduring groupings. They do not employ
assistants of any sort; their equipment is easily available to all and the skills
either minimal or learned in childhood; very little by way of capital to get
started is required and the mobility in and out of most occupations is quite free.

In their domestic labour there is little variation in the tasks that women perform
although individual women may spend more or less time on any particular
activity. Finally in agriculture, there is a strict sexual division of labour which
defines women's role such that variations are again those of degree rather than
kind. The social relations of production are qualitatively similar for all women
although for any one particular woman their significance will vary depending
on her age, her place of residence, the ages of her children and so on.

So we can speak of women as occupying a certain place in the process of pro-
duction that is peculiar to women and applies to all women. Land is not a
differentiating factor amongst women in the way that it is for men for Muslim
women now theoretically do inherit land but the practice of seclusion and the
fact of viri-local marriage means that such land as women do 'own' they do
not either farm themselves, nor do they control production in a significant way.
Exceptions spring to mind but exceptions they remain. Women do not have real
access to the major means of production in agriculture.

The relative lack of patronage between women and between women and men
means that there are not the vertical cleavages which tend to divide any particular
class of male Hausa society. Such relations of patronage do exist, e.g. the kanwar
rana institution whereby older women 'adopt' younger women as the junior
sisters and the junior then performs small services for the senior and is given non-
reciprocated gifts. But they are mainly to be found in urban areas where dif-
fferences in status amongst women are more marked, for in village society these
distinctions are minor and where kanwar rana is found it is largely based on age
rather than differences in wealth: a major difference to patronage in male
society. However far more important than these 'patronage' relations are relation-
ships between equals which reinforce the identity of women as a collectivity
rather than fragment it. Biki is an extremely important institution for Hausa
women which involves reciprocal gift giving between bond-friends at ceremonial
occasions. One of the characteristics of biki is that it is only conducted between
equals and as it may occur between the wives of a Village Head and the wife of a
praise singer. It can be seen that not only is women's status independent of their
husbands but that there is a unity amongst women which stands in contrast to the class divisions, factions and patronage relations of Hausa men.

The question of how far female status can be seen as independent from male status in general, and their husbands status in particular, has received some attention (Smith, 1959, 1961; Yeld, 1960) and is of some importance here, as the case for women as a class rests partly on the independence of female status. Hausa women divorce frequently and these conditions of marital instability are one reason why spouses cannot have the same status. In addition, women are legally and politically the wards of men and cannot be said to fully acquire the status position of their husbands but only do so in a 'reflected glory' sense. One might imagine that the degree of seclusion practised in marriage directly assigns women to a status position which is therefore a reflection of her husbands economic position. Not so, for the strictness of wife seclusion practice reflects the husband’s status but is seen as separate from the wife herself.

Thus the status system of women is independent from that of husbands and fathers and operates on a different basis:

among the females the criteria which govern social placement are those of generation, age, marriage-order to a common husband, ethnicity and descent, fertility, marital career, the position and prospects of offspring and, to a lesser extent, differences in wealth. (Smith 1959:244)

Having established the status independence of women, what of their economic independence? The autonomy of Hausa women has been noticed by a number of writers who have been surprised (and a little shocked?) by the extent to which they keep their own finances completely separate from the household finances. Husbands are bound to provide their wives with adequate food and clothing, indeed, the failure to do so is one of the few grounds for a wife to divorce her husband that is recognised by Islamic law. Men provide the grains for the main evening meal from their granaries and buy the necessary ingredients for the soup that accompanies it. The money that women earn from their own occupations is their own to use as they please and the result of this is that women have a degree of economic autonomy which they value highly. For example a woman of one village where I carried out my research was overheard saying why should she bother to make food for sale when her husband gave her all she needed. This provoked great exclamations on her foolishness, much moralizing about independence and the final judgement that she was 'simple'. This is not to say that women do not contribute to the household economy — clearly they do, in domestic labour and in material contributions — but they will not confuse their private incomes with their household obligations and they will not rely on their husbands for their private incomes. Thus a Hausa wife remains an asset not a liability to her husband and yet retains the material autonomy that gives her such independence.

In many ways women manifest this character of independence and autonomy and relative to men they appear as free agents, neither embedded in kinship relations to the same degree nor committed to their husband’s household as such. Most Hausa women will have three to four marriages before menopause and although some marriages endure, most do not and the result in a considerable physical mobility for women as they move from marriage to marriage with periods at home, as well as periods as courtesans in the interstices between marriages. This mobility is so marked that it has been suggested that women are
strangers (*bako*) in most of the communities they live in during a lifetime. This character of permanent strangers is a most important one and allows a solidarity between women to develop because of the absence of competing loyalties to kin or marriage. The labelling of Hausa women as a class is less important than recognizing the many ways in which they form a coherent group with common interests of which they are aware.

Because these women cannot be characterized as peasants the generalizations on the nature of peasant rebellions have little to offer when looking at this strike. Their situation seems to have some similarities to that of landless labourers, so can we say that rural Hausa women are part of a rural proletariat? Whilst there is disagreement about presence of classes in Hausa society, there is a consensus on the absence of landless labourers. Polly Hill writing of rural Katsina — ‘it is difficult to see how a class of resident landless labourers could ever emerge’ (Hill 1972:193) and David Norman on rural Zaria — ‘a landless labouring class is virtually non-existent’ (Norman 1972) and, in a study which included some of the villages where I worked, Jacob M. Baba (1975), all concluded that there was no evidence for a class of landless labourers. Taking the term to mean those who have virtually no access to land, either owned or rented, I would suggest that perhaps there is such a group but that they have remained invisible partly simply by virtue of being female, but also because of the conception of the indivisible household.

Hausa women are commonly supposed to do no agricultural work because this is the male ideal that husbands relate with assurance to researchers enquiring on the matter. For example David Norman in his studies values women's agricultural labour between the ages of 15 and 64 at zero when constructing his labour unit index (Norman 1974:23). It is a fiction which is maintained in spite of the fact that at certain times in their lives women are extremely important not only in crop processing but also in working in the fields. Most women over the age of about 25 or 30 participate in the groundnut harvest — this is the major exception to seclusion. In addition, post menopause women and women who live in dispersed farmsteads where seclusion is uncommon and active in many harvesting activities and the gathering of millet and sorghum. This work is done for husbands, for kin and for non-relatives and is undertaken in exchange for a fixed wage paid either in cash or kind. The latter is more common and women are usually paid an agreed proportion of what they harvest. Therefore we can see such women as constituting a wage labouring group in a way that male agricultural wage labourers do not, for the latter rarely have no land and most male *kwadago* (wage labouring) is done by independent farmers in need of cash or young men who are part of their fathers farming units. Agricultural wage labour done by women however is ‘free wage labour’ to a much greater degree for there seems to be fewer ties of patronage and dependence involved.

How are such women not like a proletariat? The fact of marriage (or an independent son in the case of widows), guarantees a woman’s daily subsistence such that her labour is ‘free’ in quite another sense. A male in a similar position risks great suffering if he finds himself without work but a woman has far greater freedom to resist deepening exploitation, because marriage provides a safety net that will always save her from total desperation. This is not to say that women are in a better position — clearly they are not because these women are paid less for their labour than men are, and a series of ideological structures legitimises
the under-valuation of female labour. However, they are in a stronger position for the reasons outlined above, i.e. they are more free and less constrained in the possibilities for resistance, either active, such as the strike, or passive, such as simply not entering the labour market under certain conditions.

This contradictory nature of marriage as meaning both dependence and independence for women is striking. On the one hand women are forced to marry to be social adults and to be a respectable member of society and a formidable ideological apparatus ensures this. Marriage deprives women of their personal liberty if, as is as usual, seclusion is practised, it constrains all their economic activities, deprives them of effective access to land, alienates them from kin and generally ensures the non-viability of the individual women i.e. makes her totally dependent. The Islamic rule that the husband must feed the wife is an important aspect of this dependency, with far reaching consequences. Yet on the one hand, Hausa women are extremely independent and economically viable as has been described above. Is ‘dependence’ even the right term, for women may depend on husbands but in a polygynous society husbands are not in short supply and can be easily replaced? Definite limits are set on what a man may expect from his wife because of the relative scarcity of women.

They are also not like a rural proletariat in that they have a series of other work relationships which may be more important. And although women might find themselves engaged mainly in this type of labour as they grow old they were not always so. Finally the dominance of the perspective of sex will modify any secondary identity such as ‘wage labourer’ such that this term will never portray female wage labouring anything more than crudely.

So by a rather circuitous route we have come to see Hausa women generally as a ‘class’ and those engaging in wage labour in agriculture as sharing some characteristics of a rural proletariat. With the important difference of greater tactical mobility however which was crucial in the ability to sustain the bean strike. Once again we find a label such as ‘rural proletariat’ inadequate for describing the very different situation of women.

Absence of Rebellion: Wheat

One might now ask, do women exert this tactical mobility in other contexts, e.g. in the wage labouring they do for village farmers? To answer this question we will look at the wheat harvest on the KRP as a comparison to the bean harvest.

The wheat on the KRP is grown on the irrigated farms of independent farmers and when harvest time comes the wheat was cut down with hand scythes by men of the farmers household and additional hired male labourers who were paid 40 to 50 k per strip, which meant a daily wage of N1-20k to N140k. Threshing was done by both men and women but always in separate work groups. Men threshers would never winnow, though. The threshing consisted of beating a pile of wheat with a stick till the heads lost most of the grain, then the grain would be winnowed and bagged. Male threshers worked in groups of two to four and were paid N2.00 per bag threshed. However, the great majority of the threshers were women — many coming from Kadawa village but also some from the surrounding areas of dispersed settlement. There were basically three types of women present: i) the older on-scheme women past childbearing age who are
no longer in kulle and often widowed; ii) the younger wives of the farmer who are breaking kulle and who would, if questioned deny that they do any farm work. All farmers agreed that most farmers were bringing out wives on the wheat but of course, their wives were not threshing; iii) the off-scheme women. They were of all ages, many carrying small children with them.

When women thresh they also winnow, but of course some women only winnow to complement the men who only thresh. Winnowing is done by pouring the wheat and chaff from a calabash held at shoulder height, to another placed on the ground, during which the wind blows the lighter chaff away whilst the heavier grain falls into the calabash. There was considerable difference in the wages paid to men and women - men were paid N2.00 per bag to thresh only whilst women received N1.50 per bag to both thresh and winnow. Since women received 50 k a bag for winnowing only we can see that they were effectively paid N1.00 per bag for threshing i.e. half the wage paid to men for the same work. Women who threshed and winnowed earned 75 k to N1.50 a day (½ to 1 bag) and the winnowers N1.00 to N1.50 k a day (2 to 3 bags).

Some women worked in groups of three to four, often cowives or bondfriends, whilst others worked quite individually. On-scheme women were recruited by the farmer simply sending word around that tomorrow he would start his wheat, whilst off-scheme women from farmsteads would walk to the wheatfields having heard the harvest had begun, and ask for work. Why then did the bean pickers organise themselves against exploitation whereas the wheat women did not?

One reason is to be found in the rather different situations of farmstead women compared to village women. The bean harvest was dominated by the latter but numbers of farmstead women were to be found in the wheat harvest. These people are more active in agricultural labour on farms of the household head for which they receive little or no renumeration and therefore their expectations are lower. In addition they have fewer craft occupations because of the absence of markets in dispersed settlement types, which means that they have fewer alternative ways of earning the cash that all women increasingly need and hence are more dependent on their wage labouring. Finally, these women were generally younger which meant they were likely to have small dependent children to take care of and their younger age entails a far more submissive obedient role than that of older women. The farmstead women had less ability to take risks, a greater need of cash and were not politicised to the same extent as the older Kadawa women who have had several years of working for the management of KRP.

Another set of reasons lie in the differences between the beans and the wheat harvest. Firstly, that the absolute level of renumeration was a little higher on the wheat were there was also the possibility of pilfering the crop (not on the beans which are not consumed locally) and of gleaning the fields later. Secondly, that the total absence of men in the bean harvest allowed the solidarity of the women to find full expression whilst the presence of male threshers in the wheat and the mixed origins of female workers who were mainly strangers to each other introduced a more complex work situation in which collective action may have been inhibited.

The structure of peasant farms as small units employing handfuls of women rather than hundreds employed by a single employer must also pose problems;
organising protest becomes more difficult; a single farmer can more easily find a few replacements for disgruntled women; and varying wage rates subverts discontent into competition for the better paid jobs rather than unified resistance.

However apart from these material and organizational reasons why women protested at low wages on the beans but not at the discrimination against them on the wheat there are important reasons that are more ideological. One is the specific devaluation of women by Islam which thereby legitimates paying them less for the same work. Islam specifically states that ‘men stand superior to woman in that God hath preferred the one over the other’ (Koran 4) and there is no question in the minds of Hausa men or women that the sexes should be paid equally for equal work. So the gap between mens and womens rewards was not seen as grounds for complaint in itself. But more important is the impossibility of women defying village men who if not husbands or brothers, may be socially connected in some way or even if they are strangers they are at least inhabitants of neighbouring villages and the possibility of recrimination remains. The authority of men over their wives in the household, which is not altogether a product of Islam, provides a model for the agricultural work relations, such as in the wheat harvest, and this makes rebellion by the women workers a much more difficult matter. In this sense we can see again how the household is part of the reproduction of structures of domination for it is only when operating outside of kin, marriage and village connections that women were able to protest against their exploitation. And paradoxically it is also the household that enables them to make this challenge for marriage can give women tactical mobility. For women, the household allows some material independence but also entails ideological oppression.

Agribusiness: BUD Senegal and BUD Nigeria

Finally, I would like to note a few points of comparison between the strike by women packers, described by Maureen Mackintosh, (1977) on an estate farm run, and partly financed by BUD and that which I have described.

There are notable similarities and differences in the two situations; in Senegal, BUD is running two farms that are financed partly by the World Bank, the Senegalese government and by BUD itself unlike Nigeria where they were, for the time they lasted, operating in a scheme financed by national capital which retained the smallholder structure. Both areas were approximately 50 km from a major urban centre (Dakar and Kano) where there were regular flights to Europe in the many planes which brought goods into the country and in which, because there was little return freight, the rates were extremely low. The local agricultural system in Senegal is described as based on millet and groundnuts with some market gardening along river sides, similar to that around Kano.

BUD’s relations with the state appear to have been somewhat different although little is said of this in Mackintosh’s paper it seems likely that as BUD were part investors as well as managers that they had the active cooperation of the Senegalese State as well as holding final control of the farm operation. In Nigeria, however, the KRP was an independent of the government without the help of international capital. The KRP was managed and financed partly by the Kano State Ministry of Agriculture and partly by a federal level body – the Hadejia-Jamaare River Basin Development Authority. The split between Ministry and Authority was a complication for BUD and one which was a factor in their
failure to get a foot in the door at KRP in the final instance. It was the Authority who agreed to let BUD operate at Kadawa initially as a trial both for BUD and the KRP. But having begun operations the Ministry Staff opposed the BUD involvement, ostensibly on the grounds that the KRP was set up to grow wheat for Nigeria not beans for Europe. The complaints finally reached Lagos and enquiries were made as to the nature of BUD involvement in the KRP — undoubtedly this was part of the reasons they were finally forced to leave. The Ministry staff on the project also obstructed BUD in numerous small ways that made their operation progressively more difficult as 1977 wore on. The KRP management merely tolerated BUD — unlike the Senegal project.

A comparison with the workings of BUD shows international capital of this sort to be far more rapacious than domestic state capital (as manifested in the KRP) which seems a bottomless pit for investment which may never show a profit and which reveals domestic capital as consumptive in nature. Why could BUD make a profit out of Kadawa whilst the project staff cannot? Partly because the scheme does not handle the marketing of produce but also because BUD enjoyed the benefits of all the very costly infrastructural development of canal irrigation without contributing to this in any way. In addition the farmers, in their bean production, used fertilisers heavily subsidised by the government, tractor operations, and water inputs at subsidised rates and the costs of the credit programme were borne by the KRP. Thus the peasant farmer production involved very few costs to BUD, all these were borne by the farmers and the scheme management. On the government farm production the land BUD used was not paid for, a group of ‘helpers’ was provided from Ministry staff at no cost to BUD, stores and housing were provided for BUD staff and so on. A further aspect of BUD’s peripatetic position was the way in which they used the management of KRP as agents of coercion, for farmers who refused to grow beans for BUD were threatened with sanctions on their water supply so that they could grow no irrigated crops.

If the KRP management gained so little how did BUD ever get permission to operate? Probably by playing on the split between Ministry and Authority, and utilising the desire of the Authority as a newly created federal body to prove itself and to make its mark on the KRP which had previously been a Ministry preserve. There was also the promise that BUD would train local staff who could take over the enterprise in the future. Finally, there is the concern that the project as a whole should be seen to be producing much, because it is a prestige project that every visiting dignitary is taken to see as an example of Nigeria’s rural development. In this context, visible output is more important than profitability and anything that makes the scheme appear more productive has something to recommend it.

Interestingly, the consequences of the strike in Senegal included the mechanisation of bean packing and even greater control whereas in Nigeria they were forced to leave the KRP entirely — partly because of the strike, partly because of the Ministry resistance to BUD intervention. Farmers, too, can still refuse to cultivate — unlike the estate farm where wage labourers are far more deeply dependent.

The recruitment of labour on the BUD Senegal farm involved both women and men, but the men of the local area were largely involved in other dry season occupations so that male workers were largely drawn from further afield (59%
were not from the estate area and most returned home in the wet season) whilst
the women employed were largely from the local area. Although male labourers
were not employed by BUD Nigeria, as in Senegal 'The main pool of available
workers in these villages, willing to work for the wages offered were women'.
Male labourers could, of course, be found, at a price though which was well
above that which they could offer women. In their Nigeria operation BUD
never even tried to recruit men as their Senegalese experience had taught them
the value of using women.

In Senegal up to 2,000 were employed, whereas in Nigeria only a few hundred
were employed, and in both, wage work was familiar to men and women. The
strike in Senegal involved women bean pickers (who were virtually all the female
workers on the farm at that time) and who, when switched to piece rates by the
management in an effort to improve productivity, refused to work. They said
that the work was not worth the effort at the lower rate of pay. However,
women bean pickers in Senegal were paid piece rates and received 'by far the
lowest rates of pay on the farm' (p.2) yet they did not strike. Assuming that
they were not another group of women (e.g. migrants), one wonders what
the reasons for this are. One factor seems to be that if the management shows it
is able to pay more (e.g. in the hourly rates paid to packers originally and in the
higher wage offered to pickers in Nigeria to harvest the private rented farm) then
women will react by demanding more. There is less of an absolute sense of the
value of their labour time below which they will not drop and more of a sense of
relative deprivation. This feeling of relative deprivation was not, of course, relative
to men for neither in Nigeria nor in Senegal did women express this view.

BUD had learned from their experience in Senegal, and when they began work in
Nigeria it was with very low wages and with piece rate because they had seen the
effect of trying to lower wages after better rates had been paid. But this attempt
to avoid the effects of relative deprivation failed because of an unhappy (for
them) coincidence, but arguably the same thing would have happened later in
the season anyway. As small farmers were growing beans which were soon to be
harvested, at the time of the strike, and as family labour would have been in-
adequate, the farmers are likely to have offered a better wage to the women.

This brings up the important question of how women's labour is valued. In
domestic labour, in petty commodity production and trade, and in some of the
agricultural work of rural Hausa women their labour time is either assigned no
value or rewards are more in the nature of a gesture recognising work done, but
not evaluating its worth. Then again some work is rewarded with for example a
proportion of the crop harvested.

One could say that the opportunity lost of women's time gives it fixed value,
being the value of the goods they could produce by alternative activities. But if
this were the case BUD would simply fail to recruit any labour at the wage
offered. They did not fail and women worked for this wage until it became
clear that BUD could pay more. For the individual women working on the
bean harvest the 1½ k per kilo offered must have been above the opportunity
cost of their labour at that time or they would not have taken the work, but
these women cannot then be said to strike because they could earn more else-
where — the strike action must be caused by other reasons. If, then we say that
women have no alternatives offering a comparable income and that they need
cash, then is it not very surprising that they have the ability to strike? The answer lies in the fact of marriage which ensures such a woman's food needs and endows her with tactical mobility. At the same time, it means that women do not sell their labour power at a fixed rate related to the cost of reproducing themselves, where this is partly borne by the household as in Hausaland. Neither does the supply of such labour available to meet demand fix the wage rate because the power relations of men and women, the obligations of kinship, the social ties of all kinds influence the ways in which rewards for labour are given. Hence the ideological and partly material dependence of women on marriage structures both the wages they will work for, and gives them the freedom to press for better wages when the conditions for such action are right.

What do women mean when they say that the work is 'not worth the effort'? Given that there are not alternatives, we cannot take it to mean that the same effort used elsewhere yields better. So either it means she would rather not do the work and have no money and depend on her husband more, or it means she values the things she spends the money on (mainly items for social exchanges that consolidate ties with other women) less than the effort involved in getting the money to buy them — both of which boil down to the fact that the wage is not worth the independence it buys. Unsurprisingly, given the value Hausa women place on independence, the wage they are prepared to work for is very low. Wage labour, indeed female production generally, seems to be motivated not by the desire to accumulate, nor by the need to reproduce, nor by the need for subsistence, nor by the demands of the state but by the quest for autonomy.

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Labour in Kano since the Petroleum Boom

Paul M. Lubeck

Since 1973, Nigeria has undergone a petroleum-induced economic expansion that has generated economic and social changes in urban Kano and the region as a whole. This paper comments on the major changes experienced by Kano from 1972 to 1978. They concern the economy, state structure, rural-urban relations, and most importantly, changes in the organization of the urban working class. Because the onset of the petroleum boom follows the author's research on the Adebo strikes of 1971-72, his article on worker consciousness in Kano (see Note at end) is used as a reference point from which economic and social change will be evaluated.

Economy and Society

Prior to the petroleum boom, groundnut exports were the mainstay of Kano's economy. For several reasons — drought, low producer prices, and mismanagement of marketing boards — groundnuts have ceased to be either a significant export crop or a productive base for Kano's extensive commercial economy. Now oil revenue, controlled and allocated by the state sector, has replaced groundnuts and other export crops as the engine of growth throughout Nigeria. This change has meant that the state sector, either Kano State or the Federal Military Government (FMG), now possesses increased control over employment, infrastructural projects, access to credit and state contracts, as well as the location and scale of many industries. The immediate consequences have been an extraordinary construction boom, an annual inflation rate between 30 and 50%, and a marked increase in state sector employment. Even more than before, a link to the state sector is a requirement for either foreign or Nigerian capitalists to gain access to petroleum funding.

Since 1972, one of the most visible changes is the presence of multinational firms either engaged directly in production or providing services. Largely because of low incomes of potential consumers, few multinational firms had previously invested in Kano. Instead, Asian and Levantine-owned industries predominated. With the increase in income generated by the oil revenue MNC's became directly involved in production. Initially this took the form of purchasing successful firms such as vegetable oil mills and textile factories. Subsequently, following the arrival of ITT and Bank of America, which opened branch offices from Lagos, major multinational industrial producers have invested in Kano. These include: Dunlop, ICI, Bata, Lonrho, Fiat, and Union-Carbide. If the petroleum
pipe-line is completed, thus connecting Kano to the oil fields, then additional firms are likely to locate there in order to process and manufacture petroleum derived products from the northern markets. Though state planning called for Kano to function as an agricultural processing centre, no international agro-industrial firms have announced plans to locate, except that Fiat plans to produce tractors and trucks.

Neither the indigenization of industry decrees nor oil wealth has brought about any dramatic increase in the scale of Nigerian industrial investments. Most alien-owned manufacturing firms continue to be managed by their foreign owners. Informants and discussions with merchant capitalists suggest that greater profits are available through investment in trade, real estate and transport than in industry. Moreover, the terms of the indigenization decrees, by encouraging Nigerians to buy shares in multinational firms, may have actually discouraged local investment in manufacturing or other risk ventures. Furthermore, because the state sector is engaged in joint ventures with multinational firms and because the FMG's import and tariff policies have varied by regime and with changes in world demand for petroleum, state policies may have discouraged indigenous capitalists from investing in fixed capital goods.

State Structure and Class Relations
With the creation of nineteen states, Kano has emerged as the most populous state in the federation. The oil revenue and the accompanying inflation has created a situation where many of the functions formerly allocated to the states or the regions are now performed or indirectly controlled by the federal centre. Currently the federal government is responsible for funding universal primary education, the organisation and matriculation of students into the universities, the courts, police and legal system, and the functioning of the produce marketing board. Local government funding is now dependent upon federal revenue and recent changes in the election of area councils and land tenure arrangements represent a shift away from local control by the traditional office-holding aristocracy, the sarakuna.

Increasingly, university educated officials in the state government have reduced the powers of the local government authorities and of the traditional office-holders and their subordinates. At the same time the incidence of business activity by the sarakuna has increased. More commonly, however, they represent state economic interests or act as state-appointed directors of joint state-private capital enterprises. Before the petroleum boom, peasant-produced surplus extracted by taxation or through the marketing boards was sufficient to reproduce this urban office-holding aristocracy. Now the sarakuna are dependent upon federal sources of revenue to maintain their class position and style of consumption. As federal reforms in the legal, educational and local government areas reduced opportunities for the sarakuna, the younger generation has pursued careers in the federal state bureaucracy, often engaging in directly economic forms of administration.

The move of the aristocracy toward capitalist activity and federal parastatal and state bureaucracies is complemented by the increased influence of the wealthy commoners in Kano. To be sure, the bourgeoisie emerged to challenge the aristocracy before the petroleum boom and eventually formed a class alliance with them during the First Republic, and the two may be merging over time into
a single class. But for the present time, the traditional aristocrats possess a
distinct status that is respected by commoners regardless of wealth. This should
be apparent in the forthcoming elections. Given rent from petroleum as the
sources of capital investment, access to state patronage is necessary for the
expansion and reproduction of the bourgeoisie. But shares in capitalist invest-
ments are equally necessary for the scions of the aristocracy now located in the
state sector; for the competition for state office and the frequent changes in
regime require that state bureaucrats control a private source of economic
wealth for their family’s security. While distinct in origin and status the two
classes are mutually complementary in function. One expects this solidarity
to increase in the face of challenges from the urban popular and working class.

Rural-Urban Relations: Land as a Commodity

The petroleum boom is associated with increasing rural-to-urban migration,
increased investment and expenditure in urban areas and a high rate of inflation
that affects both rural and urban producers. In Kano, not only has the construc-
tion of state infrastructure drawn unskilled rural labour out of agriculture, but
the spatial expansion of the city has encroached upon peasant areas in the
close-settled zone (CSZ); in the peri-urban area surrounding Kano the population
is as high as 1,400 per square mile. Survey data collected prior to the petroleum
boom shows that industrial labour was largely drawn from this area, either as
permanent migrants to urban Kano or as commuters to wage labour occupations
in the city. Since the petroleum boom, moreover, urban expansion in the form
of urban housing, industrial areas and government sponsored services (education,
airport expansion, and military bases) has encroached even further on the
peasantry in the peri-urban area. During this period, while the city expanded in
area and population, a secondary land market and real estate speculation have
developed to an unprecedented degree. This has led to disputes over land tenure
arrangements that have not been solved by the recent land tenure decree an-
nounced by the FMG. Briefly, the state appropriates land for urban expansion.
In turn, the peasant owner is paid a compensation fee that is far below the
market value. Then the land is allocated to individuals by officials of the local
government council or agency responsible, and the officials are compensated by
the purchasers. The peasants are being expropriated by land speculators acting
through the state agencies. During the past year there have been protests and
demonstrations by peasants who refused to accept the compensation fee.

State-controlled oil income offers the opportunity to accelerate industrial
production and to increase the holdings of local industrialists. Instead, the
situation in Kano suggests that it has stimulated an intense wave of real estate
speculation in a market where the seller sets his price. In part, the demand for
land and speculative housing has been increased by the state’s policy of granting
credit for housing purchases to its employees. With state employees and the
merchant class seeking to invest in land and housing there has been a tendency
for peasants in the peri-urban area to sell land to urban speculators. Informants
report with concern a previously unknown practice of enclosing land in the peri-
urban area with barbed wire. In this way the urban land market expands outward,
devouring the peasantry, who migrate to the city. In turn the recent
migrants are forced to pay high rents for crowded rooms in hastily constructed
buildings.

Within the traditional northern working class and generally poorer areas outside
the old city, the capitalist land and housing market is being felt in another way. Houses once constructed of mud bricks in areas nearer to the centres of employment are being improved with cement plastering, zinc roofs and other amenities. This allows a second storey to be built and more rent to be collected from the same parcel of land. The switch from mud to cement reflects increasing labour costs which are reduced by using permanent cement. The loss of mud repair work reduces casual and unskilled wage labour opportunities for recent migrants. Similarly, in a recent expanded part of Tudan Wada, the new buildings are comparatively expensive, multistorey modern buildings that were unknown before 1972. What is occurring is the process of gentrification where older working class areas in a rapidly growing city become valuable for their proximity to the central business district. The increased rents and the up-grading of housing has forced long-time community residents to relocate in more remote areas farther from the factories where rents are cheaper. Discussions with remaining workers indicate that many fear losing control over what had been Kano's oldest northern working class area to real estate speculators who reside outside the community.

Beyond the immediate peri-urban area of Kano, the petroleum boom has funded a large irrigation scheme with the aim of producing wheat and tomatoes in the dry season for urban markets at the expense of increasing production of the local staples, millet and sorghum. The scheme has expanded opportunities for aristocrats, officials and businessmen to invest in capitalist farming and has increased wage employment. Some farmers have lost access to farming land. Others cannot afford to finance irrigated farming. The construction boom has drawn labour away from farming into wage employment. In 1978, agricultural wages rose to match the industrial wage of N2.25 per day.

**Urban Labour During the Petroleum Boom**

For Kano's urban working class, the period following the 1973 price increase marked an era of industrial expansion, increased income inequality, and inflation. On the positive side, it also saw industrial workers organized into formal trade unions. As discussed in the earlier sections, the oil wealth created opportunities for the urban capitalist classes, and undoubtedly, some workers established themselves in petty commercial occupations. Similarly, the increased income has brought more MNC advertising and greater awareness of world and national styles of consumption, and greater emulation among higher income groups of the consumption styles of the internationalized bourgeoisie. The number of wage workers in industry and services (state, commerce, and construction) has increased enormously since 1972. In manufacturing alone, the state government estimated that there were, in 1975, approximately 27,000 employees in urban Kano. This figure is certainly an undercount, both because of acknowledged survey limitations and the fact that casual employees are not counted. Further, since employees are required to pay taxes and the national provident fund payment on a per capita basis, my past research indicates that many firms report lower employment than actually exists. Hence, I would estimate that the actual number of workers employed in 1978/9 in manufacturing ranges from 30,000 to 35,000.

Before discussing the forms of class struggle and the transition to trade union organization, we should attempt to evaluate the benefits of the oil boom for the wage earning class of Kano. While wages have increased from a minimum of
N0.87 to N2.25 per day, inflation, drought, and increased demand for urban resources such as housing has reduced the real value of the increased minimum wage. In Table I, I have reported commodity prices for food data that I collected in November of 1971, 1975 and 1978. Because there is a dearth of any consistent and reliable information on prices in Nigeria, I have reported them in detail. The final right hand column gives the rate of increase from 1971 to November 1978. For example, wages have increased by 159 per cent since 1971, while the price of the most inflated foodstuff, palm oil, has increased by 812 per cent since November 1971. Note that all foodstuffs listed have increased at a rate well beyond the increase in wages. Further, the rate of increase for the staples grown in Northern Nigeria, millet and guinea corn (sorghum) is much higher than for rice, of which the FMG has imported large amounts from the world market. Whereas, in 1972, rice was considered a luxury by workers, by 1978 small shops in traditional workers' residential areas such as Tudan Wada sold one pound packages of American brands such as Uncle Ben's Rice. Overall workers wages have not nearly kept up with inflation.

Table I: Food Prices and Industrial Wages in Kano, 1971 to 1978 in Naira

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Millet (measure)</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice (measure)</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorghum (Guinea Corn) (measure)</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beef (kilo)</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palm oil (beer bottle)</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groundnut oil (beer bottle)</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pepper (measure)</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starting wage for Industry</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
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</table>

In 1978 N1 = app. $1.60 = £0.80.

Let us now examine class conflict and strikes among industrial workers. Just as was the case during the strikes surrounding the Adebo Commission's awards, a wave of strikes designed to force private sector employers to pay an arrears award of three months pay followed the publication of the Udoji Commission in 1975. While industrial actions are not limited to periods when wage commissions make their announcements, the wage review commissions serve to crystallise class conflict around a single issue. Workers separated by sector, but united by community and dependence upon the market, were further unified when the politically weak and unpopular Gowon government attempted to spread the oil wealth to the lower income wage earners by updating and backdating pay scales for the modern sector. Just as was the case during the Adebo affair in 1971 industrial employers initially claimed that the Udoji Commission did not apply to them. And in similar fashion the workers organized strike committees and went out until they had received their arrears pay worth, on the average, three months back pay. By 1975, however, trade unions had been organized in many factories so that there was less disorganized class conflict and somewhat less violence than was seen during the Adebo strikes.

Tactically, strikers had learned a great deal from the first strikes. In two cases, workers cut telephone lines from the manager's office to force a payment or an agreement to pay before the police could be called. Other cases show
how experienced workers applied their knowledge of the production process as a weapon against management. In one tanning firm workers deposited skins in vats filled with chemicals before going out on strike for the Udoji arears; they correctly reasoned that the management would pay them immediately rather than lose the value of the skins in the vats. Workers in jobs that were absolutely necessary for the production process often led walkouts because they realized that the remaining workers depended upon their production. Again, just as in the Adebo strikes, the negotiators and often the strike leaders were drawn from skilled and lower level supervisory workers. One major change concerns the level of violence at indigenously owned firms. In many cases the locally owned firms pay a lower rate, even below the national wage. Earlier, most of the violence was directed against alien entrepreneurs. During the Udoji strikes, however, workers directed abuse against Nigeria owners for not recognizing the needs of their countrymen during a period of high inflation. In one case, the owner of a modern textile mill was stoned and his vehicles destroyed during the negotiations. Earlier he had threatened in classical entrepreneurial style to dismiss all workers and hire new employees unless they agreed to return to work without receiving arrears. This case corresponds to a generalized perception among my informants that the new men of wealth have gained power and social influence in Kano; whereas before the local government reforms reduced the aristocracy's control over issues such as land, the commoners clung to the belief that the Emir and the sarakuna were dominant. While most of the spontaneously organized strikes were similar to those of the Adebo affair in 1971, the critical difference between forms of class conflict depended upon whether a trade union had been organized.

Working Class Organization: Trade Union Development

The FMG restructured trade union organization during the period following the coup that brought the Murtala-Obasanjo government to power. The restructuring calls for the ordering of all trade unions into 70 nationally organized unions, the severing of all contact with foreign trade union organizations, except those affiliated with the ILO and the OAU, and the appointment of a trade union administrator with a federally subsidized budget. Initially, the plan appears to have been an attempt to develop a corporate structure where heads of trade unions would be appointed by the FMG. Trade unionists responded to corporatism by forming a Committee for the Defense of Trade Union Rights. After negotiations with the FMG, worker-elected representatives, rather than FMG nominees, became the officers of the National Labour Council (NLC). The rationalizing policy of the FMG allocated approximately one million Naira to the NLC; the check-off policy whereby union dues are automatically deducted from workers' wages was approved; and the workers accepted the FMG's demand that trade union leaders not be affiliated with any political party. In general, the reorganization of the trade union movement should be positive in that it eliminates overlapping and awkward organizational structures in favour of rationalized and centralized organizations. By banning external affiliations with eastern and western bloc trade union organizations, trade union leaders will not be able to depend on foreign sources for funding. This change might make them more dependent on and responsible to rank and file demands. With the appointment of a new Military Governor of Kano State in 1975, trade unions have been allowed to function, where earlier they had been repressed with official acquiescence. Hence, though the FMG's reforms may reduce trade union autonomy, and be used to repress workers' protests in the more organized South,
these same reforms may, at the same time, advance the development of trade unions in Kano.

True to earlier experience under the first republic, initial union organizers in Kano were political brokers drawn from the urban petty bourgeoisie. For example, the leader of the Kano Labour Council in 1975 had been active in two political party organizations during the First Republic and, at the same time, represented the indigenous contractors of Kano State. Subsequently, he has become an official in one of the political parties. While he did not represent the working class in any sense, he did organize several trade unions among industrial workers. And, though informants state that he did not have their trust, he was personally strong and capable of intimidating local managers into allowing trade unions to function. In an interview with me in 1975, he presented himself as a manager of industrial relations, denounced strikes as a solution to industrial disputes and strongly advocated the preservation of 'northern' interests in the trade union movement. With his departure and entry into party politics, several representatives of the newly formed Kano State branch of the NLC have taken responsibility for the official NLC opening of February 1978.

What of the advances made by workers in organizing and controlling trade union organizations? In the factory that I called factory A in my previous article, workers had successfully organized a trade union and demanded to have protection against ovens and burns. By 1978 gloves and helmets were provided by management. Further, workers report that the negotiating committees had reduced verbal abuse from alien supervisors; the management had agreed to bonuses being paid on certain holidays; and the fear of being sacked without reason was reduced, if not eliminated. I mention these points because they were achieved by first generation workers without the aid of professional organisers. Optimistically, one expects more improvements when the NLC representatives take full command in Kano.

Most of the larger multinationally owned firms have recognized trade unions and many of the smaller capitalist enterprises have been forced to accept them. The problem is to sort out the trade unions which are supported by the rank and file workers from those that support management. It is clear that national policy will require in the long run that formal trade unions shall exist, but the question of worker's relationship to the union remains more difficult to assess. One great change since 1972, however, concerns worker's perception of trade union rights. In my previous article, I presented data to show that a large proportion of the workers interviewed did not recognize the term trade union or the function of trade unions. Now, large numbers of workers, whom I interviewed in the past, belong to and discuss trade union issues. The expression that they used to describe this change was, 'our eyes have been opened'. The following case study of trade unions in a large textile firm, earlier referred to as factory B, provides the best case study of how rank and file perceptions of trade unions and workers control of the organization have changed since 1972.

The firm had been owned and operated by Levantine capitalists but had sold out to a multinational trading company that was now moving into industrial production in Kano. Earlier, supervisors had taken over a weak trade union and converted it to a management sanctioned extortion scheme, whereby the supervisors received union dues. Since then a new union has been organized by the national textile workers union but union representatives were drawn from the
skilled and supervisory positions. The union was formed by a strike committee, after the successful negotiation of the Udoji arrears payments without violence. Meetings were organized on Sundays at a well known beer garden and sometimes night club in the working class area. This hotel has become a common meeting place for trade union organizers. Initially the union was successful in eliminating the ‘pass system’, where workers were forced to remain at their machines until a ‘section pass’ for the toilet was available. The union representatives also manipulated the Islamic issue of correct prayer times (e.g. 2.00 p.m.) in the workers’ favour by informing the local state commissioners of the management’s refusal to allow prayer to be completed at the correct time. This led to the demand by the state government that a mosque be built and that workers receive time to pray at the correct time irrespective of the production schedule. Because this issue generates widespread support even among the most recent rural emigrant, the prayer issue is often one of the most successful tactics used by trade union organizers.

The prayer issue indicates how working class demands have gone beyond pay disputes towards exerting some control over the labour process and the more important issue of job security. A great deal of conflict has been waged over the elimination of arbitrary dismissals. Because of virtually unlimited applicants for a few jobs, supervisors exact sums up to a week or even two weeks’ pay from prospective applicants. Urban born workers, however, tend to have personal contacts or family linkages and avoid paying. But rural born workers usually pay. In 1971, a third of workers interviewed in factory B admitted to being forced to pay a bribe in order to be employed. I assume the actual number to be much greater. Furthermore, job security and the absence of reasonable grounds for dismissal was often stated as the worst aspect of industrial employment. While many experienced workers recognized the rationale for layoffs during recessions, they bitterly resented the arbitrary powers of factory foremen to sack workers for trivial offenses in order to sell the job to a rural emigrant.

Several months after factory B had been absorbed by a multinational trading and industrial firm, and after Udoji arrears had been paid, several popular workers in the weaving section were fired for minor offences by a senior foreman and the Nigerian personnel manager. The situation was complicated because the foreman was also president of the union. He had been selected and accepted by the workers only after pressure from the management indicated that someone should be chosen who was responsible and respected by the management. Workers discussed the arbitrary firing of the weavers and concluded that the foreman was firing people without reason in order to sell their jobs. As this discussion occurred on Friday, the remaining officers of the union agreed to meet at the beer garden on the following Sunday. At the Sunday meeting workers cited other occasions where the foreman had fired people without reason, in order, they believed, to sell the job. The following Monday union representatives organized the morning shift workers, instructing them to take their time cards, to refuse to work and to demonstrate at the factory gate until the manager arrived. Workers continued to demonstrate during the morning shift and were able to prevent the afternoon shift from entering. At first, the management hesitated to accept the criticism of the foreman by the rank and file workers. The union committee, however, brought forward large numbers of workers who acknowledged paying bribes to the foreman. After the workers refused to work until the union officials were shown the paper removing the
foreman, the management accepted the verdict of the workers. Furthermore, the management accepted the union's demand that the union president be allowed to visit the factory during any shift in order to discuss grievances and trade union issues with union members. Undoubtedly, such victories improved the workers' confidence in their ability to control arbitrary dismissals. Although it is possible to dismiss such actions as merely economistic, the distance travelled since 1972, when workers lived in fear of arbitrary dismissal is enormous for recently proletarianized workers.

Labour and Politics: Civilian Rule and Political Parties

Before ending these notes on changes in the organization of Kano's working class, I should share my impressions of workers' attitudes towards the political parties and the forthcoming elections. In general, most have great expectations for civilian politicians and support the Peoples Redemption Party of Aminu Kano. Many, however, are cynical over the outcome of the election for Local Government Councils, whereby elected officials distributed land to the wealthy and not to the 'people'. It is clear that the support given to Aminu Kano represents continuity of affiliation from NEPU to the PRP. What is also clear, however, is that the consciousness informing this support is not working class consciousness. Rather, among northern workers, the consciousness is that of the urban talakawa (the commoners); that is, those without state office, wealth or modern education. In this context, the urban working class identifies itself as the labouring class and, at the same time, as a member of a vaguely defined urban popular stratum. Here the precapitalist and precolonial origins of inequality continue to exert a powerful influence upon the consciousness of urban workers. Because wage workers move from the modern sector to the informal and petty commercial sector at various times in their careers, this should not surprise us. Rather than remain isolated as industrial or wage workers, wage workers are forming an alliance with independent commodity producers and petty traders under a common populist ideology of equity and justice for the 'people'. To be sure, the leadership and the political style is petty bourgeois, yet the alliance is likely to receive broad support in Kano State. What wage workers as a class are likely to gain from an election victory remains unknown; for the party leadership lacks working class representatives in Kano. This fact suggests that, while working class organizations are taking root in the factories and while they are exerting control over aspects of the work place, as yet they have been unable to convert this strength into political organizations that directly reflect working class interests. Nevertheless, since the forthcoming elections are the first open and free elections for most northern workers, and since the political parties and their supporters reflect little change since the 1964 elections, this outcome is not unexpected. Again, because events move quickly and often in contradictory ways in Nigeria, these comments on workers and the forthcoming elections should be treated as tentative.

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Consciousness, Organisation and Action amongst Lagos Portworkers

Peter Waterman

This paper examines the relatively well-paid and relatively secure workers employed by the state sector in a peripheral capitalist society. The state sector is of particular importance in Africa as one of the earliest and most stable sources of wage employment. In Nigeria the earliest manual worker unions were based on the public corporations, and many such unions existing in the 1970s could trace their history back 30 or 40 years. Public corporations provide a high proportion of wage employment in Nigeria even today, and they are responsible for such strategic sectors as energy supply, transport, telecommunications, broadcasting, etc. These facts alone would seem to justify attention to the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA).

The paper is meant to demonstrate a class approach to the analysis of such workers. By a class approach I mean one based on Marxist assumptions but without an explicitly Marxist conceptual framework of theoretical discussion. However, such an approach does assume that capitalism implies uneven industrial and ownership patterns both internationally and nationally. And it therefore also assumes differentiation in working-class structure, consciousness, organisation and action. Although this specification may seem simple enough (indeed, oversimplified for most Marxist academics), it does need restating in a period in which research and discussion on African workers continues to take place within the framework of the 'labour aristocracy’ thesis. Whether used as a crutch or an aunt sally, this thesis (crudely, that rich and secure workers or unionists were allied with ruling elites and imperialism against the peasants and the casual or migrant wage-earners) has become an obstacle to the direct and detailed investigation of the African working class. The empirical non-existence of the 'labour aristocracy', and the dubious nature of the concept itself have been adequately argued elsewhere. At least one would have thought so. In any case, this paper is meant to demonstrate a direct class analysis, carried out without crutches or aunt sallys.

This paper has been drawn out of materials which are themselves part of a general study of workers and unions in the Lagos cargo-handling industry. The general work has not yet been completed. When it is, it will probably be in a form that will make it inaccessible to trade unionists in Nigeria. Yet the portworker unionists have made considerable contributions to the research, by supplying materials, permitting interviews, and discussing drafts. Moreover, this
is their history and life, and they have a right to expect that socialist researchers do not act towards these as capitalists do towards their labour (i.e., expropriating it for individual profit, power and prestige). This paper is therefore also meant to be one which could be discussed, commented on and used for educational work by portworker and other union activists in Nigeria.

The NPA and its workers
The NPA is a state corporation responsible for the ports of Nigeria. Within Lagos it has a national headquarters building on Lagos Island itself, its traditional quays at Apapa over the harbour, a brand new quay on Tin Can Island, and various minor jetties elsewhere. In the early 1970s it was employing within the Lagos Port Complex itself over 10,000 officers and staff. The staff were divided between such departments as Traffic, Engineering, Accounts, Dockyard, Harbours, etc. They were also divided by employment status between the 75 per cent permanently employed and the 25 per cent engaged with less security as daily paid, temporary or casuals. The workers were further divided into some 200 job designations, although these could themselves be grouped into two major categories: the manual workers (unskilled, semi-skilled, skilled) predominating in Engineering, Dockyard, Harbours and Estates, and the clerks in the massive Traffic Department. As well as having a different occupational composition, departments also have different ethnic balances. Traffic and Engineering consist to 70 per cent of Yoruba and Ibo, although the proportions differ in each case, and in neither case does one group have a majority. Harbours, largely employing ‘floating staff’, consists predominantly of ‘eastern minorities’ coming from the creeks of south and eastern Nigeria. Although somewhat simplified in the 1970s, the NPA salary scales still consist of 23 Grades, each consisting of three to seven incremental steps. Over the 20 years previous to 1975, the lowest rates of pay had increased by a factor of six, and those of top management by a factor of less than two. Yet, at this later date, there was still a differential of some 15.5:1 between the two. Despite massive money wage increases, the unskilled portworker’s real wage was in 1975 only one per cent up on 1960, and that of a clerk only 20 per cent up. Portworkers have rights to a whole series of benefits covering annual increments, promotion, sick leave and medical treatment, vacations, retirement benefits, and protection from arbitrary dismissal. Some have access to run-down but subsidised housing. Most have access to the canteen, as well as to ‘essential commodities’ distributed by the National Supply Company at fixed prices. Although in most of these benefits there are glaring discrepancies between those of officers and of workers, the workers evidently appreciate the advantages of working for NPA: in 1975 there were only 95 resignations in the whole port, less than one per cent of total staff.

The relative privilege of the regularly-employed NPA worker becomes clear when we contrast his position with that of the casual dockworker employed on the same site by local capitalist contractors. Even if we assume the dockworker to work a full month, he will earn less than half the pay of an NPA manual worker. But the chances are that he will only be employed 15 or 20 days a month. He is subject, moreover, to a series of illegal charges by superiors with power over his employment. He has no social security, vacations, toilet facilities or protection from arbitrary discipline or dismissal. On a wage less than half that of an NPA worker he has to meet similar daily fares and rents. Portworkers in the NPA and dockworkers employed by contractors live in two separate universes of wage
labour, universes which hardly meet, except for the dismissed low-skilled NPA worker forced to take a job as a docker, and the rare dockworker who manages to get into NPA.

From the time that the port was divided between the colonial Marine Department and the Nigerian Railway Corporation it has been unionised, its unions forming (along with other public sector unions) the first base of national trade unionism in Nigeria. The key economic role, geographic position and employment security of NPA workers has given them a continuing importance within the changing national trade union scene in Nigeria. The major unions have histories running back to the 1940s or earlier. Their major leaders have been in position almost as long and have repeatedly held prominent positions nationally and internationally.

In dealing with certain issues below, we will be aware of all the above, of the multiple divisions between workers ‘vertically’ and ‘horizontally’, of the contrasting status of ‘junior’ and ‘senior’ staff, of wage increases against a background of inflation, of the gulf that divides the portworker from the dockworker, and of the role of NPA unionism as a backbone of the national movement. We will have to see this, also, within a certain historical context, as Nigeria moves from colonial rule, through a Nigerianisation of the bureaucracy and polity in the ‘political days’, into the period of military rule — which has also witnessed a bloody civil war and several counter coups. This period has also witnessed the blossoming of Nigerian commercial capitalism, financed by massive cash receipts as the country joined the world’s major oil exporters in the 1970s. The unproductive and dependent nature of Nigeria’s dramatic economic growth has found expression within the port itself: whilst total throughput during 1955-75 has increased 400 per cent, exports have fallen by 23 per cent and imports have increased by 600 per cent. We should not forget, finally, the changing formal labour control strategy of the Nigerian state, moving from the liberal model of the late-colonial and early-independence period, to the increasingly restrictive and directive model of the military one. Since 1968 there have been increasingly severe anti-strike laws and trade union legislation, culminating in the administrative reorganisation of the hundreds of unions into some 43 industrial unions (plus 18 for ‘senior staff’ and nine for employers) in late 1977. Although the forced marriage of several unwilling partners into a brand new Nigerian Ports Authority Workers Union (to be called NPANWU2 to distinguish it from a predecessor of the same name) only occurred in 1978, the threat had been hanging over them during the mid-1970s.

Worker consciousness: no visible enemies

Evidence on organisational characteristics is from a survey of workers in the Traffic and Engineering Departments of NPA in 1976. Union membership was claimed by nearly 80 per cent of the portworker sample, and 90 per cent of these claimed to be paying dues. Bearing in mind the general rate of unionisation in the NPA, these are high rates. But even if the respondents were not actually members (or not actually paying members), the response indicates a favourable attitude towards union membership. Whilst only five per cent of those interviewed could not name their union, nearly one quarter were unable to name any union officers. Furthermore, over one half did not know the national affiliation of their union. Just over one-third had attended no union meeting in 1975 despite the fact that this was the year of the major Udoji Award and consequent
disputes. A favourable attitude towards unions is evidently not matched by information on them or participation in them. Furthermore, less than half the respondents claimed strike experience in what are two fairly strike-prone departments of the Port. However, nearly two-thirds of them had taken part in other forms of protest — mostly a ‘work-to-rule’. Given that this term had in part come to replace ‘strike’ since the legal restrictions on the latter, perhaps this answer gives a better idea of industrial protest activity than the former one.

The 80 per cent union support and over 60 per cent protest experience suggest a quite well-unionised and active workforce, even if some of the other answers suggest lower levels of knowledge and activity. To what extent do these features find expression in worker attitudes? I interviewed 12 workers, amongst whom five were clerical and seven manual. Amongst the clerks there was one supervisor, the rest being low-grade quay staff. All were from the Traffic Department. Amongst the manual workers were an unskilled porter and blacksmith, a couple of semi-skilled equipment operators, a skilled carpenter and an assistant supervisor. Most of them were from the Engineering Department.

What did this interview data suggest? Despite the fact that most NPA workers are likely to spend their wage-earning life within its junior staff, there are still high aspirations to professional or petty-entrepreneurial occupations. Wage labour within the NPA appears to be considered more as a — possibly long — period in the worker’s life than as characterising his social status. The retirement benefits are rather an encouragement to aspire to petty-entrepreneurship than to a time of rest. Both family demands and the insecurity of such benefits in a time of high inflation in any case require a continuation of economic activity. As for the aspiration to professional employment, this is fired both by past example within NPA, and by the possibilities (hypothetical or not) apparently offered by the commercial boom.

The alternative to bureaucratic state and managerial control of NPA was seen either in terms of corrective active from above or in terms of private enterprise. Generalised grievances, pointed criticism and often marked hostility toward authoritarian and arbitrary management were not taken to require independent worker or union intervention.

There was generalised hostility to the senior staff, to the differentials they enjoy, and to the barriers that exist between the junior and senior. From pre-colonial tradition and/or late-colonial practice there seems to be some expectation that each should in his own lifetime progress from being a ‘junior’ to being a ‘senior’. Such an expectation of eventual promotion to a position of influence and respect is, thus, not simply due to ‘traditional’ age-grading, but to the British civil service practice of annual increments, and to the experience of rapid promotion of many junior staff to officer (and even top management) status during the period of rapid Nigerianisation associated with de-colonisation.

It is striking to observe that the NPA workers literally cannot identify any enemies to themselves. They do not think of any social category in Nigeria in such terms. Said one, ‘I cannot say we have enemies. There is inability to reason along with modern demands. But we do not have visible enemies as such’. Given their resentments, the extent to which they accept a view of society as existing of one community is remarkable. Once again, experience of the relatively classless rural community may have been reinforced by the colonial experience,
which created an image of a universe divided along racial lines. Again, the belief in classlessness would have been reinforced by the past promotions of fellow workers (often without academic qualifications). Despite the increasing attempts of NPA management to enforce ‘paper qualifications’ as a precondition for recruitment or promotion to post within NPA, there is not yet a hereditary management or hereditary working class within the corporation. Both groups are largely first generation.

Equally striking is NPA worker inability to identify those in a common position to themselves. In part we can take the inability to identify friends as a complement to the inability to identify enemies. Given, however, common NPA worker residence alongside other wage-earners, petty entrepreneurs and the unemployed, and given that significant wage rises usually occur as a result of common national action along with other wage earners, one would have expected them to see some brothers in arms beyond other corporation workers. The inability to do so may be explained in terms of the nature of NPA as an enterprise and as an employer. As a state corporation it does not operate on narrow profit-and-loss calculations, this distinguishing it sharply from the multinational companies that have dozens of branches in the Apapa area alone. And, although its conditions may not be better than those of the local MNCs, the near-100 per cent security NPA offers seems to turn it into the universe which not only surrounds the worker in the present but also (despite his aspirations) for the future. Be this as it may, the NPA workers clearly see themselves as isolated from others and evidently have no conception of a working class.

In their attitudes toward collective action one does find the positive evaluation of trade unionism and worker protest that one would expect from their union membership and participation in industrial action. Yet this is clearly qualified by feelings either of powerlessness in the face of military rule, or of dependency on government to strengthen union organisation for the workers. The ambiguity here is crucial since it bears on the willingness to take action either against the state or within the trade unions. We will see that in practice worker action is aimed rather at NPA management that at the state, and that workers have tended to be observers of, rather than participants in, the unification of the unions.

The leaders: no race apart

The backgrounds of union officers do not differ significantly from those of NPA manual workers. By ethnic origin, they are mixed. They are rather older than the average NPA worker, with most of them being over 40. A ‘young man’ amongst the union officers is in his thirties rather than his twenties. Lengths and types of education are mixed, with a few having school certificate or equivalent, and several having trade training within NPA. Most have been working in NPA for well over 10 years, many for over 20. Amongst the fulltime officials there are ex-manual workers as well as an ex-senior staff man (from outside NPA). And amongst the unpaid officers one finds men from the occupations found amongst the members — a fireman-greaser, an ableseaman, a fitter, an assistant supervisor, a marine engineering assistant, a clerical supervisor, etc. Apart from one unpaid officer who receives a honorarium of N15 a month as General Secretary of his small union, the others receive nothing above their pay. Of the fulltime officers interviewed, one was receiving N159 and another N268 per month. Whilst the first sum was not much different from the average
manual wage found in my survey of NPA, the second is 1.8 times above it. Another fulltimer, however, was earning N330 per month in 1973 — some 3.6 times the maximum of a skilled tradesman in that year. However, even this considerable differential would have put him in the same year somewhere near the bottom of the senior staff scale. Whilst some fulltime secretaries may therefore enjoy the living standards of the Nigerian middle class, and whilst the unpaid officers might enjoy freedom from their official NPA occupations, it would be difficult to argue that they are a race apart from the workers they organise.

As one might expect, the officers have many years of union membership and activity behind them. Whilst some had first become officers just two to five years earlier, several had done so as long as 15, 20, or 30 more years back. And behind even the shortest period of office holding there appears to lie 10 to 20 or more years of membership. It thus seems that union leadership is not quickly won in the NPA. When questioned on their own unions, some interesting replies were given. Thus, only one gave an accurate idea of his union's membership in Lagos Port. The others either did not know or gave wildly exaggerated figures. Behind this lies, no doubt, not only confusion about the meaning of the word ‘member’, but also the absence of reliable figures for ‘financial’ members, and the conflicts current in 1975-6 over representatively. Whilst most knew of their organisation's present or past affiliation nationally, far less knew of the international affiliations. Knowledge about international affiliation seemed to be correlated with participation in trade union courses — these being often organised by the internationals. The great majority of the officers had taken part in such courses, at the Trade Union Institute (run jointly by the African-American Labour Centre and the moderate-reformist United Labour Congress) in Lagos, at Ibadan University, at the International Conference of Free Trade Unions' institute in Kampala, or in the United States, Switzerland or Germany. It is this formal training in moderate-reformist procedures and norms that enables one to speak of a leadership 'ideology' rather than simply of 'attitudes'.

Whilst in terms of background and incomes the union officers may not be a race apart from the men they lead, they do have capacities and a role which separate them off from the ordinary workers, which bring them into relationship with management, provide them with a quite distinct ideological training, and make personal social mobility in the future a practical possibility. To what extent, if any, does this lead to a particular set of attitudes that might differentiate them from the workers they lead? Using the same open-ended interviews employed with the workers, I found that their attitudes were little different from those of their followers. They, too, have aspirations for entry into the world of the professions (particularly industrial relations consultancy, but also politics and journalism) and petty commerce. They, too, are critical and resentful of NPA officers. They, too, cannot identify significant allies or enemies of the NPA workers. They, too, believe in union action but consider government assistance necessary to assist this. The only significant differences would seem to be leadership criticism of unions and workers ('their own worst enemies'), and the greater leadership confidence in the efficacy of union action. On the basis of these interviews one might be included to conclude that the problem may be not so much one of a gap between leadership and membership attitudes as excessive closeness. Despite their wider experience and formal training, the leaders would seem to have a vision little wider than those they are supposed to be leading!
We can examine this by considering the more systematic and formal declarations of the leaders when commenting on labour relations, the role of the workers and unions, or the nature of Nigerian society. Statements on such matters are frequently made during trade union conferences, seminars or in newspaper interviews. The official industrial relations ideology of the Nigerian state and NPA management is in large part the liberal-paternalist one of its counterparts in Great Britain and the USA (tripartism, human relations, etc.), spiced with reference to 'traditional' Nigeria society and attitudes, the NPA as one family (with junior and senior brothers). Whilst the union officers take the Nigerian or local references with a considerable pinch of salt, they do themselves accept uncritically and preach enthusiastically the liberal-paternalist element, only criticising management for failing itself to practice 'modern', 'scientific' industrial relations. When it comes to the social or political structures of contemporary Nigeria, the leadership tends to take the same stance, criticising Nigeria for its failure to measure up to the UK or US pattern, calling for income redistribution policies and a consultative role for the unions in development plans. Broader and more-realistic perceptions of Nigerian reality do exist amongst the leaders, concerning the closing down of access to higher positions throughout society, the 'apartheid' between NPA officers and ordinary workers. But these perceptions are not drawn together and systematically presented in the way that the moderate-reformist ideology is.

We may mention two significant exceptions to the above generalisations, the ideology of Michael Imoudu in the period of transition from colonial rule (late-1950s to early 1960s), and of Alhaji H.P. Adebola in the 1970s. M.A.O. Imoudu is known as 'Number One' because of his role as the first and outstanding radical leader of the Nigerian working class in the 1940s. He became involved with NPA on its creation, and in the following years offered a socialist critique of Nigerian society and the moderate-reformist unions to the NPA workers. Despite the vulnerability of both the Nigerian state and the moderate-reformist unions at this time (workers throughout Nigeria were demanding radical action to get their share of the benefits of independence in 1960), and despite the considerable impact of socialist leaders elsewhere in Nigeria, Imoudu's appeal failed within the NPA. Adebola, a leading national and international figure of moderate-reformism in the 1950s and 1960s has long led the Railways and Ports Transport and Clerical Staff Union (R&PT&CSU). He was on two occasions during these decades publicly exposed by Imoudu for his extreme reluctance to strike, and he failed to make a significant impact within the NPA. In the 1970s, however, having largely abandoned his national and international ties, he has come to articulate a peculiarly Nigerian amalgam of aggressive but quite non-socialist egalitarianism.

Adebola accepts the tripartite industrial relations model, but uses this to aggressively demand the right to strike at a time when the state is restricting it. Tripartism means for him the equality of unions with management, under the patronage of the state. Having seen his peers (and his own employees) take management positions, he sees no reason to consider them any more socially important than himself. In his views of Nigerian society he combines individualism with egalitarianism, favouring private enterprise at the same time as he condemns excessive wealth. Identifying with the Nigerian state, he has become the leading critic of foreign influence on Nigerian unions, particularly that of the US. Whilst Adebola has come to outbid the other NPA union leaders and to
dominant portworker unionism in the mid-1970s, we cannot say that this is because of worker response to this set of ideas ('ideology' would here be too formal a term). What we will see is that in liberating him from the straitjacket of liberal-paternalism, it enabled him to adopt a more effective strategy.

This was a set of ideas which was not only fashioned out of Nigerian materials, but which was in advance of those of the workers themselves. If we compare it with Imoudu's socialism, however, we see that it was only one step in advance. (Imoudu's socialism was out of sight! Like the liberal-paternalism of the other union leaders it was both foreign-based and incapable of informing an effective trade union strategy.) On the other hand, one is obliged to note the restricted nature of Adebola's radicalism. In the new period of direct state intervention into the unions, the identification with the state, whilst reflecting worker attitudes, is likely to severely restrict union action.

Union organisation: militancy overcomes factionalism

Between the mid-1930s and 1943 there was but one union within the Marine Department, which came to be known as the Nigerian Maritime African Workers Union (NMAWU). By independence in 1960 there were around seven. The figure peaked at around nine in the mid-1960s, but it was still five in 1977, just before the creation of the NPAWU2. The divisions multiplied and unions resisted amalgamation despite the formal ideology, national and international affiliation shared by all of them except for short periods or minor organisations. What was the basis for this persistent factionalism?

The original splits were for differing motives. The split of engineroom ratings from the NMAWU in 1943 was based on occupational category. When this union was joined by deck staff and registered as the Marine Floating Staffs Union (MFSU) in the later 1940s, it appeared to institutionalise a departmental category — 'floating' as distinguished from shore-based staff. The split of the marine drivers from the MFSU in 1955 would seem to have been one of higher status workers faced with a 'threat' from a lower-status category, even though the marine drivers carried the lower-skilled engineroom staff with them. But when these lower-grade staff split from the Marine Engineering and Allied Workers Union in 1958, it was clearly an issue of lower-status workers protesting disregard by higher-skilled ones. In addition to multiplication arising from splits, we had the transformation of two railway unions into 'railways and ports' unions in 1955. Since one of these, the Railways and Ports Workers Union of Nigeria (R&PWUN), was led by Imoudu, this introduced another basis for division, political ideology, or national, or international affiliation. (Since ideology implied in this period a given national and international orientation, the three elements cannot be separated). At the time of the radical-moderate conflict around 1960, unskilled members of an effected union alleged that the real motive for it lay between Imoudu and the leading moderate, Chief O.A.F. Beyioku, 'in their personal importance as Trade Union Leaders'. One might not be prepared to accept this as a sufficient explanation for this case. But conflict of personal interest must be considered a continuing motive for keeping the moderate unions apart from each other even when they were under attack from the militant Adebola in the 1970s. Although ideological-political conflicts disappear with the political parties in 1966 and the decline thereafter in the influence of the national and international trade union centres, three distinct new motives for division appear. The first is a clear division strategy between
Adebola's Railway and Ports Transport and Clerical Staff Union and the others, with Adebola accusing the others of kowtowing to management, and they accusing him of employing 'unscientific' methods. The second was ethnicity, with Adebola and his enemies, and others, making accusations of tribalism. One last motive appears, that of religion, when opponents of Adebola (a muslim) refer to his Railways and Ports Transport and Clerical Staff Union as an 'Arab union'.

We thus have eight more or less explicit motives or explanations for division: occupation, department, status, politics, personality, strategy, ethnicity, religion. These operated not only between the unions but often with them also. Whilst the Nigerian Maritime Trade Union Federation (NMTUF) was always there as a common voice of the unions, it was often prevented from acting as such because of these disputes.

It would be easy — and not untrue — to treat these simply as indicators of the low class-consciousness of which we already have evidence. This, however, would prevent us from asking the important question of the basis in the NPA worker's experience for holding to or propounding such explanations, and acting in according with them. It would thus prevent us from finding practical solutions to factionalism amongst union leaders or workers in NPA. It is important to note that the eight explanations are of different orders: some are rooted in general social and ideological structures of a cross-class nature (ethnicity, religion); some in the division of labour and in worker-manipulation techniques (occupation, department, status); some in the nature of working-class organisation (politics, strategy, personality).

We may explore these issues a little further by examining the issue of 'tribalism'. Whereas the radical-moderate split of the 1950s-1960s was fought out in terms of political ideology, that of the 1970s has been expressed largely in terms of ethnicity. It is true that in the 1970s one does find the moderates accusing the militants of using 'unscientific' methods, of being 'political', of 'violence' or 'anarchism', and the militants accusing the moderates of being tools of management, or ineffective. But the main accusation of the first again the second was of tribalism, and the militants similarly accused the moderates. The accusation against the Railways and Ports Transport and Clerical Staff Union was that it was Yoruba-dominated, appealed to Yoruba tribalism, and attacked management because it was non-Yoruba in composition. The counter-accusation of Adebola was rather against Ibo managers for conspiring with the Ibo officers of his own and other unions.

It was difficult to obtain evidence for or against many such accusations. What I could do was to see to what extent the composition of union leadership might provide grounds for them. I could only do this in a rather arbitrary and rule of thumb manner, but this was sufficient for the purpose. Thus, I defined 'predominance' as a situation in which one ethnic group had more than half of the leadership positions in a union and 'balance' as a situation in which no single group had this. I then analysed the ethnic composition of union leaderships, taking for each of the main organisations a list of activists, a list of national officers and a list of the Lagos area leadership. On this basis it is possible to speak of Yoruba 'predominance' in the Railways and Ports Transport and Clerical Staff Union, of Southern and Eastern minority groups (or these plus Ibo) 'predominance' in the Nigerian Maritime Workers Union (NMWU), and of 'balance' in the Nigerian Ports Authority Workers Union.
The Southern and Eastern minority predominance in the NMWU is due to the fact that it is based on floating staff who are themselves largely from the eastern minorities. The R&PT&CSU, however, has been traditionally based on a department in which the Yoruba were less than 50 per cent, and has been since 1970 making appeals to workers in departments in which Ibos alone may outnumber Yorubas. One can only speculate about the origins of Yoruba predominance amongst its leadership. It seems possible that it springs from the civil war period, in which its members (whether Yoruba or non-Yoruba) might have sought protection under a predominantly Yoruba leadership. Whether this is so or not, the fact is that in the mid-1970s it was moderate, Christian, non-Yoruba leadership which had warm relations with a top management largely of the same composition. And it was these that were making the most and loudest accusations of tribalism. The R&PT&CSU for the most part satisfied itself with refuting the charges and accusing those who made them of bad faith.

The sources of support for ethnically-identified leadership lie not simply in the widespread use of ethnicity in the cruel, competitive and arbitrary world surrounding the NPA, but in the traditional, widespread and blatant use of it by officers and top managers in jockeying position with in the corporation. NPA workers have traditionally appealed to ethnically-affiliated superiors for protection or promotion. The accusation against the R&PT&CSU was evidently an attempt to appeal to the ethnic identification against a militant union. Meanwhile, the R&PT&CSU was relying on its militancy to appeal across ethnic divisions. Despite the ethnic composition of its leadership, it managed to hold and spread its influence outside Lagos Port (where Yorubas are in a clear minority) as well as to win over non-Yoruba members of both the MMWU and the ethnically-balanced (but equally ineffective) NPAWU.

It seems paradoxical that it was the most 'western' of the unions in the port that were most using ethnic appeals in the mid-1970s, and that it was the union that had broken most links with the west that was best overcoming tribalism. By stressing the value of 'vertical' links between workers or unions at the bottom and management at the top, the moderates were not only undermining 'horizontal' worker solidarity in general, but were unable to overcome vertical relations of a type they formally abhorred. In so far as it stressed opposition between the interests of workers and those of top management, the militant union was not only able to overcome ethnic identification, but also those of department and status. It is noteworthy, finally, that whilst the other unions were tied up with small-group or individual issues of promotion and regarding (which the unionists dub 'grades-and-trades' demands) it was by raising a demand generalisable across the NPA that the R&PT&CSU most dramatically appealed to non-members in the 1970s. The union may have raised the demand for an one-eighth pay increase for just one section of its own members, and have won an extension to others by good luck. But it fought for implementation and extension, and the demand spread across the departments and unions, thus providing the basis for the only portwide strike in the 1970s.

Collective protest action: going the whole hog?

Such evidence as I have from the period 1945-65 does not suggest that port-workers were very strike prone compared, for an appropriate example, with railway workers. Portworkers seemed in general to have accepted the argument of their leaders that advances were to be won by negotiation over the table,
or to have sought advance within ethnic, departmental, occupational, status categories, etc. Ananaba, formally himself a leader of the moderate tendency nationally, and later an officer of the ICFTU, actually believed that

splinter unions have often won concessions which members could not win when the union was intact . . . The great improvements in pay and service conditions of the employees of the Nigerian Ports Authority might never have been made at the time they were, had all the workers been in the NPAWU or any union of transport workers. (Ananaba 1969:139.)

The splinters therefore bargained against each other for advances, only occasionally taking brief, common, industrial action. The major strikes, both in terms of numbers partaking and in terms of length, were those actions taken with the framework of the national general strikes of 1945 and 1963-4. The official record suggests that recent years have been much stormier than earlier ones. I have records of 13 strikes during the 10-year period 1968-77. Eight of these were directly organised by the R&PT&CSU, and two of the other five were inspired by its success on one of these occasions. One of the two was organised by NPAWU dissidents who later joined the R&PT&CSU. The R&PT&CSU president declares:

we do not use our power to hold this country to ransom, but we go to the whole hog in industrial relations matters.

'Going the whole hog' means that the union has an aggressive manner at the bargaining table within NPA, immediately declares a formal dispute if it does not obtain satisfaction, pushes matters through to the Industrial Arbitration Tribunal (or the law courts), and then enforces formal agreements by initiating or supporting strikes amongst its members. What is the nature of strikes and what sort of worker action do they imply? The actions are mostly of a demonstration nature, with one-day stoppages being common, and five or six the maximum. They are usually brought to an end by merely verbal assurances from management or the re-opening of negotiations. In terms of form, also, they are limited, requiring a minimal commitment or change of routine by the strikers. Workers do not customarily quit the workplace, picket or gather in menacing crowds. The leisurely workplace typical of NPA is simply reduced to a halt, workers remaining in their departments, reading the papers or chatting. This does not, however, mean that actions are limited to a mere ritual, nor that there is no challenge to the customary order. On one occasion, office workers in the Headquarters building locked gates and forced management to stand in a courtyard in the sun. On another, a group of workers (on their own initiative but with tacit support of their local leaders) cut off the electricity supply to the Port. Moreover, union branches have struck despite the opposition of leaders. Finally, it should be remembered that strikes in the 1970s have taken place against a background of escalating anti-strike legislation, of which workers were well aware. They struck in 1977 even after a new decree stated that workers most lose pay for days struck, and that strikes implied a breach of the employment contract. The 13 strikes have been rather successful in so far as they have taken place against a background of escalating anti-strike legislation, of which workers were well aware. They struck in 1977 even after a new decree stated that workers most lose pay for days struck, and that strikes implied a breach of the employment contract. The 13 strikes have been rather successful in so far as they have brought an authoritarian and arbitrary management to rapidly make considerable concessions in either word or deed. They have been carried out without cost to either strike leaders or members, since disciplinary measures have always been abandoned and workers paid for days struck.

Such protest action, however, represents the highest point reached within NPA. On only one occasion in the 1970s did the NMTUF itself call out all the workers, and that was following the footsteps of both the R&PT&CSU and a radical
section of the NPAWU — and it was for less than a day. Moreover, the militancy of the R&PT&CSU should not be exaggerated. Since neither its leadership nor its membership sees management as an enemy, strikes are rather seen as a weapon against bad managers. Strikes are considered a necessarily evil, not as a means for building up worker consciousness and capacity. Although carried out in defiance of the state, strikes are seen more as an appeal to it to take action against a recalcitrant management.

The R&PT&CSU leadership is as prone to use other means of struggle which do not imply mass action at all. Thus, it has through the 1970s continually made use of secret letters and files to which it has been able to get access. Such documents have been used in press releases, and in appeals to various state bodies for action against the NPA managers. These exposures have been extremely effective, finally resulting in the retirement at government order of a considerable number of top managers, as well as an officer of the NPA Board. The tactic is, no doubt, applauded by workers, seeing their erstwhile lords and masters tumbled by the audacious Adebola. Yet, the tactic is not one that requires any collective worker action. The workers, with the exception of the one or two who might be involved in obtaining or copying the confidential documents, are just an admiring audience. Furthermore, the tactic is just that: exposure or threat of exposure against a particular manager, or management as a whole, will be used to obtain some possibly unrelated concession by the union. Thus, when the R&PT&CSU obtained incontrovertible evidence that a particular manager was running a private transportation company from his NPA quarters, the evidence was handed to the press. But, at a certain point, the campaign was simply abandoned.

The opportunity for the union to make a point about the nature of management as such was, of course, not taken because the union still believes there can be a good management. I do not know whether it is this sort of behaviour to which the moderate critics of the R&PT&CSU are referring when they call it 'political', but it is, perhaps, a style of operation more appropriate to the Nigerian parties of the past than to that collective worker self-activity necessary if one is to be able to deal with the more-experienced and tougher management and state that we can expect in the future in Nigeria.

Relations with other workers: the missing link

It has already been stated that the NPA unions have played a key role in both national and international trade union relations. Connections between NPA workers and others were, in fact, expressed at three different levels: At the industrial level there was the NMTUF — intended to link all unions within the maritime industry whether in NPA or not. At the national level there were the usually short-lived and competing national centres. And at the international level, there was, in practice, the ICFTU, the Americans (the AFL-CIO and its instrument in Africa, the African-American Labour Centre), and the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF).

The key question at the industrial level is the relationship between the NPA workers and the dockworkers. It has been said that the dockworkers inhabited a different world. Yet they did work on the same site. And they have long had some king of trade union organisations. The necessity of a relationship between the two groups was, in fact, recognised in the creation of the NMTUF in 1955. This organisation was in part the creation of a dockworker leader who had early
come into contact with the moderate-reformist ITF. Under the stimulus of such international forces, and with the sympathy of the colonial Labour Department (itself favouring depoliticised trade unionism), portworkers and dockworkers were brought into one federation. The failure of this initiative was due in part to the weakness and division within the dockworker unions — based as they were on casual labourers. But it was also due to the disinterest in the dockworkers of the portworker unions. Since the NPA unions tended to seek their own salvation through pushing a particular interest against other NPA workers, it was hardly likely that they would concern themselves in unity with workers outside the NPA. During the early 1960s the R&PWUN of Imoudu did develop an interest in the dockworkers employed by the NPA itself within Port Harcourt and those employed by contractors within Lagos. In 1964 it began to call itself the Railways, Port and Dock Workers Union of Nigeria, but it soon lost interest in the dockworkers. And since Imoudu’s declarations concerning the sufferings of the dockers were little more radical than those of his moderate opponents, one must conclude that it was more organisational self-interest than political conviction that drew his attention to the dockworkers in the first place. Since then there has been virtually no relationship between even the moderate-reformist dock unions and the NPA unions, far less between portworkers and dockworkers as such.

Despite the failure to relate to the dockworkers the NPA workers did have a relationship with workers in other industries. But what was the nature of this relationship? We have seen that both workers and union leaders consider at least other corporation workers to be in a similar situation to themselves. A relationship with these has been mediated either through committees set up over common demands or through successive national trade union centres. The portworkers were affiliated to the African Civil Servants Technical Workers Union (1941), the first federation of manual workers in Nigeria, which itself gave birth to the first Trade Union Congress (1943) and which helped organise the first General Strike of 1945. Port and rail unions dominated the united All Nigeria Trade Union Federation (1953 to 1957-9) that successfully fought several major national campaigns in the year leading up to independence. Although the portworkers were in the late 1950s and early 1960s divided in their national affiliation between competing moderate and radical centres, they nonetheless played a common role in the united national Joint Action Committee that organised the 1964 General Strike. Since then, the NPA unions have been affiliated with the moderate-reformist United Labour Congress, of which Adebola himself was President (1962-69), and of which other port union leaders were prominent officers. The ULC might have been able to offer NPA union leaders some prestige, education, and access to international organisation, but it was unable to unite them. And benefits from the ULC did not motivate them to any specific contribution to the national centre. Thus, when a campaign for the implementation of the Udoji awards began in 1975, this was done not within the framework of the ULC, but of a Joint Action Committee of unions within the public sector. As far as national relations with other workers were concerned, the NPA unions were almost back to 1943!

Confirmation of the isolation and ineffectivity of the NPA unions nationally is supplied by the process of reunification nationally that occurred in 1975-8. Stimulated by government pressure, the national trade union centres voluntarily created a Nigerian Labour Congress in late-1975. Although desired by both
portworkers and port unionists, this unification was a marriage of convenience between the officers of the national centres. The President of the R&PT&CSU became the leader of the NLC, and other NPA unionists got positions on its over 100-strong executive. When government broke up the NLC in 1976, there was no protest from the NPA unions collectively or singly. By 1978 all NPA unions have been dissolved in favour of the new NPAWU2, and this was a constituent part of a new NLC. But both the NPAWU2 and the new NLC had been created by government fiat: the union leaders had been reduced to bargaining or fighting amongst themselves for positions within these bodies; the workers had again been merely spectators.

When, in 1976, I asked NPA workers if they thought that they had brothers in arms abroad, the only one who replied affirmatively was a former union leader who mentioned the ICFTU and the ILO. Even some trade union officers were unable to answer, stating that 'we in the trade union junior cadre are not in a position to know their help to us'. Those who did know mentioned courses and equipment offered by the ICFTU, the ITF or the AFL-CIO. Only one mentioned workers — rather than organisations — and there was no specific reference to African workers at all! The international bodies have been themselves instruments of state or bloc interests as well as of the unions that dominated them. Whilst, in 1969, Adebola broke publicly with the AALC, denouncing its CIA connections, and generally ignoring the internationals, other union leaders retained and cultivated these links.

What the three international bodies had in common was a strategy of gradual reform drawn from the West European and American unions that controlled them. Adapted for use in Africa this implied identification of interests between workers and managers, unions and governments, in 'national development'. Factionalism and corruption within Nigerian unions were seen by them as due to 'tribalism' or 'underdevelopment', to be overcome by education. Themselves cultivating close relationships with successive governments, the international organisations were in no position to stimulate class action by NPA workers against their management or against the state. Rather than representing workers of other countries to NPA workers, the internationals remained wealthy, powerful, external patrons. They provided an unrealisable model before which the less confident unions and leaders could only consider themselves inferior, and which the more confident rejected at their peril. The internationals did not teach the NPA unions how to organise the effective strikes which are behind successful bargaining table tactics in capitalist democracies. What they did was to provide ineffective moderate-reformist leaders with both organisational and moral support, thus substituting for a militant and active membership. It would thus appear as if working-class internationalism was more a relationship between top NPA union leaders and moderate Western trade union officers than anything of a more significant nature. The workers did not know when the internationals were in Nigeria. And when the Nigerian state legislated against their future presence the workers did not notice them go.

The isolation of the NPA workers within the corporation, their non-consciousness of a national or international working class, should not be considered as determined solely by their relatively-privileged position amongst workers in Nigeria, nor as simply due to industrial inexperience. It has been powerfully stimulated by ideological and political practices, these latter being under the influence of
forces outside the Nigerian working class, indeed outside the working class of any country in the world.

Conclusion: the potential for class consciousness and action
The above reflections are not intended to be a judgement, far less a condemnation: this task can be left to moralists and ideologists. The purpose has rather been to consider soberly the current situation of the NPA workers and unions so as to reveal the obstacles to an extended understanding of, and control over, their own work and lives. The consciousness, the organisation and the activists necessary to achieve this advance exist within the NPA, although possibly without the coherence necessary for effective action. The role of Adebola and the R&PT&CSU in the 1970s is itself evidence of a little-realised potential amongst the workers and activists. But this is not to exaggerate the capacities of this particular leader or organisation. In any case, the union no longer exists, and Adebola has been transformed into the General Secretary of the government-created NPAWU2, where he is supposed to coordinate an executive consisting of his former rivals. The new organisation will have to defend NPA workers in a far more hostile environment that has so far existed within Nigeria. And in this task, there can be no prediction concerning the response of this or that leader, of the organisation as a whole, or of workers who have now been forced out of their organisational enclaves.

It was not a militant but a moderate union leader who (whilst still showing confidence in government) revealed in his changing words the changing 30-year experience of NPA workers:

Nobody is an enemy to us. We are all fellow Nigerians. In one family you get some people at the top and some who are suffering. This is the system the nationalists fought for. But those who got in regarded themselves as a privileged class. They look at themselves as a society that wants to maintain that privileged class. Some jump from the commoners to the elite group. Even if they are from the same womb, they have made it. They are the enemies, they are! they are! . . .

And it was an ordinary worker who answered a question concerning action in defence of the workers by stating that

the only power we have is demonstration, work-to-rule and strikes. By trade unionism. That is the only weapon after so many negotiations have failed. Strong and united labour front, because we are more than the big men.

This may not seem enough to those observers who are convinced from their experience or study that the enemy is the international capitalist, the Nigerian capitalist and the Nigerian state, and that the Nigerian worker cannot overcome such enemies without allying with the rest of the labouring poor within Nigeria, and the international working-class movement without. Yet, working-class consciousness, organisation and action usually advances snail-like, and the past failures of socialist intellectuals and organisers in Nigeria suggest that it is only by recognising both the precise obstacles to and potential for movement that they will be able to provide effective leadership to workers — inside or outside NPA.

Bibliographic Notes
This paper was first presented to a seminar on 'Social Stratification and Class Formation in Africa', Centre of African Studies, Leiden University, May 18-19. I am grateful for the comments received from Okeke Ugwuanyi, NPA craftsman, longtime unpaid union activist,
now an officer of the new NPAWU2. The longer work from which the material is extracted is a draft Ph.D. Thesis (for Erasmus University, Rotterdam), entitled ‘Wage Labour Relations in Nigeria: State, Capitalists, Unions and Workers in the Lagos Cargo-Handling Industry’. I hope to make the extensive documentary materials on which this thesis is based available to other researchers in microfiche form.

In addition to work relating directly to labour in the cargo-handling industry, this list of references includes a number of comparative and general items on labour in Nigeria as well as items mentioned in the text. A 1,500-item classified bibliography on ‘Labour and Labour Relations in Nigeria’ is currently being prepared for microfiche publication and should be published (by Interdocumentation Co., Zug, Switzerland) in 1979 or early-1980).


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The Deepening Crisis of the Nigerian National Bourgeoisie

Segun Osoba

On the ‘Nigerian national bourgeoisie’. The term is used here in the sense in which Franz Fanon uses it in relation to the African national bourgeoisie or middle class in his chapter on ‘The pitfalls of national consciousness’ in his book, *The Wretched of the Earth*. It delineates the politico-geographical context within which this class operates and it is not meant to confer on its members any attributes of patriotic national consciousness or of a capability to combat Euro-American imperialism. The discussion in this essay clearly underscores the essentially comprador character of the Nigerian bourgeoisie most of whose members are either actually or potentially active collaborators with foreign monopoly capitalist interests in Nigeria.

The Nigerian national bourgeoisie whose representatives were allowed by the British colonialists to have a share in Nigerian state power in 1952 has been enmeshed in a progressively deepening crisis situation ever since. In spite of the phenomenal growth in the numerical strength of the national bourgeoisie and its client, the petty bourgeoisie, since 1952, it has not succeeded in transcending the power sharing arrangement inaugurated by its foster parent (the British colonial authorities) in 1952, nor has it been able to alter significantly in its own favour the balance of power within this colonially derived power-sharing framework. The most distinguishing aspect of this power-sharing arrangement is that the Nigerian national bourgeoisie has always operated as a junior partner in relation to the British colonial authorities and British finance capital before independence, and in relation to the Euro-American metropolitan centres of world imperialism and their transnational corporations since independence. In other words, the power distribution between the Nigerian national bourgeoisie and the international bourgeoisie of the Western imperialist metropolises, is akin to that subsisting between an agent and a principal in a capitalist market system. The Nigerian national bourgeoisie and, through it, the Nigerian national economy, are dependent on the international capitalist bourgeoisie and the global imperialist economic order in precisely the same way as a business agent is dependent on his principal with all the implications of unequal exchange and exploitative relations appertaining to an agent-principal or client-patron system.

It is possible to speculate that this syndrome of dependence of our national bourgeoisie and our national economy has persisted till today because the ultimate political and economic decision makers among our national bourgeoisie
are ignorant of it or of how precisely it works. This kind of speculation will, however, amount to idle speculation as it would be flying in the face of concrete empirical evidence. As far back as November 1961 during debate in the Federal House of Representatives on the government’s proposals for the 1962-68 National Economic Development Plan, two leading Federal ministers, Zanna Bukar Dipcharima (Trade) and Waziri Ibrahim (Economic Development) frankly admitted that the Nigerian national economy was not in Nigeria hands but, rather, was subject to almost total control and manipulation by ‘imperialist’ powers and interests. Waziri Ibrahim even went further to indicate that, though the Government realised that in the past, economic planning in Nigeria had been aimed at meeting the requirements of the ‘imperialists’, the government was not able to do anything about altering this system of dependence because of the gargantuan forces ranged against it:

You are know very well that if we want to go very quickly in our economic changes, we cannot easily do it without creating a certain amount of trouble in this country . . . The imperialists have got various means of defending their monopoly. They have got their newspapers and televisions and they go to any extent to tell lies. If we want to really set about improving the economy of our country in a particular way, they may say we are Communists. They can make our countrymen suspect our every move. If they do not succeed by false propaganda, by calling us all sorts of names, if they fail to make us unpopular in order to win their case, they can arrange assassination. They can go to any extent without discrimination.

The essence of the November 1961 statement of Waziri Ibrahim is that the national bourgeoisie recognised the structure of dependence binding out national economy to world imperialism, but felt helpless to do anything about it. This condition of an ability to make a correct diagnosis coupled with a paralytic inaction in providing effective remedies for the ills of our national economy has remained with our national bourgeoisie and has even become more critical. In his opening address at the Colloquium on ‘Black Civilization and Education’ during FESTAC, 1977 our head of state, General Olusegun Obasanjo perceptively recognised that as a consequence of European colonial domination of Africa, most African countries today are no more than ‘trading outposts’ for foreign imperialist powers. He also identifies four categories of indigenous agents manning these outposts for their foreign imperialist principals. These are (i) the ‘commercial or business trading outpost agents’ (represented by the various business groups forming the Nigerian Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture); (ii) the ‘bureaucratic trading outpost agents’ (e.g. senior civil servants, officers in the armed and security forces, and all those involved in manipulating state power from the local government level to Dodan Barracks); (iii) the ‘technical trading output agents’ (all those working in the technical and technological spheres of the economy be it in the private or public sector like engineers, architects, surveyors, medical doctors etc. and (iv) the ‘intellectual trading outpost agents’ (those who superficially deal in the formulation and manipulation of ideas like teachers operating at different levels of the educational system, students of universities, polytechnics and ATCs, lawyers on the bench or at the bar etc.). As if this point was in need of reinforcement, General Obasanjo, in a speech delivered last month before a recent workshop at the University of Ibadan on ‘Development Planning in Nigeria in the 1980s’, went back to the theme of our economy not being in our own hands and of Nigeria being a country of agents. The most remarkable thing, however, about the General’s performance in January 1977 at FESTAC and in January 1978 at Ibadan is that he proferred no solution to the problem of economic dependence beyond
appealing to the representatives of the self-same ‘trading outpost agents’ to formulate strategies of action by means of which Nigerians would win control of their economy.

Now, it has to be admitted that the Nigerian national bourgeoisie, especially its leading decision-makers, have a vested objective interest in finding effective solutions to the problems of the nation’s economic and cultural dependence on the metropolitan centres of control and manipulation. It is objectively in the interest of our national bourgeoisie to be able to create a relatively independent and autonomous domestic capitalist economic order in Nigeria. If our bourgeoisie were to succeed in achieving this degree of autonomy and independence vis-à-vis international monopoly capital, then they might be able to retain all, or at least most, of the surplus value generated in the Nigerian economy by the labour of Nigerians being applied to the nation’s natural resources. This would also mean that, should the national bourgeoisie have a medicum of enlightened self-interest, by recognising that its tenure in power depended critically on how much improvement in the living conditions of the Nigerian masses it is able to generate, then it would have at its disposal the huge resources being syphoned away to Europe and America under the present system of dependence for financing genuine development programmes that might yield substantial improvement in the living conditions of our people.

The essence of the deepening crisis of the Nigeria national bourgeoisie, and this has always been well-known to its leading representatives, is that its failure to retain and use an adequate proportion of the nation’s wealth for generating a credible quantity of economic and social development in the country has robbed succeeding bourgeois regimes in Nigeria of even minimal legitimacy and authority in the eyes of the overwhelming majority of Nigerians. It is this ever-widening gap of legitimacy and authority between the rulers and the ruled in Nigeria that has been primarily responsible for the instability of succeeding bourgeois regimes, civilian and military, since 1960. It is a function of this legitimacy/authority gap and the resultant instability of the Nigerian political system that ruling regimes in Nigeria since 1960 have tended to acquire the features of a rapid turnover and high perishability and tend to lose credibility with their public soon after they emerge.

Consequently, it is precisely because the leaders of successive regimes demonstrate, by their speechifying and sermonizing, an awareness of the subversive impact of the role of foreign monopoly capital on their own legitimacy with their people, and because the recurrent collapse of regimes should ordinarily help to sharpen the awareness of the bourgeois ruling class of this problem to national dependence, that it is impossible for us to attribute the paralytic inaction of successive bourgeois regimes to ignorance of the problem. On the contrary, we would suggest that a more truthful explanation of this paralytic inaction on the part of the Nigerian bourgeoisie and the stubborn persistence with which the problem of national dependence has survived in our country can be found in an analysis of the objective and subjective factors operating within the Nigerian society and on the global scene to inhibit positive and decisive action by successive bourgeois regimes in Nigeria. These factors can be subsumed under four main categories: (i) the structure of world imperialist economy into which Nigeria has been effectively coopted; (ii) the profitability of the Nigerian bourgeoisie’s role as commission agents; (iii) contradictions
within the ranks of the national bourgeoisie; and (iv) contradictions between the national bourgeoisie and the masses.

Nigeria as a structural part of the world imperialist economy

The processes by which, under classical colonial rule and in the period of spurious decolonization, the Nigerian domestic economy and its potential bourgeois ruling class were structurally integrated into the global imperialist economy I have discussed elsewhere and they need not detain us here. The critical point is the implications of this structural integration for the performance both of the Nigerian economy and its national bourgeoisie. First of all the integration is such that the Nigerian economy operates primarily for the benefit of the metropolitan economies and responds most sensitively to their demands. Concretely, the most important economic activities going on in Nigeria are foreign-directed or foreign derived. For instance, petroleum mining which is by far the biggest and most strategic single economic activity in Nigeria is almost totally dominated by foreign technology supplied and controlled exclusively by Euro-American multinational corporations. More than ninety per cent of the petroleum mined in Nigeria is exported to the USA, Britain and other Western capitalist countries in descending order of magnitude. The same happens in the exploitation of Nigeria's rich reserves of tin and columbite on the Bauchi Plateau. Our agricultural economy, apart from the declining food crop sector of it, also operates largely to meet the needs of Euro-American industries. The picture is the same whether one is thinking of cocoa, groundnuts, rubber, soya beans or timber.

In effect, the role predetermined for us within the framework of the global imperialist economy is that of an exporter of raw mineral and agricultural materials and an importer of finished or semi-finished manufactured goods.

Our very long list of imports include industrial goods like motor vehicles, railway engines, aeroplanes, different kinds of machinery, engine spare parts, more than sixty per cent of the petroleum products we need, textile materials, shoes and processed food items like milk, sugar, coffee, tea, cocoa, beverages, fish, meat, alcoholic beverages etc. The logic of the pricing system on world markets devised by the metropolitan centres is that manufactured goods attract a higher saleable value per unit of labour put into their production than raw mineral and agricultural products. Since we sell exclusively mainly raw materials to the metropolitan capitalist economies and buy mainly finished manufactured goods from them, we end up selling the products of our people’s labour to them at relatively cheap prices and buy the products of the labour of metropolitan capitalist countries at relatively exorbitant prices. Therein lies the truth of Samir Amin’s theory of unequal international division of labour and the unequal exchange appertaining to it.

Given this cast-iron structure of dependence rigged up by the major capitalist economies of the world to ensure that ex-colonial third world countries like Nigeria continued to subsidise the metropolitan economies in perpetuity through the system of unequal exchange the viable options open to us are narrowed down to only two. Our bourgeoisie could acquiesce in the structure of dependence and try to make it work as much as possible in their own interest, on the ground that, because the metropolitan centres of control and manipulation are so much stronger than they are, to challenge them frontally could amount to a futile suicidal gesture on their part (Waziri Ibrahim’s prescription). This is a
relatively easy option, because it does not threaten the super-profits of the imperialist powers, who are thereby prepared to repay this good turn by guaranteeing to the representatives of our national bourgeoisie their agency commissions which are insignificant compared with the super-profits earned by international finance capital, but colossal in relation to the abysmally low-level of incomes and the poverty prevailing among the masses of our people.

The second option, the revolutionary option, is a very difficult and dangerous option. It involves the systematic and arduous task of mobilizing the masses of the people by the bourgeoisie in an anti-imperialist struggle against foreign monopoly capital. Since it threatens in a very real sense the profitability of imperialist enterprise in our economy, it is bound to provoke sharp retaliatory measures from the imperialists against the representatives of the national bourgeoisie embarking on such a course of action. Since it also involves the necessity of imposing on all of society the ethos of self-reliance and egalitarianism, it means that a bourgeoisie opting for this revolutionary course of action must be prepared to give up a great deal of the unjust colonial privileges enjoyed by its members (e.g. heavily subsidised cars and housing, astronomically high salaries etc.) and the fat commission agents’ fees drawn by some of its members. There is no evidence from the twenty-six years of majority African rule in Nigeria that the present Nigerian national bourgeoisie has the political will and clarity to engage world imperialism in a serious struggle in concert with and on behalf of the oppressed masses of its people. There is also no evidence that is capable of mustering up enough revolutionary discipline and a self-sacrificing nobility of heart that would make it give up its privileges and its profits so that its people can have a new and more dignified existence.

It means, in effect, that in the impasse in which the Nigerian national bourgeoisie has found itself, it perceives only one option for itself and its people: accommodation within the neo-colonially prescribed structure of dependence on international monopoly capital and the international bourgeoisie that manipulates it. From the era of the First Republic our national bourgeoisie has deceived itself into believing that even within the constraints of national dependence, it has some room to manoeuvre and could use a combination of moral suasion, declarations of undying friendship between Nigeria and her ‘traditional friends’, threats and feigned gestures of trying to reach some accord with communist countries, to extract some concessions from the imperialist countries of the West. Chief among the hoped-for concessions during the First Republic was investment capital from the West for financing a public development programme in Nigeria. In spite of repeated verbal assurances from government spokesmen in the USA, Britain and other European countries, the execution of the 1962-68 National Development Plan demonstrated beyond all reasonable doubt that the Nigeria bourgeoisie’s hope in this regard was without any basis in reality. Whereas the authors of the 1962-68 plan expected to derive about 50% of the total capital expenditure in the plan period from foreign sources, ‘at the end of the Plan period, foreign loans in fact amounted to only 25% of realized capital investment’. In contradistinction to this, foreign private investment in the economy, estimated at N780 million for the plan period, was already exceeded by 64 per cent by 1966, two years before the end of the plan period.

The implication of this pattern of behaviour by the imperialist countries is that they prefer investing their capital in third world countries dependent on them
through their own private nationals who would be in effective control of such investments, rather than making direct government investment in the public sector which could be more effectively controlled by the recipient government. If the leading political decision-makers among the Nigerian bourgeoisie had done their homework in political and economic intelligence thoroughly, they might have formulated a more realistic plan based on national self-reliance in 1962 and might have been saved all the griping and belly-aching that they resorted to in the late 1960s and 1970s. For instance, as early as September 1957 one Mr Hollister, the head of the USA International Cooperation Administration (the forerunner of the USAID) is reported to have declared:

A basic factor in the policy of the International Cooperation Administration is the desire to use American aid in such a way that recipient countries might safeguard the development of the private sector of their economies.

Again, in 1961, Ludwig Erhard, as Economics Minister and the brain behind the much trumpeted ‘economic miracle’ of the Federal Republic of Germany, stated in giving the underdeveloped countries economic and military aid, and aid in forms of cadres, we do not want to promote the development of state capitalist collectivism.

During the Second Republic, especially in the period of the fictitious oil boom that followed the end of the Nigerian civil war in 1970, the most sought-after concession from the Western capitalist countries has been ‘transfer of technology’ to us. Whereas the authors of the 1970-74 National Development Plan placed top priority in the industrial sector on agro-allied industries and petro-chemical and chemical industries, (meant to boost the two most important economic activities in Nigeria — farming and petroleum mining) potential foreign private investors showed very little or no interest in both industrial areas: 0.1 per cent of total proposed manufacturing investment in agro-allied industries and no interest at all in petro-chemical and chemical industries. It should be clear for all except the Nigerian political decision-makers to see that for Western capitalist entrepreneurs to respond to such demands by us would mean facing their lucrative export market in a wide array of products including processed food, petroleum products and synthetic fibres.

In view of the well-known facts about the politics of ‘transfer of technology’, it was particularly distressing to learn that one of the primary objectives of the recent visit of our Head of State to the USA was to plead with the US President and the business community in that country to ‘transfer technology’ to us through massive investment in our industrial economy. It was even more distressing to hear our Head of State, apparently in his anxiety to make the US business establishment more receptive to this plea, make a statement to the effect that ‘America is the nearest thing in the world to man being in total control of his environment’. This is a statement which most Americans, especially Black Americans and other marginalised groups, will have great difficulty in understanding, let alone believing, in view of the especially bad record of the US military-industrial complex in abusing and ravaging the human and physical environment of the country and its neighbours.

Among some of the fanciful ideas being indulged in by our national bourgeoisie in relation to the chimera of ‘technology transfer’ are the following. (1) We can acquire the appropriate technology and technical assistance from the industrialized Western countries in developing an autonomous nuclear capability, when up till now we have not succeeded in getting from the same source the transfer of
the basic technologies like road construction, electric power generation by water, carbon fuels and gas, supply of good drinking water adequate for domestic and industrial purposes, metallurgy, etc., etc. (2) The air-lifting of thousands of hastily selected and politically illiterate young people to Europe and America to pursue courses in various branches of engineering and technology, at a time when there is almost total confusion about what to do with our own technical education programme at home, and in a situation on which the preponderance of foreign ownership and control of the few industrial establishments limit their usefulness as practical training groups for our students of technology and engineering. (3) The proposed massive importation of US academic and supporting personnel into our universities under the spurious 'Nigeria-US Linkages in Higher Education' Programme, at a time when the degree of dependence of our universities on Euro-American academics is already intolerably high and inconsistent with a policy of national self-reliance.

It would appear to me that, given the existing structure of the world capitalist economy, the highest form of 'transfer of technology' we will be able to achieve in the foreseeable future is the multiplying of assembly-type industries, where nothing of consequence is fabricated locally and the inflated prices of whose inferior products are protected by high tariff walls. Apart from the assembly plants for Peugeot and Volkswagen cars that have gone into operation since then, the characterisation of industrial activities in Nigeria in the 1970-74 Development Plan looks as if it is going to remain valid for a long time:

Most industrial activities in the country are still not manufacturing in the true sense of the term, but mere assembly industries. Very often, all the components used are imported and are merely put together behind the tariff wall. Whether one is considering the manufacture of shoes or cosmetics, beer or soft drinks, the story is broadly the same... All that happens at most of the breweries is that all the imported inputs are mixed and sealed in imported bottles.

Another major concession which the Nigerian national bourgeoisie is currently seeking from the Western investors of capital is that they allow Nigerian businessmen (whether full or part-time) to share in the ownership and control of their business enterprises in Nigeria. This desired concession is embodied in the Nigerian Enterprises Promotions Decree enacted by Gowon in 1972 to take effect in 1974 and its new form as amended by the present regime in 1976. At every turn since this bright idea exploded on the Nigerian political scene, leading government spokesmen have reiterated that the objective of the decree is indigenization of the economy, not nationalization, i.e. to achieve a higher degree of Nigerian participation in the national economy, not to take it over completely. But even this limited objective has proved stubbornly unattainable probably because the unwillingness of many foreign entrepreneurs to split ownership and control with Nigerians has happily coincided with the preference of many Nigerian businessmen for the easy and highly remunerative life of a commission agent over and above the hard and uncertain life of an entrepreneur.

On balance, we can say with a high degree of certainty that the structural integration of the Nigerian economy and its national bourgeoisie into an international capitalist order constitutes a major constraint on the ability of the bourgeoisie, even if it were willing, to change radically this structure of dependence. It is, however, important to note that while this objective structural constraint constitutes a necessary condition, it does not amount to a sufficient condition for the ongoing dependence of our national economy on the metro-
politician centres of control and manipulation. Consequently we shall proceed to consider other factors which, taken together with the structure of dependence, provide an adequate explanation for the crippling dependence and paralysing inaction of our national bourgeoisie.

The profitability of the Nigerian Bourgeoisie’s role as commission agents
We endorse the assertion by our Head of State that Nigeria is a nation of commission agents, but only in the sense that the Nigerian national bourgeoisie that has usurped the power of decision-making over the nation’s economic, social and political life is a class largely made up of agents. We also recognise that apart from being pre-programmed by foreign monopoly capital to perform as commission agents, members of the Nigerian bourgeoisie themselves recognise the profitability of this role. It is this recognition of their own subjective interest of making profit that has helped to reinforce the structural links of dependence binding us to the metropolitan centres of control and manipulation. This is why successive regimes have passed and upheld laws which have created optimal conditions for the operation of foreign investment capital in Nigeria. These laws, among other things, guarantee to private investors tax free holidays, exemption from import duties on machinery and other components, freedom to repatriate capital and profit and a relatively low level of company taxation. Since a considerable number of members of the Nigerian bourgeoisie are recruited by these foreign investors to their boards of directors essentially to play the role of political power brokers between them and the Nigerian ultimate decision-makers, they get their own share of the resources syphoned away from Nigeria in what appears to be a perfectly legitimate manner, but which amounts to unearned profit or robbery of the Nigerian economy.

The explosion in the last ten to fifteen years of the contract and consultancy businesses in executing all sorts of public projects ranging from the construction of roads, bridges and buildings to transporting fertilizers and other capital goods from the ports to the hinterland has facilitated the further penetration of our national economy by foreign capital and has enlarged the scope of operation and the quantum of profit of the Nigerian commission agents. It is precisely this subjective element of profitability that has created a situation in Nigeria in which there is an abundant supply of Nigerians (representatives of the Nigerian Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture, the Nigerian Bar Association, the Nigerian Medical Association, Chartered Societies of Architects, Engineers and Surveyors, NAUT, NUNS, the civilian and military bureaucracy) who are willing and anxious to collaborate with major foreign firms and their representatives to commit various forms of economic sabotage against the Nigerian people. The list of such crimes of economic sabotage, even from 1966 to date, is limitless, but it will suffice to mention only a few:

1. the massive rip-off of the Nigerian economy by the US confidence trickster, Soleyman Nagatty, involving at least four of the 12 states of the Federation at that time;
2. the Scania Bus Scandal in which some crooked businessmen in Sweden and Nigeria ripped off the Lagos Municipal Transport Service of over N500,000;
3. the exploitation of Nigeria’s petroleum and natural gas resources which constitutes the primary leakage in the economy;
4. the cement importation scandal of 1973-5 which enriched a large number
of Nigerian agents and even larger numbers of foreign shipping companies and cement dealers but nearly wrecked the Nigerian economy;
5. the illegal trafficking in Nigerian foreign exchange, in which representatives of the Nigerian bourgeoisie, for considerations of quick and easy profit, helped foreign business concerns and individuals to syphon out of Nigeria millions of naira of unearned income;
6. the Leyland bus scandal, which was part of the FESTAC scandal, in which some Nigerian commission agents, by drawing fat commissions for peddling their political influence in high decision-making quarters, millions (possibly hundreds of millions) of naira were looted and smuggled out of the country by the myriads of FESTAC contractors and consultants;
7. the system known to the government, whereby prices of imported goods from the Western capitalist countries are automatically marked up from source by anything ranging from 25 to 300 per cent for Nigeria and other OPEC member countries;
8. the effective undermining of the Nigerian Enterprises Decree (alias Indigenisation Decree) by effective collaboration between Nigerian commission agents and foreign business concerns operating in Nigeria.

One major consequence of the explosion in the numerical strength and operational scale of the Nigerian bourgeoisie as commission agents in the context of military authoritarianism and almost total lack of accountability (Never mind the symbolic gestures of inconclusive probes and retirement of bureaucrats with or without full benefit) is that the pace of capital accumulation by members of the Nigerian bourgeoisie (both its business and technocratic sectors) has been phonemenally accelerated. This explosion has produced in the last few years a rash of Nigerian millionaires operating in both the public and private sectors, but has also put several times the millions made by the Nigerian commission agents into the pockets of their Euro-American principals.

Consequently, given the innumerable leaks in the Nigerian national economy, it is impossible for the people of this country to reap any significant cumulative benefit from the exploitation of the vast human and material resources with which their nation is blessed. It is, therefore, not accidental that after less than ten years of the much trumpetted Nigerian petroleum boom, the Nigerian economy is in the grip of such a major crisis of solvency, that the Nigerian bourgeois ruling class (the author of this crisis) has no other solution than to seek a loan of one billion US dollars from their main collaborators in rendering the economy bankrupt. This is, in fact, the ideal situation which Western monopoly capitalism would want to place us in, because the more dependent on them we are for credits to shore up our own pseudo-capitalist economy, the greater their own freedom of action to manipulate and control our whole economy for their own benefit and to our own disadvantage.

Contradictions within the ranks of the national bourgeoisie

Even though there is a growing consciousness among members of the Nigerian national bourgeoisie that in the final analysis they have common interests to defend against the masses of their people, this class consciousness is still in an embryonic stage and is far from being fully formed.

Consequently there exist among the bourgeoisie several contradictions of varying degrees of antagonism which undermine their cohesiveness and unanimity in the bargaining that they have to do as a class of commission agents with foreign
monopoly capitalist interests. Some of the most antagonistic contradictions exist between the bureaucratic bourgeoisie (whether military or civilian) and the business bourgeoisie. This is because the bureaucratic bourgeoisie are the ultimate political decision-makers and, irrespective of how they have acquired their political decision-making capability (through the ballot box, barrel of the gun, appointment or nomination) they have some awareness of a constituency of accountability that they must periodically appease if not with positive action then at least by appropriate rhetorical pronouncements. The business bourgeoisie, on the other hand, do not feel the pressure of such a constituency and, trapped within their own myth of belonging to the private sector of the national economy, feel much freer than their bureaucratic counterparts to take actions and make statements that sometimes conflict violently with the clearly ascertainable and articulated interests of the masses of Nigerians.

A classic case of such a contradiction is over the issue of the crippling dependence of our economy on foreign imperialist interests and the need for Nigerians to stop being agents for foreign capitalists and to take the ownership and control of the Nigerian economy into their own hands. At about the same time that General Obasanjo was enlarging on this theme in his address to the Ibadan workshop on ‘Development Planning in the 1980s’ in January this year, Chief Henry Fajemirokun, the unquestioned philosopher-king of the Nigerian business bourgeoisie was striking a different chord at a gala performance in London. Fajemirokun, the President of the Nigerian Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture, and President of the West African Federation of Chambers of Commerce, was speaking in London at the inaugural meeting of the Nigeria-British Chamber of Commerce, of which he was President of the Nigerian Chapter and Deputy President of the British Chapter. On that occasion Fajemirokun urged British businessmen in the presence of a ‘strong Nigerian representation’ at the meeting which ‘was crowded to overflowing, cheerful and very commercially minded’ that

they should be taking a more aggressive and dynamic interest in Nigeria. Britain should be pressing hard to regain the trading and economic leadership which she seems so tamely to have abandoned. (West Africa, 16.1.1978)

This kind of blatant contradiction of stated government policy position on the national economy indicates that even if government were genuinely committed to implementing its policy statements on say indigenisation or husbanding of foreign exchange reserves, it would find such implementation extremely hard, if not impossible, as a great deal of its success would depend on the willing and active cooperation of the Nigerian business bourgeoisie.

Furthermore, even though the objective interests of the Nigerian national bourgeoisie demand that they should be committed to the creation and consolidation of a pan-Nigerian national consciousness, an awareness of the need, as one of our civil war slogans put it, ‘to keep Nigeria one’, in real practical life they appear to be working overtime to fragment this consciousness, not just into nineteen but several times that number. The national bourgeoisie objectively need the reality of ‘one Nigeria’ in order to enhance their bargaining position vis-a-vis their foreign monopoly capitalist principals and be able maximally to exploit the resources of Nigeria for their own selfish ends. But this objective of ‘one and indivisible Nigeria’ (according to the rhetoric of the CDC Draft) is in violent conflict with the bourgeoisie’s fundamental dependence on their Euro-
American sponsors and manipulators and with their own internal struggle for a lion’s share of that part of the national surplus appropriated by their class.

This contradiction between the bourgeoisie’s objective need for a united Nigeria and their subjective fragmentation into several antagonistic groups manifests itself in several forms, but we shall examine two of the most obvious ones. Firstly, the politics of state creation in Nigeria since the announcement of the Macpherson constitutional proposals in 1948 has had very little, if anything, to do with the need to allay the fears of minority ethnic groups. On the contrary, in spite of the platitudinous nonsense about bringing development closer to the people, its primary dynamic has been the desire of ethnic and regional bourgeoisies to carve out for themselves exclusive spheres of influence where they could appropriate the surplus of the people’s labour power without having to contend with their rivals for power in Lagos from the other regions and ethnic groups. The representatives of these ethnic and regional bourgeoisies on the CDC were so obsessed with the desire to create these exclusive empires for themselves that they defined state citizenship in crude biological terms and far more stringently than they defined Nigerian national citizenship. (The Draft Constitution, Article 210 states that ‘belong to when used with reference to a state, refers to a person either of whose parents was a member of a community indigenous to that state’.) The excessive attention which the Constituent Assembly has given to the issue of the creation of new states, and the fervid politicking going on among its members on the issue, are symptomatic of the potential and actual significance of statism as a divisive force among the national bourgeoisie. However, our experience since 1967 when eight new states were created and since 1976 when another seven new ones were created has amply demonstrated that the primary, if not exclusive, beneficiaries of the exercises have been bureaucrats who have made meteoric rises in their careers and contractors and consultants of various kinds who are reaping an extraordinarily rich harvest from selling a variety of goods and services to the state government.

But since we do not have as many states as there are bureaucrats, contractors and consultants with over-large ambitions for personal and group aggrandizement, it seems almost certain that the politics of state creation and of keeping Nigerian ‘foreigners’ out of the existing states will for a long time remain a divisive force among the Nigerian bourgeoisie, given the existing commission agent type of capitalist economy that they are operating.

Secondly, religion (especially Christianity and Islam) is being actively manipulated by the leading lights of the national bourgeoisie and their minions, in the same way as ethnicity and statism, for selfish sectional and personal interests. As Yusufu Usman rightly pointed out in a recent lecture on the subject, members of the client Nigerian bourgeoisie are manipulating religious differences among Nigerians, partly to mask their real identity which they dare not expose to the ordinary people whose political support they want to mobilize for their own selfish advantage. Among bourgeois or petty bourgeois groups competing for power religion can also be used, and it is already being used to cloud the issues at stake vis-a-vis their actual or potential constituencies. It is for such reasons that dubious and ambitious aspirants for student union offices in our universities are increasingly resorting to the dangerous tactic of promoting their candidate on the basis of their membership of either the Christian or Islamic faith and vilifying the other faith.
It is only in this light of deliberately manipulating the issue of religion that we can see that assinine and acrimonious debate on the Federal Sharia Court of Appeal that has been going on in our mass media and in the chambers of the Constituent Assembly.

Apart from the doubtful commitment of the combatants on either side of the battle line to the ethnical and moral principles sustaining both Islam and Christianity, all the participants in the verbal warfare have scrupulously avoided raising the fundamental issue of hammering out a common and viable legal and judicial system that would be readily intelligible and accessible to the Nigerian masses and would constitute for them a bulwark against the mystification of the law and the arbitrary and oppressive use of state power by the bureaucrats, judges, police, the army and other so-called law-enforcement agencies.

Contradictions between the national bourgeoisie and the Nigerian people
The primary contradiction between the Nigerian national bourgeoisie and the Nigerian masses is that the bourgeoisie is a willing and active collaborator with hostile foreign imperialist forces to rob the overwhelming majority of Nigerians of the legitimate fruits of their labour. The Nigerian bourgeoisie are the social engineers, fuelling and servicing the engines of economic, political and cultural oppression planted in our midst by the world imperialist powers and their multinational corporations. Their ultimate role is that of hard task masters driving the masses of their people to work in the service of world imperialism for scanty or no reward. They have many weapons in their armoury for coercing their people to perform such virtual slave labour. For instance, they have an educational system, essentially elitist but advertised as popular and mass-oriented, which guarantees that most Nigerian young people cannot realistically hope to have more education than is necessary for them to join an exploitable labour reserve in the rural and urban centres. The national bourgeoisie also has a salaries and wages system (alias Udoji and Williams and Williams) that ensures that the overwhelming majority of wage earners would never earn enough either to sustain a dignified existence or threaten the super profits of the national bourgeoisie and its Western imperialist principals. They also have a colonially-derived legal and judicial system whose main function is to defend the sanctity of the private properties of both the domestic and international bourgeois capitalist classes against what they see as the envious glances of the poor Nigerian masses. In other words, they have created in Nigeria mass poverty in the midst of plenty and a police state to defend the scandalous plenitude of the few rich.

In the final analysis the contradiction between the national bourgeoisie and the masses in Nigeria hinges on the operation of international finance capitalism that sustains the dependent domestic capitalism of the national bourgeoisie. But as we have pointed out earlier in this lecture the national bourgeoisie is not able to resolve this contradiction in favour of the masses of its people and against its foreign imperialist principals. It is also not able to come out openly and tell the Nigerian people that its true commitments is to domestic and foreign capitalist exploitation of the human and material resources of the nation.

Consequently, the more astute ideologues resort to masking their real intentions and commitment behind woolly and mendacious manifestoes. They preach the discredited ‘end of ideology’ sermon and call on the people to embrace their own vacuous zero-ideology and keep quiet about capitalism. While peddling the
myth of zero-ideology, they are at the same time laying the foundation stone of a mammoth twenty-two storey building of the Nigerian Stock Exchange as if the people of this country are so dim-witted that they do not know that the Stock Exchange is the hub of any capitalist economy. In one breath they wax eloquent about the virtues of free enterprise and throw the doors of the economy wide open to private foreign investors, in another they complain about the inefficiency and unprofitability of government owned and controlled public corporations. However, they conveniently forget to mention that public corporations in Nigeria are inefficient and unprofitable, because they were rigged by those who set them up and operate them primarily to serve as conduit pipes for money to flow from the public treasury into private coffers. This is ensured by appointing the Chairmen and most members of the corporations' board of directors from the Nigerian business community. These in turn see their primary task as awarding fat and soft contracts and consultancies to their foreign and indigenous business associates even if the corporations go bankrupt as a result.

The ultimate crisis of the national bourgeoisie is that, in spite of the exertions of their ideologues to cover up in rhetorical formulations the ugly reality of the disastrous failure of the bourgeoisie to uphold and defend the genuine interests of their people, nothing, literally nothing, really works in the country. All the problems they inherited at independence have been multiplied many fold. The gap between urban and rural communities has widened radically and continues to widen with the very grim implications of a growing flood of migrants from the villages to the major towns, unspeakable urban congestion, alarming decline in food production. In urban centres the scandalously opulent and sanitized GRA's with their 'millionaires' belts' and ten-car families are poised in a frightful confrontation with the vast, overcrowded, smelly and slummy 'native' cities where poverty, endemic diseases and crime reign supreme. Members of the national bourgeoisie have cornered so many private cars, built so few urban roads, and are so incapable of managing the resultant traffic congestion in major urban towns, Lagos being the absurd limit, that many of them spend more time in traffic than at home or at work.

Confronted with this catalogue of their disastrous failures, the bourgeoisie, now totally trapped in its own self-induced crisis, makes a last ditch attempt to escape responsibility. It tries to project on to the whole Nigerian people its own moral bankruptcy and its own failure of character. Instead of the spokesmen for the National national bourgeoisie going to their people in a repentant and humble mood and begging for the people's forgiveness for the chaos, misery and disaster that they, the leaders, have inflicted on their people through their intellectual and physical laziness, their lack of patriotism, their indiscipline and their moral and spiritual decadence, it is the long-suffering people, the victims, who get accused of all these crimes committed against them.

When the leading lights of the national bourgeoisie are not engaged in this cynical game of 'passing the buck', they resort to toying around with ill-thought-out technical and half-hearted measures for dealing with problems that can only be solved by a drastic revolutionary restructuring of the society. We have witnessed urban rents and the cost of urban land grow exponentially in the wake of rent edicts, ostensibly enacted to bring down urban rents but in effect designed to further enrich those members of the bourgeoisie powerful and influential enough to be allocated building plots in the Government Reservation Areas (GRA).
To deal with the galloping inflation in the Nigerian economy, which is partly imported from the industrialised capitalist countries and partly induced by the irrational consumption pattern of the national bourgeoisie, our political decision makers have conjured up two huge white elephants — the Price Control Board and the National Supply Company. The result has been not less but much more inflation with serious problems of survival for the masses of our people earning marginal incomes.

Finally, when all else fails our national bourgeoisie resort to the ancient device of staging big spectacles to divert the attention of their people from the central issues and the primary contradictions of life. It was not by accident that in one single year our leaders spent many million naira to stage FESTAC '77, International Boy Scouts' Jamboree '77, ECOWAS Games '77 and International Trade Fair '77. Apart from dissipating scarce resources that could be creatively used for raising the level of the overall well being of our people on such mindless exhibitionism, these shows, especially FESTAC have awesome implications for the health and integrity of our culture.

In this and other ways the issue of national culture whose resolution lies at the heart of a viable national consciousness and the promotion of national unity is vulgarised and befuddled by the national bourgeoisie. The Nigerian bourgeoisie sees cultural revival exclusively in terms of demonstrating to themselves and to their Western patrons that Africans have cultures of their own. However, since the most vital aspects of culture (the refinements of mind and spirit) cannot be publicly displayed, our bourgeoisie and their clients, the petty bourgeois intellectuals, are reduced to treating culture as something limited to dancing, singing and other marginal and external features of culture. Furthermore, because of the vulgar bourgeoisie's obsession with making profit for themselves from every project they embark upon, they have progressively commodified the people's culture by organising tourist-oriented cultural and arts festivals, exclusively for the amusement of the urban-based national bourgeoisie and their foreign visitors. At the end of the day, the peasant communities which alone have managed to retain a credible amount of the forms and spirit of their indigenous cultures are merely exploited in a cynical way by the bourgeois merchants of culture. Their representatives are transported to the urban centres of amusement and made to dance and sing outside the contextual framework of the living culture to which they belong.

Thus, cultural and arts festivals come and go without any visible positive contribution being made to the development of national cultural awareness or revival.

What is to be done?

Our concern with the issue of the deepening crisis of the Nigerian national bourgeoisie has nothing to do with helping it to find an escape route from its own self-engineered disaster. On the contrary by attempting this analysis, we intend to focus attention on the danger which this barren bourgeoisie, bent on committing suicide, poses to the present well being and future course of development to the generality of our people. It is also my hope that, by reasoning together, those of whose commitment and loyalty is to the masses of our people, rather than to their foreign and domestic exploiter, will be able to formulate a strategy of action for averting this danger.
In this regard, I suggest that the only viable course of action for us is a revolutionary one in the most fundamental sense: revolutionary in the sense that we have to get critically inserted among the masses of our people and be willing to learn from their rich practical experience of life as well as impart to them our own theoretical knowledge so that together we can create a people’s revolutionary movement whose material, intellectual and spiritual culture will be so much superior to the decadent culture of the bourgeoisie. The cultivation of a superior people’s revolutionary culture and its corollary, a people’s revolutionary organisation, is of supreme strategic and tactical significance. Its significance lies in the fact that the national bourgeoisie has to be stoutly opposed and overthrown because, as Frantz Fanon correctly judged, ‘literally it is good for nothing’. Now, in spite of the bankruptcy of that bourgeoisie, in spite of the fact that it is ‘incapable of great ideas and inventiveness’, it is still dangerous and has the monopoly of a wide array of coercive instruments of state power which it is capable of using against our people with a murderous effect. To be able to oppose this decadent, but dangerous, bourgeoisie with optimal effect, it is imperative that we arm ourselves and our people with a genuine revolutionary culture and a discipline and invincible revolutionary organisation, unshakeably committed to the principles of social justice and equity, to the liberations of our people from material and cultural deprivation and implacably opposed to all forms of exploitation of man by man.

A luta continua!

Bibliographic Note

This is the text of a public lecture delivered at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria on 4.2.1978, and at Bayero University, Kano on 5.2.1978 under the auspices of MPN and OSMA respectively.


See also Yusufu Bala Usman ‘The manipulation of religion in Nigeria today: its social and political basis’ Abridged text of lecture, Students Union, Institute of Administration, ABU, Zaria, 2 November 1977. Segun Osoba and Yusufu Bala Usman wrote the (unpublished) ‘Draft minority report’ to the Constitutional Drafting Committee.
Political Parties and Ideology in Nigeria

Richard Joseph

First interpreting the complex forces at work since the overthrow of Gowon, this article then explores the process of party formation that has gone on as Nigeria begins the return to civilian rule. Noting that no socialist grouping on a national plane has emerged, it documents how the major contenders for power in the forthcoming elections are groups, not solely based on ethnicity, that do have some ideological differences, but are nevertheless parties that are organised around well-known political figures from pre-military coup days. It remains to be seen whether subsequent developments lead to the more clear-cut emergence of ideological competition or back to the old ethnic in-fighting and the perpetuation of the present class domination.

Since the overthrow of Yakubu Gowon, the Nigerian people have witnessed a number of sudden shifts in their country’s foreign, economic and internal political policies. During these four years the nation has also been guided on a course, decided upon by the military regime and its senior civil advisers, intended to lead to civilian rule by 1 October 1979. There are many general statements an observer can make with regard to the interrelationships among the oil-fuelled economy, the pattern of class formation, and the new party organisations. In the final analysis, however, it must be seen that Nigeria has been a nation-in-waiting since July 1975. Since the military proconsuls hold all the trumps, there has been an unwillingness on the part of various sections and social groups in the country to play their hand too openly. As a consequence, while from one vantage point the country appears to be moving smoothly along the chosen path of political change, from another these developments seem like mere ripples on the surface of Black Africa’s most complex social formation.

Instead of succumbing to the urge to impose some coherence on this state of affairs, I intend to adhere to the contrary spirit: that the study of Nigeria since the advent of the Murtala/Obasanjo regime requires a certain degree of caution in explaining what appears to be taking place. Shortly after his arrival in power, General Muhammed made a decision which seemed to portend a drastic shift in the balance of ideological weight on the African continent (see Basil Davidson’s remarks in No.5 of this Review, p.102). Murtala refused to follow the line of the Nixon-Kissinger Administration on Angola and instead threw the decisive support of his government behind the MPLA. Yet, as any tracing of Nigeria’s involvement in subsequent intra-African disputes would reveal — whether the
Shaba episode in Zaire, the Ethiopian-Somalian war, the Chad civil war and the Tanzanian-Ugandan conflict — the military regime has remained consistent but not in the way many of us would have expected based on the Angolan episode. Quite briefly, this consistency has been of a formal OAU sort, demanding fidelity to the principles of non-intervention in the affairs of fellow sovereign states, opposition to the involvement of foreign powers in African disputes, and the promoting of mediation at all times, sometimes regardless of the relative merits of the positions of the warring parties.

Another example of how views of Nigeria reflect more one's hopes than actual developments occurring in the country are perspectives on the various stages in the return to civilian government. During the first stage (1975-76) in which the Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC) was preparing the draft constitution, it was clear that the mixed-economy advocates had prevailed against the socialists. The two socialists on the fifty-member CDC (49 plus the Chairman), historians Yusufu Bala Usman and Segun Osoba, went ahead and produced their own minority draft. Throughout the second stage of this transitional programme, i.e. the wide-ranging national debate on the draft constitution, the position in the country-at-large seemed the very reverse, with the socialists making easy work of the arguments of their opponents. Yet, before anyone could rejoice over this new wave of socialist consciousness sweeping the country, the 1977 elections to the Constituent Assembly produced a body even more conservative than the CDC. Still, there was some consolation for those who wished to argue that these elections did not reflect the true dynamics of Nigerian society since the Assembly members had been indirectly elected by local government councils, and a sizeable number (27 of 230) were directly appointed by the government.

The Neutralising of the Nigerian Left

After the lifting of the ban on party politics on 21 September 1978, the first group to announce its formation was the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo. This was followed before long by more than fifty other political associations. Although many of these presented themselves as being ‘progressive’ or ‘welfarist’, in fact only a few could be regarded as socialist, and their public existence was to be extremely fleeting: the Socialist and Working People’s Party (SWPP), the Socialist Party of Workers, Farmers and Youths (SPWFY), and the Nigerian Workers and Peasants Movement (WOPVAN). Under the new Nigerian Constitution of 1979 and the Electoral Decree, as amended, of 1977, such associations had to satisfy three general criteria before they could be registered as political parties. These were, in order of importance, that they had established party offices in 13 of the 19 states of the federation, that their organisation in the local government areas of these states was sufficient to enable them to present their programmes effectively to the electorate and, finally, that their objectives conformed with Chapter II of the 1979 Constitution on The Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy.

Only five of the nineteen parties which submitted registration papers were adjudged by the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) to have satisfied all three criteria: the Great Nigerian People’s Party (GNPP), the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), the Nigerian People’s Party (NPP), the People’s Redemption Party (RPR), and the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN). The factors which appear to distinguish the registered from the unregistered parties (leaving aside those of the latter which were just frivolous) are easily noted: ready access to investible
funds; leadership by a well-known political figure from the pre-military era; and
the existence of an underlying political formation which provided an available
infrastructure of militants and alliances for the new party. While I do not wish
on this occasion to undertake a full analysis of the registration procedure, it is
still necessary to indicate the reasons why none of the socialist associations got
off the ground in the first phase of civilian politics. Although a number of
socialist thinkers were active, especially on the university campuses, during the
past five years, they were never able to build a national association which would
be capable of challenging the future conservative or liberal-welfarist parties.
Some well-known Marxists from the days of the Socialist Workers and Farmers
Party, such as Dr Tunji Otegbeye, had already thrown in their lot with one or
other of the monied left-wing parties, in his case with the emerging Unity Party
of Nigeria.

The debate within the ranks of the socialists revolved around three options:
first, whether they should concentrate on building a long-term political move-
ment and overlook the race for electoral advantage in the first post-military
government; second, whether they should function independently of the pro-
gressive establishment parties in the event that they themselves opted for seeking
registration for the first electoral contests; and, finally, whether a policy of
‘entrism’ should not be practiced and their members simply join the two left-
of-centre parties and fight to ensure the electoral victory of these parties, the
implementation of their progressive policies, and finally their transformation
into full-fledged socialist parties. Looking back over the past seven months, it
can be said that many of the socialists shifted from one to another of these
strategies as the campaign progressed. The failure to gain registration of the most
active of the socialist groupings still in contention, the Socialist Party of Workers,
Farmers and Youth, finally resulted in its members being advised to join the
PRP or the UPN.

From an ideological standpoint, therefore, it can be said that socialism is not a
central issue in the 1979 elections. Whatever may be taking place behind the
scenes and in private homes, it can also be asserted that no socialist movement
or organisation is presently effectively engaged in the struggle to succeed the
military government in Nigeria. My reason for stating these points in such a bold
manner is because there was no way of predicting such a dénouement at any time
between July 1975 and September 1978. Nigerian socialists played a prominent
role in opposing Yakubu Gowon when his administration became increasingly
riddled with corruption, and when Gowon seemed unwilling to make his long
overdue exit from State House. Their challenge to the contents of the Draft
Constitution, as mentioned earlier, was highly articulate and effective. From
October 1977, however, when the Constituent Assembly began its deliberations
largely divest of Marxists, the socialists in the country became more the target
than the source of political action in the country. The two developments which
further eroded their prospects in the transition to civilian rule were the re-
structuring of the trade union movement, 1977-78, and the fees crisis in the
universities of March/April 1978.

As the general strike of 1964 illustrates so forcefully, the promotion of a radical
alternative in Nigerian politics is closely tied to the organisation and dynamism
of the trade union movement. It is, of course, generally the case that only labour
unions can provide the substantial funds needed for the involvement of left-
wing parties in electoral politics. In the case of Nigeria, this rule is rendered even more absolute because of the central part that hard cash plays in the purchase of electoral support. Without a trade union connection, there is no way the socialist associations could have set up functioning offices in two-thirds of the states of the Federation in order to qualify for registration. The trade union reforms did achieve one objective which many Nigerian progressives would applaud, namely, the condensing of the great multiplicity of unions into seventy industrial unions. There might be a division of opinion as to whether the creation of one central labour organisation, the Nigerian Labour Congress, would serve more to facilitate suppression or representation of the workers’ interests. However, there can be little doubt that the third major aspect of this decree, namely the proscription of any formal association between trade unions and political groups or of any financial contribution from the former to the latter, will gravely undermine the prospects of any left-wing, not to mention socialist, party for some time to come.

In the case of the 1978 fees crisis in the universities, the Government’s actions served to dispel whatever lingering trust the Nigerian Left may have had in the post-Gowan military regime. A substantial increase in boarding and lodging fees for university students had been decreed by the Government via the Nigerian Universities Council. This decision triggered off demonstrations which resulted, at the University of Lagos and Ahmadu Bello University, in the fatal shooting of several students by the police and army. Upon receiving the report of the Commission of Inquiry set up ostensibly to investigate the causes of the disturbances, the Government ordered the expulsion of a number of lecturers from the Universities of Ibadan, Lagos and Calabar, as well as one journalist from a government-owned newspaper. In view of the already declining role of the Left in national affairs since the brief reign of General Muhammed (July 1975-February 1976), the severe disciplinary action taken against the outspoken lecturers in 1978 greatly tempered the willingness of their colleagues to put themselves at risk by criticizing a government which had already promised to go. The final act in this muzzling of the radical Left came with the decree of December 1978 banning university employees and students from participating in party political activities. It can reasonably be concluded, therefore, that the Nigerian Left — including its significant representation among university lecturers and students — has been consigned to the sidelines, largely by the Government’s fiat, in the contest to determine its successor.

The Registered Parties 1: The Centre-Right

On the basis of the brief survey above, it can readily be seen that the struggle for socialism, as far as legal political activities are concerned, has been postponed until after the 1979 elections. How soon it will begin depends upon the degree of liberalism of the new government, as well as the vigour of the socialists in forcing concessions from it. The reason for this is because it is unclear, under the present electoral regulations, how openly or fully an association can function before it has been registered as a ‘political party’. Any discussion of the prospects for radical social progress in Nigeria in the near future must therefore focus on the campaign promises, class composition, organisation muscle and electoral prospects of the leftist PRP and UPN. As for the three centre-right parties, the GNPP, NPP and NPN, however much they may be distinguishable in terms of their area of sectional support, or the prominence of ‘heavyweight’ politicians in their line-up, it cannot be denied that they differ only marginally in their ideological pronouncements.
The Great Nigerian People's Party is largely notable for the determination of its Chairman and presidential candidate, Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim, to invest his vast personal fortune in the bid for national leadership. His party does appear to have prised away some chunks of popular support in such far northern states as Sokoto and Kaduna, and should also put up a reasonable showing in many states down the eastern flank of Nigeria, from Waziri's home state of Borno to Cross River and Rivers States. To the wider public, however, the GNPP is mainly known for its leader's slogan of 'politics without bitterness', whose banality has not been helped by the frequency with which it has been uttered and printed. According to Uncle Waziri (as he now wishes to be called), all good things in life — schools, roads, hospitals, industries, etc — will follow inexorably from the introduction of a spirit of camaraderie and fairplay into Nigerian politics.

The Nigerian People's Party has gone through the most tortuous history of all the parties, and this may be reflected in the voting results later this year. It is necessary to put on record here certain aspects of the genesis of the NPP, since they touch on the unresolved national question in Nigeria. There were two basic inputs into what emerged as the NPP: first, a coalition of representatives of some of Nigeria's ethnic minorities before and during the Constituent Assembly; and, second, the belated attempt to rally the faithful of the old NCNC party of Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe. Before the Assembly had convened, representatives from the Middle-Belt or lower North had grouped themselves into a Committee for Union and Solidarity (CUS). The motivating factor here was opposition to 'Hausa-Fulani' domination, a battle cry which encapsulated so much of the politics of the First Republic. Because of the predominance of the Middle-Belters in the armed forces, and the fact of a dozen years of military rule in Nigeria, many of their leading figures became convinced that they had a pivotal role to play in any new governing alliance. In the Assembly they avoided joining up with any of the major ethnic blocs, and instead worked in collaboration with representatives of other ethnic and sectional minorities.

The tense battle in the Assembly to throw out the provision for a Federal Sharia (Islamic) Court of Appeal in the draft constitution represented the high point of this 'majority of minorities' strategy. During these deliberations, a Club 14 (later Club 19) emerged, which grouped aspirant politicians from within and without the Assembly. Between the time the Assembly came to an end in June 1978 and the lifting of the ban on politics two months later, Club 19 had concluded an alliance with a set of 'Progressives', mainly from the two Ibo states of Anambra and Imo, along with ex-NCNC politicians from Lagos and the Yoruba states. The final ploy to make the emergent party truly national took the form of its fusion with Waziri’s own personalist grouping, the National Union Council. This shotgun marriage crumbled, however, when Waziri’s new partners refused to make him Chairman and presidential candidate of their joint party, the NPP. After the split, Waziri went ahead to form his own GNPP, while the NPP rump responded to the wooing of Azikiwe and his fifth column of NCNCers to bring the seventy-four year old politician out of retirement to lead the party.

The post-registration NPP is a curious, and unsettled, animal. At its head is Dr Azikiwe, who appears to add a new plank to the party’s programme each time he mounts the rostrum. The sectional/sentimental basis of the NPP has been condensed from its early ‘union of minorities’ ethos to a belief in the forging
of a Middle Belt-Ibo axis in Nigerian politics. The Party’s slogan, ‘Power to the People’, seems to have been lifted from US protest politics of the 1960s. There is some attempt to project the NPP as being more democratic than the other parties and more concerned with bringing power closer to the people. Its best electoral chances appear to be in the two Ibo states, and a fair showing is expected in two of the Middle Belt states, Plateau and Benue, as well as in Lagos and Rivers States. The fact that Zik had to delay so long before getting into the race, that many prominent Ibos — including some of his former lieutenants — have remained rooted in the NPN, and finally that the other three parties are fighting for a strong third-place showing in the Ibo states, all point to the continued political disunity and even disorientation of the Ibos since the civil war.

The National Party of Nigeria regards itself as Nigeria’s natural party of government, and with good reason. During the months immediately preceding the lifting of the ban on politics, an impressive list of politicians of the First Republic — commonly referred to as ‘heavyweights’ or ‘men of timber and calibre’ — came together to re-establish what is in large part the same governing coalition that was dispersed by the first military coup of January 1966. Although a number of younger politicians from the universities and public corporations had undertaken much of the legwork involved in setting up the National Movement (parent to the NPN), when the Party held its first convention in Lagos in December 1978 they were quickly brushed aside by the old guard who appropriated all the leading positions in the Party, permitting only their preferred appointees from among the ‘Newbreed’ to fill the others.

The most striking thing about the manifesto of the NPN is its continuity with the past quarter-century of Nigerian governmental action. There are many improvements promised in the provision of amenities, especially to the rural areas, of better housing, health delivery systems and educational facilities. Yet the general tone of the Party’s pronouncements is one of painless transition from military to civilian government, keeping basically to the array of socio-economic policies that typify the post-colonial period:

The Party will encourage, protect and promote private initiative, ownership and control in those areas of our economy where private control and ownership does not threaten or endanger the public interest. Such a judicious mixture of private and public ownership is necessary in order to mobilise all our resources at this stage of our history . . . We do not consider it appropriate at this time to envisage programmes which go beyond the aspirations of our Federal Constitution by creating unrealistic expectations among our people.

The composition of the NPN leadership is what its own adherents would call the ‘responsible’ elements in the society, and what its opponents would dismiss as the monied ruling class. What I find most interesting about the NPN, however, is not its conservative political programme, or its crowded ranks of old politicians, prominent lawyers and businessmen (as well as its covert supporters among the traditional rulers). Rather it is the way in which the NPN, as the party seeking the most direct path to political power, has replicated within itself the fundamental structure and principles of the post-colonial Nigerian state. The architects of the NPN know just what it is enables a social formation like Nigeria ‘to work’, and this basic frankness enables them to avoid — at least in the short term — the normal divisions and disputes which render Nigerian politics, whether bourgeois or radical, so prone to collapse.

Only a few of these features and practices can be discussed here as they have to
be analysed more fully when a general study of the transition to civil rule is undertaken. The NPN recognizes that a basic principle of Nigerian political and economic life is the equal division of social goods, or what Nigerians often refer to as the ‘national cake’. This principle is not conceived in the traditional liberal sense of equality of individual opportunity. Rather, the basic social units of Nigeria is taken by the NPN leaders to be the ethnic, linguistic and regional blocks of the population. The NPN has therefore made into an operative principle of party policy what is frequently repeated in the 1979 Constitution as a directive principle in the conduct of government affairs, i.e. that the President or Governor or whichever public official is involved ‘shall have regard to the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity’.

In the selection of persons to fill its three most important national posts—presidential and vice-presidential candidates, and Chairman of the Party—the NPN devised a formula, now known as zoning, by which the standard-bearer for the first election would come from the North, his running-mate from the East, and the Party Chairman from the West. Given the ethnic dynamics of Nigerian society, this has meant in practice that the well-known triangular pattern of Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Ibo predominance would be re-established. Yet the Party was able to argue that it was simply manifesting its fundamental nature as the most constitutional of Nigeria’s political parties. The 1979 Constitution prescribes that ‘the members of the executive committee or other governing body’ of any political party ‘must reflect the federal character of Nigeria’. As interpreted by the NPN therefore, the basic equalisation principle of the Second Republic must be the equality of access to political power of the ruling stratum of all major ethnic groups of the population. We would consequently expect to find, and do, that below the top national positions, the Party has sought to find room for representatives of as many ethnic groups as possible.

What is clearly taking place within the NPN, and might be extended throughout the political system if the Party is successful in the elections, is the legitimizing and consolidating of the basic patron-client networks of Nigerian society. The basic understanding here is that the masses of the people can be expected to vote for their sons-of-the-soil who promise to deliver the goods to their people in the way of roads, schools, water-schemes, scholarships, and public appointments. Such a calculation is not weakened by a realisation that many such notabilities are likely to salt away their ten per cent of any proceeds meant for their community. This ‘You Chop I Chop’ principle—as it is nicely put in pidgin—also serves to temper the absolute application of the notion of equal access to political power since, for electoral purposes, certain ethnic groups must just be regarded as more equal than others.

The pattern of political thinking outlined above for the NPN applies in varying degrees to the other parties as well, although the NPN has been the most determined and systematic in its application. If the NPN is successful in the elections, I believe we are likely to see the factors of class and ethnicity integrated at a higher level (in terms of party and government behaviour) than occurred during the preceding civilian and military administrations. The NPN can therefore be seen as a true Oakeshottian conservative party in that its fundamental objective is to improve on the model of governance which was emerging under the First Republic, but which was undermined by the greatly disproportionate size of the country’s sub-national units. It would be ironic if, in detaching the regions or
states from the boundaries of the large ethnic collectivities, the makers of the new Republic had inadvertently rendered ethnicity a more viable basis of political organisation and management in Nigeria. It is from such a perspective, i.e. the rationalising of ethnic politics and class rule, that we can understand the relatively smooth progress of the NPN since September 1978.

The Registered Parties 2: The Centre-Left
The first of five elections are to be held in July 1979 and there is no certainty that Aminu Kano will obtain tax clearance to compete for the presidency on the ticket of the People's Redemption Party. Even if he is not disbarred, it is difficult to see his party winning significant national power on its own in 1979. Although Chief Awolowo often refrains from directly attacking Aminu Kano and the PRP, he still indulges in the telling gibe that the PRP is a lame donkey which can never get its riders to the promised destination. Aminu Kano and his northern lieutenants have played a two-sided game in recent years. On the one hand, they have been involved in an attempt (not supported by all his faithful) to effect an 'historic compromise' between followers of the two fiercely-opposed parties of the First Republic, the traditionalist Northern People's Congress and the Northern Elements Progressive Union. Simultaneously, Malam Aminu has kept his independent political network in readiness in case the first option misfired.

On the very eve of the formation of the NPN in September 1978, Aminu Kano and his supporters staged a walkout from the caucus of the National Movement in which they had participated during the preceding four months. His faction stoutly declared that it left because of the insuperable ideological differences between Aminu Kano and the other NPN organisers. The latter, however, countered that the main reason for the split was Aminu's failure to get any of the pre-eminent party positions he desired. After some delay, the PRP was finally formed in October and, with a certain amount of luck, managed to squeak through and obtain registration. On this occasion, there are different perspectives from which I want to discuss the PRP's role in the 1979 political campaign. On the national level, the PRP does not have the strength of organisation, the breadth of support across the country, and the depth of finance needed to win sufficient power at the centre to be able to put its policies into effect. Yet, in many northern states and particularly in the largest, Kano, the PRP is clearly the most class-based party in the elections, embodying the interests of the talakawa (peasantry) and the urban masses.

The point to note about the Emirate North is that its class divisions and prerogatives remain as glaring as ever, although many of the formal weapons of political and social control have been removed since 1966 by a variety of reforms. The progress in the latter area has contributed to a sharpening of overt class conflict since the talakawa feels less constrained by the fear of arbitrary punishment by the local courts and police than before, while the hegemonic classes — the traditional sarakuna and big businessmen — still enjoy a vast array of economic and social privileges. Despite the relative coherence of its class identification, the PRP has projected two different ideological positions nationally. In the eyes of its bitter opponents, as well as those of its youthful supporters, the PRP is indisputably socialist. Yet, for reasons perhaps deriving from his long years of battling outside the gates of the Establishment, and his recent attempt to try and win power from within, Aminu Kano has proclaimed 'democratic humanism'
rather than socialism to be his party’s goal. This concept has turned out to be no less nebulous in his hands than it was when it received such close attention from Kenneth Kaunda some years back. Moreover, Aminu Kano has saddled his lieutenants, especially the disputatious yet eloquent S.G. Ikoku (presently, PRP vice-presidential candidate), with the task of paying respectful homage to the leader’s ‘democratic humanism’ while strongly maintaining that the party’s objective is a socialist Nigeria.

Despite this terminological confusion generated from the top, the PRP is clearly Nigeria’s most left-wing party, although it is yet to demonstrate the organisational muscle needed to put its radical policies into practice. I would also distinguish the party’s northern core from its membership and leadership in the south, the latter often consisting of middle-of-the-road politicians who saw their chances of being nominated for desired electoral offices foreclosed in the other parties. From the PRP’s manifesto, campaign literature and public broadcasts, the following ideological elements can be extracted. The Party consistently speaks of the need for a new social order in Nigeria, and usually frames this concept in class terms, i.e. the removal of the traditional and comprador ruling groups and the transfer of power to representatives of the broad masses. The PRP places the radical transformation of the Nigerian economy at the forefront of its proposals; and it distinguishes itself from the UPN by emphasizing the need for the expansion and socialization of the economic structures of the country over the immediate implementation of a programme of increased welfare benefits and social amenities.

The PRP, alone among the legalized parties, argues a clear line of opposition to imperialism and neo-colonialism, and constantly criticizes the power of multinational companies in Nigeria. It is also the party which is most insistent in its call for the vigorous prosecution of the liberation struggles in southern Africa as well as the Middle East. The radical populism of the PRP becomes easily apparent when one converses with its dedicated militants working to mobilize the masses of the north, or with its articulate spokesmen among northern university lecturers, petty traders and clerks. The possibility that open class warfare can erupt in any of the large cities or towns of the north is not overlooked by any of the political parties, nor by the military government which is prone to step in at the slightest sign of tension or disturbance. It is against this background of strong class identification, but a no longer silent class struggle, that we must understand the conflicting imprecision and forthrightness in the PRP’s ideological statements.

The party which has provided the greatest achievement and generated the most heated controversy in the 1979 campaign must surely be the Unity Party of Nigeria. There are many factors which distinguish the UPN from the other parties. First, at seventy years of age the UPN leader, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, is more dynamic and more intellectually stimulating than almost any other political figure in Nigeria today, not to mention his four rivals for the presidency. The second distinguishing feature about the UPN, often acknowledged even by its opponents, is the party’s superior organisation. The organisational practices of the UPN percolate from the top downwards, starting from the leader who has molded himself into a highly disciplined political animal, through his close political comrades of decades of party combat, and finally to the party activists on the local level who are daily imbued with this spirit. Finally, it would be
denied by few that it is the UPN which has presented the most coherent body of ideas to the electorate in the form of its four ‘cardinal programmes’: (1) free education at all levels, (2) integrated rural development, (3) free health care, and (4) full employment.

To situate the UPN ideologically, a similar approach to that used in the case of the PRP must be attempted. To begin with, one has at his disposal the basic ‘texts’ of the Party consisting of the books published by Awolowo and which, in recent years, have tended to be increasingly theoretical. In the last three of these volumes — *The People's Republic* (1968), *Strategy and Tactics of the People’s Republic* (1970), and *The Problems of Africa* (1977) — Chief Awolowo has formulated what he believes are a set of principles and practices which, if adhered to, would transform Nigeria and other African countries into democratic socialist republics. This is not the occasion to examine in any detail the Chief’s theoretical contributions except to indicate that they are an amalgam of Marxism, Fabianism, Christian humanism with a strong dose of Hegelianism, and finally the Chief’s own unique reflections on the problems of language, ethnicity and the federal state. It can further be noted that Awolowo’s writings provide nearly all the major issues and even arguments put forward by the UPN in the present campaign, while going beyond what the Party is prepared to present to the electorate.

Where the campaign manifestos and platform speeches fall short of the Chief’s published writings tend to be those very areas in which the intentions and proposals of Awolowo are most evidently socialist. Some of these features which are either unreflected in the current campaign, or deliberately played down, can be briefly mentioned. First, there is his thorough condemnation of capitalism and the principle of ‘egoistic altruism’ on which it is based. Second, there is little mention in the campaign of the procedural methods he had elaborated for ridding the nation of all rentier classes, whether based on land or company shares. And third, his curt dismissal of the mixed-economy — ‘the economic hotchpotch in Britain is certainly not socialism’ — can not be reconciled with many of the UPN’s pronouncements today. Instead, what Awolowo and his party are promising the Nigerian people in 1979 is the achievement of socialism without class struggle. The Chief dismisses the capitalists in Nigeria as being an insignificant handful of individuals. One of his co-ideologues and UPN candidate for governor in Oyo State, Bola Ige, goes a step further and argues that the so-called capitalists in Nigeria are really economic touts, commission agents and parasites.

From the UPN’s standpoint, there is no need to wage a struggle against such meagre forces. On the issue of the transformation of Nigeria from its present economic hodgepodge, the UPN is studiedly vague. When pressed on this point, Awolowo often replies that he once thought Nigeria would become socialist after five years, but now he no longer expects to live to see a socialist Nigeria, even if his Party wins and holds on to power after 1979. The basic refrain of Awo and his comrades is that the UPN has no intention of trying to introduce socialism to Nigeria in ‘one swoop’. The Chief often buttresses this remark by citing the case of Mossadegh in Iran, who allegedly nationalised the petroleum operations in his country without adequate preparation and sufficient skilled manpower, only to have to hand them back to the oil companies and die a disgraced man in prison.
So just what it may be asked with some irritation is the UPN's programme for transforming Nigeria into the promised socialist Republic? When confronted in private on the issue of why their party has been so vague on this point, the pet answer of Awolowo as well as the young left-wingers in the UPN is: 'You cannot conduct an electoral campaign in Nigeria in that way!' It is the questioner who then finds himself challenged to answer if the Party would get very far campaigning against the 'comprador bourgeoisie'. At this point in time, this writer must indicate two opinions on this matter which could be argued with equal force. The first is that the UPN's mild public pronouncements do not fully reflect the true level of socialist thinking within the Party's inner councils. The second is that the pragmatic — some would say opportunistic — electoral strategy currently being executed is likely to be of more importance in determining the Party's behaviour once in power than the more considered views of its socialist thinkers. Which of these two reflections will prove decisive must depend on the interplay of a variety of factors which it is just not possible at this stage to predict.

The most accurate description of the UPN, judging solely from its electoral promises, is that it is the Nigerian Welfarist, or even Free Education, Party. Here is how Awolowo has justified the formulation of the UPN's four cardinal programmes of free education, integrated rural development, free health care and full employment:

In a society where illiteracy compounds the basic sociological structures, and where ideological arguments are mistrusted by the generality of the people as mere abstractions, the best way to articulate a national philosophy of development is to reduce it to programmes of action.

As indicated above, the UPN has succeeded in rendering its programme familiar to 'the generality of the people', although the level of critical debate on the whole package, and especially the integrated rural development and full employment proposals, has been very low. An overwhelming degree of attention has been paid, as much by the UPN as by its opponents, to the promise of free education and free textbooks at all levels.

For a party which professes to be leading the way to a socialist Nigeria, the question must be asked why so much importance has been placed on the immediate establishment of a free and universal education system. The philosophical underpinning for this programme of action is most fully elucidated in Awolowo's *The People's Republic*. In one of his progress reports released during the campaign, he summarised some of the ideas discussed in that book. 'Man', he asserts, 'is the prime mover in every economy. Without him nothing at all can be produced'. This seemingly Marxian starting point recedes as the argument progresses, and Awolowo develops a more humanistic than materialist approach: 'the resources of nature are negative and inert; man, on the other hand, is positive and dynamic. He is the determinant of all the impulses of progress'. From this, he goes on to affirm the need to develop all men in society so that each will be afforded 'equal opportunity to contribute to socio-economic development'. The full development, and employment of each, therefore become the necessary conditions for the development of all. In the hands of Awo, Karl Marx is transmuted into J.S. Mill: from the idea of man as the prime agent in production, we arrive at the need for the development of individual capacities as the key to the development of the whole society.

On a different level, the UPN leaders and its articulate supporters believe there
is some logical connection between the four cardinal programmes, and particularly the first one of free education, and the ultimate objective of a socialist Nigeria. Here is a sampling of such opinions:

Labanji Bolaji: Free education at all levels is feasible in Nigeria only if the country is ready to do it ideologically by adopting true socialism.

Bola Ioe: You cannot have free education, free medical scheme, integrated rural development and full employment without moving inexorably towards socialism. Those things never happen in a capitalist society.

Awolowo: . . . our determination is to build an irreversible basis for a socialist society by implementing these four cardinal programmes.

It can be seen that we have a curious set of arguments here, i.e. that the most practical way to achieve a socialist Nigeria is by committing the nation, by means of the ballot, to programmes which are believed to imply, or presuppose, or necessitate the greater socialization of the means of production. It will also be noticed how the UPN's 'socialism' is conceived more in terms of judicious social engineering by a progressive government, than as the outcome of increasing proletarian consciousness and class action.

Socialism and the National Question

We can expect, I believe, to see a regular cyclical pattern of the rise and fall of ideology as a salient feature of Nigerian politics. The basic reason for this is that Nigeria, as its people often argue, is still to a large extent 'a geographical expression'. There are three major ways in which African governments have dealt with this problem since independence. The first is through the agency of the pseudo single-party with real power being exercised by a civilian autocrat via the bureaucracy, secret service and police. Although parliamentary institutions may exist in such policies they are usually impotent. The second is where the military imposes itself as the legitimate political authority in the nation, and the alteration in rulers then derives from intramilitary politics, or from the dynamics of the wider society as fed into the military establishment. The third pattern is the recent one represented by the Marxist regimes which emerged out of the liberation struggles in the former Portuguese colonies.

None of these models has been of lasting relevance to Nigeria, and there appears little likelihood that they will be in the foreseeable future. What 'Politics 1979' represents above all is that the Nigerian national question is once again being thrown back for its resolution into the cauldron of the country's class, ethnic and regional conflicts. If the NPN prevails in the elections, the national issue will be rendered less acute in the short term because of the Party's willingness to retain the fundamental modus operandi of the system bequeathed by the military. Since, however, the UPN is unlikely to sweep much of Yorubaland, whatever its performances elsewhere, the ideological differences between Awolowo's satrapies in the West and Shagari's national government in Lagos will rekindle the basic sectional confrontation of the First Republic. This time, however, instead of a bitterly-divided West confronting a North-East alliance, it will be a more hegemonic party in the western states up against a less cohesive and powerful alliance in the centre.

The PRP, NPP and GNPP have little prospect of winning national power in 1979 unless a last-minute alliance is concluded between any two of them. This leaves the UPN as the only viable alternative to an NPN government. If Awolowo and his organised and dynamic band come to power, there are few who would deny
that his initial policies would bring about progressive changes in many areas of Nigerian life. An Awolowo government, for example, is likely to be the most resolute in tackling the colossal waste, inefficiency and gross corruption of oil-boom Nigeria. Yet, under such a government the many contradictions of the Nigerian social formation, as well as those within the UPN itself, will be quickly brought to the surface. An NPN government would continue the policy of the Obasanjo regime of nudging the Nigerian capitalist class away from its extreme consumerist mentality, but it will also endeavour, like its predecessor, to keep the rural and urban labouring masses in check. The UPN, on the other hand, would rapidly implement its New Deal programme for these social groups only to find that its reforms have kindled the very class consciousness and struggle that the Party discounts, or hopes to prevent.

Whoever wins power in 1979, I expect to see a renaissance of ideological formulation and debate as occurred during the 1976-78 period. The buoyancy of the Nigerian treasury has meant that the 'common man', whether rural or urbanised, is still wrapped in the myth that his real hope of socio-economic betterment lies in the success of his relative, or other son of the soil, in getting a lien on the public purse and trickling a few coins down to him. Some progress should be made by the two centre-left parties in challenging the ruling idea that the affluent have some right to enrich themselves further in return for 'political service'. This should then pave the way for the more thorough critiques, programmes and actions of the socialists. The point the latter should bear in mind when they resume their public activities after 1 October 1979 is that a continuation of the present capitalist strategy in Nigeria will only petrify the nation-state into a confederation of ethnic and clanic dominions. The instability and volatility of such an arrangement needs no elaboration. What the socialists can therefore offer, whether outside the party system or within the left-wing parties are not just the most pertinent proposals for revolutionizing the narrow economic base of Nigeria, but also the only ideological perspective from which to challenge the vertical clientage networks which facilitate both class domination and class subjection.

Bibliographic note
This essay is based on numerous interviews conducted in Nigeria since January 1978, and on close coverage of the daily press and other private and government publications since 1976. This has been supplemented since September 1978 by personal attendance at party meetings and rallies throughout the country.

The term 'First Republic' has entered the political lexicon in Nigeria to refer to the post-colonial civilian administrations, although the country only became a republic in October 1963. It has been used in this essay because of its general convenience. Nigerians are daily creating their own political vocabulary, and where I find it appropriate — as is evident on a few occasions in this paper — I do not hesitate to use it. Labanji Bolaji, cited in the text, was Managing Director between 1975 and 1978 of the African Newspapers of Nigeria Ltd. which produces the pro-UPN organ, the *Nigerian Tribune*. General Murtala Muhammed is usually referred to by his first name of Murtala.
Briefings

OIL BOOM AND CRISIS IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA

Bill Freund

The formal independence accorded to colony after colony in Africa, Asia and the Americas was followed by an ever-louder chorus of pain and disillusionment from the 'new nations' whose diplomats cried, apparently in vain, against the terms of trade which appeared to go ever more sharply against the primary product exports on which their economies depended. The wail of despair was, however, cut short in 1973 when the prices of many mineral and agricultural commodities rose dramatically. Most spectacular was the tripling of petroleum prices. The Western press began to speak in flattering tones of the fabulous wealth of the oil-rich nations. Glossy supplements sang the praises of investing in them and commented respectfully on national plans that aimed at industrialisation and 'development' sparked by the oil export boom. Where there had been a uniform 'Third World', distinctions were now drawn between the interesting prospects of the oil producers and an oil-consuming 'Fourth World', still beset with the overwhelming problems of 'underdevelopment'. Even radical scholars, who had focused their attention on the process of deterioration of terms of trade, were caught short-handed and began to re-assess the problems of poverty and dependence in the capitalist world.

Nothing has perhaps confounded believers in the oil dream more than the recent setbacks to Western interests in Iran, the world's second largest oil exporter, whose Shah was not long ago predicting the rise of Iran as the fifth economic power in the world by the end of this century. At present (February 1979), the extent to which social contradictions were intolerably heightened by the oil export boom and the hollowness of the Shah's boast are only too apparent. This article seeks to examine the impact of the oil boom on tropical Africa's major exporter, the federal republic of Nigeria, with the hope of demonstrating related developments and conveying some sense of the dilemma in which Nigeria now finds itself. There may be no Ayatollah in Nigeria, but underlying problems that led to the Iranian crisis are manifest in Nigeria.

Two general points inform the discussion. One is that petroleum is not fundamentally different in kind from other raw material exports. It is subject to the same trade cycle patterns of the capitalist world market. There is no correlation to be made between development and oil. The forms of 'development' spawned
by the Nigerian oil boom are best understood in the context of the history of capital accumulation over the past century.

More fundamentally, radical analysis of structures of dependency goes wrong when it places its weight largely behind the terms of trade issue. Ultimately, no social formation can be understood primarily through the medium of relations of exchange. The critical focus must rest on the social character of production; it is from here that we can establish comprehension of class structure and flashpoints of exploitation and of conflict. Analysis must proceed in this direction even if we are primarily concerned with the roots of external relations of dependence. As Marx wrote, '... the mode of pillage is itself determined by the mode of production. A stock-jobbing nation, for example, cannot be pillaged in the same manner as a nation of cow-herds'.

What sort of nation was Nigeria before the oil boom? Productive labour revolved around the activities of hundreds of thousands of peasant households and village communities, focused on securing a low level of sufficiency. Before the establishment of colonial domination, the surplus accrued to the ruling class, which had emerged in most areas, and, on a limited scale, to merchant capital. After the conquest, 'traditional rulers' became assimilated into the colonial bureaucracy and European firms assumed the commanding heights of an expanding commercial network, with indigenous merchants integrated at more modest levels. Social relations of production and agricultural techniques were not so much changed by the great extension of cash crops designed for an external market as seized upon and encapsulated. It seems likely that the surplus may have grown substantially largely to the benefit of the expanded reproduction of capital in Britain. This process of incorporation can be said to have taken root in northern Nigeria between 1910 and 1945; for the south, an earlier set of dates may be more appropriate.

From the Second World War, the colonial state instituted marketing boards and intensified corporate taxation. Much of the funds accumulated went into reserve in Britain to serve the metropole's post-war needs. However, as independence approached, a growing portion was retained by the emerging Nigerian state (and regional governments). The surplus served to generate a large class of nonproductive salary earners. An army of bureaucrats now sat on the back of the cash crop economy. In the budget, pride of place went to the expansion of the educational system, through which entry to the bureaucracy was controlled.

From the late 1950s, Nigeria witnessed the rapid growth, from an admittedly very low base, of import-substitution industry, largely foreign-owned and foreign-managed, often dependent on imported raw materials and catering to the consumer habits created by Western capital (industrial textiles, beer, flour, plastic, etc.). The industrial labour force represented only a small fraction of a swelling, increasingly proletarianised urban population. Economic and extra-economic pressures on the peasantry fed this population. Only a small part secured wage employment; far greater numbers survived through multitudinous petty commercial activities and a related parasitic dependence on kin and other patrons.

This was hardly a propitious setting for the pluralist democracy proposed by the negotiators for independence in 1960. In 1966, civil authority collapsed, the army seized power and Nigeria was plunged into a costly and brutal civil war concluded only in 1969. During the war, the Nigerian economy was forced to
sustain the growth of an army of 200-300,000 troops and their dependents. Nobody thereafter dared to arrange for their demission and military government continued into the post-war period.

Nigeria began to export petroleum in 1957. Production increased rapidly and overtook other exports in value following the Civil War. With the great price hike in the wake of the Middle East October War, the oil boom had well and truly begun. The character of oil production differed markedly from the production of agricultural and mineral goods already developed in Nigeria for the world market. Groundnuts and cotton, ginger and cocoa, oil palm and sesame cultivation were all integrated into the peasant economy. Tin mining and gold mining were extremely labour-intensive activities relying on the same chain of labour contractors who controlled the lower rungs of the Nigerian labour market. The production of crude oil, by contrast, is notoriously capital-intensive. Only a few thousand workers are required to produce the millions of barrels of oil annually exported from Nigeria. Thus the impact of oil had very little direct effect on the mass of Nigerians; it was the vast sums that suddenly accrued to the Nigerian government which has been decisive. From 1973, there was a dramatic increase in government reserves acquired and held abroad, at first primarily in pounds sterling but with a big shift to US dollars from 9% of reserves in 1970 to 42% in 1976. In 1974, these reserves seemed to be almost incalculably high, sufficient at a go to pay for twenty-four months of imports; they totalled N4.187 millions at peak in April, 1975. (In 1976-1978, £1 = £0.82-0.87.)

The federal government has played the decisive role in determining the expenditure of oil revenues. The most fundamental point to be made about the determination process is the strong element of continuity that exists with earlier development planning. Within the budget, security and defence expenditure, education and the construction of transport infrastructure have taken up the lion's share of the money. In 1978, the military and the education system together received 31% of the recurrent federal budget and 18% of the capital budget. In addition, education absorbed an average of 20% of the state budgets.

Although the chief of staff, General Danjuma, publicly acknowledged the importance of reducing the size of what has become a gigantic, ageing welfare roll of warriors, it proved very difficult for the federal military government to make any substantial cuts in military manpower. In large part, the military budget went, not so much into flashy military hardware as for wages, barrack construction and other amenities (schools, car loans, etc.). Virtually every sizeable town in Nigeria has its military suburb and the weight of this army of drones, whose size is usually estimated at over 200,000, bears heavily on the budget. The 1978 budget calculated an allocation of N193.2 million for the federal police, of which N145.4 million, or no less than 75 per cent, was to go on wages and salaries. Defence and security expenditure thus consisted in large part of the maintenance of a non-productive population.

Much the same could be said for education. Huge sums have been sunk in providing middle-class housing and middle-class salaries for a greatly expanded teaching profession. Especially at the lower rungs of education, this has tended to happen at the expense of actual educational facilities (libraries, sports grounds, etc.). Underneath a rhetorical facade which stressed the links between educational expansion and development, it is very unclear that Nigeria learnt the
lesson of the attempts to introduce universal primary education in the southern regions in the early 1960s. These programmes had absorbed a substantial amount of resources but did little to increase skills or vocational opportunities. The much larger expenditures made on universal primary education (UPE) in the oil boom (over N1.000m by 1977) equally lack any clear sense of purpose.

University expansion in Nigeria was dramatic and extravagant in the 1970s. The older six universities all grew enormously, while seven new ones were created. All were accompanied by the spread of vast housing estates, for which staff paid virtually no rent, and infrastructural spending that often went on prestige projects, such as the spectacular theatre at the University of Ife. Ever larger numbers of students were encouraged to expect by right an affluent life-style modelled on the Western bourgeoisie and secured through state employment.

A third feature of government spending bore the same anomalies as military and educational expenditure: the massive programme of construction of public works and especially roads. New roads were laid down and tarred all over the country linking virtually every district in Nigeria. The big contracts went to European firms, the largest of all in 1977 being the Dumez (French) contracts of N107m for the Okene-Kaduna road and N96m for the Shagamu-Benin road. Apart from the rake-off abuses and the poor quality of much surfacing, the new roads generally proved short-lived and extremely expensive to maintain in decent condition. While potentially they had some beneficial effect, in large part they serviced the ever-growing import economy much as did the expensive improvements made to the docks and the airports.

The most dramatic feature of the oil boom was the growth in imports on such a scale as to transform the population of Nigeria into what appeared to be a huge host of cargo cult worshippers. By the spring of 1978, Lagos port was doing 97% of its business in imports and only 3% in exports while airports actually received even more goods than the seaports. In 1974, Nigerian imports were worth N1,737m; by 1976, they reached N5,140m and in 1977, N7,297m. By mid-1978, they were running at an annual rate of N8,760m. Some of this reflected capital expenditure but consumption of imported consumer goods also increased dramatically. At the end of 1974, the Udoji commission recommendations on wage and salary increases were put into effect at the recurrent cost of £3 50m p.a., with the wage hikes frequently matched in the private sector. Private consumption of imported goods can moreover be related to the great increase in the expatriate population, the expansion of the middle and upper sectors of the salariat and the new wealth of Nigerian contractors.

Into Nigeria poured a flood of luxury goods on unprecedented scale. The supermarkets were sporadically filled to the brim with imported foodstuffs, clothing and consumer goods of every type. For example, Nigerian imports of high fidelity equipment, tape recorders, etc. increased from N1.7m in 1973 to N15m in 1976. Colour television broadcasting was launched and intended for expansion to each of Nigeria’s nineteen states, although prices of imported receiving sets began in the neighbourhood of N1,000 in the mid 1970s.

Particularly after the Udoji wage increases, which temporarily benefited the lower level office-workers, Nigerian roads were increasingly clogged by fleets of motorised two-wheeled vehicles. In 1976, Nigeria imported 18,305 scooters, 19,353 mobyllettes and 178,026 motorcycles at a cost of N67m. In the same
year, car imports surpassed the 100,000 mark. The car boom was powered by the prevalence of car loans and allowances which provided low-interest rates and subsidies for a large stratum of government and private sector employees. In 1976, Volkswagen and Peugeot both began to assemble cars in Nigeria, but virtually all components continued to be imported from abroad. The influx of automobiles dovetailed, of course, with the strategy of constructing tarred roads throughout the country.

One important source of new consumer goods was the Hajj pilgrimage. As oil wealth percolated through the population and the government relaxed restrictions on money taken out of Nigeria (1975), the Hajj became increasingly popular. In 1977, more than 100,000 Nigerians with the right to take foreign exchange up to a value of N1000, flew to Mecca, bringing Nigeria almost to the top of the list of pilgrims’ countries of origin. Many were merchants or pious individuals sponsored by merchants who returned to Nigeria with imported goods for sale.

Import of manufactured goods was linked to expenditure on prestige projects of little use. The government spent directly large sums on luxury hotel construction. A particularly extravagant example, the annexe to the Federal Palace Hotel, Lagos, was commissioned from the Italian firm of G. Prono at a cost of N18.5m and opened formally in November 1976 with rooms going at rates of N45-200. Somewhat wryly, the new annexe was justified as a result of the ‘growth of the tourist industry in recent years’. In reality, what had grown was the army of foreign contract seekers and Nigerian civil servants who could bill their ministry for the exorbitant hotel charges.

No extravagance was perhaps so much in the news (and criticised) as Nigeria’s sponsorship of FESTAC, the second world festival of African culture in February 1978. FESTAC, apart from a traditional durbar in Kaduna, took place entirely in Lagos, with little benefit to most non-television owning Nigerians. The bill was estimated at N141m, consisting mainly of fees to contractors and imported goods.

While privileged sectors experienced real gains, as measured in purchased imports, and a few made fortunes, the masses soon found any gains from the oil boom cancelled by inflation. The government, by overvaluing the inconvertible Naira and liberalising import duties in order to cheapen urban food supplies and relieve inflationary pressures in industry stimulated imports so much as to actually heat up those pressures radically. On the official scale, which if anything errs on the conservative side, the cost of living index (base 100 established in 1960) rose from 151 in 1970 to 215 in 1974 to 349 in July, 1976 to 377 in January, 1977 and up another 31% in 1977 to 493 at the beginning of 1978. Thus labourers’ Udoji wage gains were cancelled out by 1977 or 1978. For the poor, the oil boom merely provided trophies in the form of motorcycles, radios and tape recorders, destined to rust or dust later.

The import flood imposed an extreme strain on the infrastructure of the Nigerian economy. The Port Harcourt oil refinery was unable to keep up with demand for fuel oil and periodic petrol shortages created endless queues, greatly assisted inflation and held up the transport of all other commodities. By 1976, most of the petroleum actually consumed in Nigeria had to be imported in refined form from abroad. The physical and human capabilities of the Nigerian Electric Power
Authority was strained to the limits and power cuts ate enormously into productivity in general, notably in industry. In 1976 NEPA estimated a 90% shortfall in manpower. In the spring of 1978, industries reported that 30% and more of capacity lay idle due to power cuts while private generators figured ever more prominently on the import list. Emergency plans had to be carried forth to make up for the increasingly obvious deficiencies of Kainji dam as a power source. Ironically, for consumers the glut of imports was accompanied by endless shortages and an atmosphere of hoarding. The ever-rising tide of cars made the improved streets of the biggest cities almost impassible.

Conventional wisdom would expect a boom of industry generated by the sudden increase in export wealth in Nigeria, but oil exports actually tended to impede industrial growth. In the early 1970s, a Lagos state survey of industry indicated rapid growth of output and labour force (in 1971-74, 21% value added and 8% increase in labour force p.a.) but very little new capital expenditure (1.9% p.a.) to meet new consumer demand. Thereafter, the flood of imports and supply difficulties led to very slow industrial expansion in 1975 and an actual decline through much of 1976, with renewed growth, faltering rather quickly late in that year. Industrial production was again severely impeded by the disastrous electric power situation in 1977-78.

At the same time, the few plans for heavy industrial development seemed eternally bogged down. Little other than talk was accomplished towards the development of a petrochemical industry. Natural gas continued in 1979 to be flared off in the oilfields, with the only serious plans for development tied to favourable export arrangements with the USA. After twenty years of good intentions, feasibility study and construction, the steel industry has yet to be born. Despite massive cement consumption, production had barely recovered to pre-Civil War levels by the late 1970s. The oil export boom led to a significant shift in emphasis from planning for industry to primary product export, if not actually to de-industrialisation. At present, Nigeria remains significantly less industrialised per capita than other West African countries such as Senegal or Ghana.

The whole picture took sharp focus with the cement scandal of 1975, which helped bring about the fall of the Gowon administration. By the summer of 1975, some 400 ships sat in queue off Lagos, most of them bearing the first installment of twenty million metric tonnes of cement (eight times the total annual capacity of Lagos port) on order from the government and private consumers. After the fall of Gowon, the Muhammad government cancelled orders where it could, but found that the immense demurrage charges (N77m in 1975 and the first three months of 1976) were insisted upon by Western courts prepared to attach Nigerian assets in lieu of repayment.

The impact of the oil boom has been even more remarkable on agriculture than on industry and infrastructure. Two sets of figures tell the tale: the collapse of Nigerian agricultural exports and the rapid rise of food imports.

Colonial Nigeria was geared towards the production of cocoa, palm oil and kernals, timber, rubber, cotton and groundnuts for the world market. In the 1970s, with labour attracted to construction work, relatively poor prices offered for commodities and low taxation, cash crop agriculture collapsed. By 1976, Nigeria's exports consisted almost entirely of oil, with other items constituting
not much over one-twentieth of the total by value. Palm oil and groundnut oil actually began to be imported into the country. In the north, the most spectacular figures are for groundnuts, which had shown the greatest post-World War II cash crop growth in the country. The marketing board bought 454,000 tonnes in 1972, 270,000 tonnes in 1973, 114,000 tonnes in 1974, 178,000 tonnes in 1975, 42,000 tonnes in 1976, 12,000 tonnes in 1977 and 50 tonnes in 1978. Northern farmers continued to grow groundnuts; they were for sale in markets and widely consumed, but they were not offered for export or sale to the marketing board. For palm produce and cocoa, the decisive cause of decline has been the growing scarcity of cheap migrant labour. There has been a shift in labour use generally that has affected mining and food crop agriculture as much as cash crop agriculture. Indeed, it is the sustained attack on productive labour in agriculture, not the decline in cash crop production itself, which made the oil boom so ominous in Nigeria.

Overall estimates of food production increases in Nigeria between 1960 and 1975 are roughly 1.8% p.a. From 1974, food imports began to skyrocket and take an ever-larger share of the overall import bill, reaching 15% of the total in 1977. The value of food imports was N88m in 1971, N295m in 1975, and N528m for the first three quarters alone of 1977. A food deficit, estimated in late 1976 at five million metric tonnes was increasing at a rate likely to bring it to sixteen million within a decade. Much imported food consists of basic foodstuffs consumed by the urban working class and peasants — meat, stockfish, rice and flour. Fish imports reached a value of N30m in 1976 and N67m in 1977; sugar imports went from N76.6m to N129.4m in those years; maize imports, worth N1.4m in 1976 rose to N3.5m in the first eight months of 1977; wheat was imported to the tune of N98m in 1976 and N129m in 1977. The most spectacular increases were in rice. In 1975, Nigeria imported 15m kilos of rice. In 1976, imports tripled to 45m and, in the first nine months of 1977, attained 246m kilos. American rice undersold the grain and root staples produced by Nigerians to such an extent that it found a ready market even in rural areas.

In 1976, the federal military government launched Operation Feed the Nation to try to come to grips with the growing crisis in peasant agriculture but it did not touch the basic causes. OFN was admitted to be a failure by officialdom, which had devoted little enough thought and resources to the problems of agriculture in its development plans.

The social atmosphere engendered by the oil boom intensified economic problems and made solutions harder to come by. As the boom gathered momentum, the cities of Nigeria took on the character of gold rush towns. Foreigners flocked to cash in on the bonanza. Greek merchants and Arab doctors, Filipino nurses and Indian schoolteachers, Italian construction workers and German lorry salesmen, American bankers and British lecturers jostled one another on the streets, all attempting to sell services of good, bad or indifferent quality. Firms reckoned to retrieve their initial investment in two to three years. The expatriates rubbed shoulders with a much larger number of Nigerians — the 'educated' and not so educated 'elite' — trying to secure a foothold in the oil economy while the going seemed good. As Richard Joseph incisively puts it, '... the great urge of many Nigerians ... is to inject themselves into a trading circuit, whether of cement, lace or palm oil and get their "cut" of action'.
The synonym for a wealthy Nigerian became 'contractor', symbolising a new, if sometimes uncomfortable, symbiosis between two rapacious partners, expatriate business and a swelling Nigerian class of compradore contractors and importers. The government's principal attempt to regulate the relationship between the two lay in indigenisation legislation, which required expatriates to take on Nigerian partners and served to imbed the Nigerian elite more deeply into prevailing economic relationships. A dramatic fruit of this, following the renewed indigenisation legislation of 1977, came in the form of N60m offered for Nigerians in shares of foreign-owned companies, ensuring their commitment to the welfare of those companies. For the big trading companies, there were spectacular profits in the boom years and less than half of declared profits had to go in taxes, as shown in Table 1. The Nigerian ruling class structure became even more dependent for its income on servicing Western business interests and import trading.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Turnover</th>
<th>Pre-tax profits</th>
<th>Post-tax profits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UTC</td>
<td>63.1</td>
<td>138.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFAO</td>
<td>116.6</td>
<td>180.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.G. Leventis</td>
<td>63.9</td>
<td>131.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Holt</td>
<td>168.4</td>
<td>289.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAC</td>
<td>395.1</td>
<td>576.1</td>
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Figures taken from Business Times, passim.

The oil boom ended almost as quickly as it had begun. The administration of General Yakubu Gowon was said to have made its plans on the assumption of Nigeria producing three million barrels of oil a day, a figure never actually attained. Oil production and export proved to be just as vulnerable as tin, groundnuts or cocoa to the vagaries of international trade. The oil industry was affected severely by the recession that hit all Western countries simultaneously, by the declining value of the American dollar in which Nigeria held much of her reserves, and by the successful efforts of the oil companies to find new sources of petroleum in the North Sea, in Alaska and in Mexico. Indeed, Nigeria was forced to agree to what had originally been seen as unfavourable terms by BP-Shell in May, 1977 in order to expedite further exploration on which her petroleum future was entirely dependent. As a result, 'Nigeria (was) financing the additional payments for exploration and drilling, has reduced profit taxes and royalties, and increased tax credits and annual allowances, at a time when oil production and prices (were) falling'.

Early in 1977, oil production surpassed the mark of 2.3 million barrels a day and then began to decline to 1.852m in December 1977; 1.637m in January 1978 and 1.521m in March 1978 with a gradual increase later in 1978 to about 1.9m barrels in August. The world oil glut and the Nigerian import boom squeezed Nigeria's reserves. Reserves had reached a peak of N4,187m in April 1975; they declined to N3,057m in June 1976 and to N1.8m by April 1978. In 1974, Nigerian reserves were the equivalent of 24 months' of imports; in 1975, twelve months and in 1976, eight months. By the summer of 1978, they barely covered two months of the mounting import bill. Imports were running at a rate of N730m a month and exports at only N400m. Oil revenues were
expected to be down 20% nominally and perhaps 40% in real terms over 1977 by the end of the year. In October 1977, Colonel Muhammad Buhari, chairman of the Nigerian National Oil Corporation, gave a key speech attacking Nigerian 'squandermania' and informing the public that the boom was finished. Thereafter, government statements in the press increasingly reminded the public of the need for austerity and budget cuts began to take effect in some areas.

From 1978, there appeared to be an increasing improvement in the chaotic conditions that had prevailed at the height of the boom. Emergency installations improved the electric supply, petrol shortages began to be relieved with the completion in 1979 of the Warri refinery, a new motorway system relieved Lagos traffic and the Tin Can Island complex expedited ship deliveries. Import restrictions were tightened. After the Shah's downfall, other oil producers have been able to bargain from a stronger position again.

However the boom years were not merely an unpleasant but isolated era which Nigerians are fortunate to have done with. Oil is proving to be a substance that sticks the more one tries to extricate oneself. Petroleum functioned similarly to other export-oriented primary products in the Nigerian economy because the context of Nigerian trade with the West has not changed. During the colonial period, each crisis in international capitalism — World War I, the 1919-21 slump, the Great Depression, World War II — and each natural disaster threatened the viability of peasant production and community life. Capital accumulation in the twentieth century has derived from a monetarised surplus extracted from peasant households. The response of capital to particular historic opportunities and crises has led to cash values becoming more deeply imbedded in social relations and the acquisition of necessities. The oil boom introduced no new orientation into the Nigerian political economy, but its scale and intensity has been such as to assume crisis-like proportions through the deepening of this process. While production has remained at best relatively stagnant, intolerable pressures have mounted up in the sphere of consumption. Massive spending on education, the military, prestige projects, road-building and consumer good imports have led to the rapid extension of the class of bureaucrats and contractors geared to the consumer expectations of their affluent cousins in the West, to say nothing of the wealth won, often corruptly, by those at the top of the heap. Productive labour in agriculture has shifted into construction work and commerce of all kinds, snatching at the leavings of the oil revenues. The result is massive food importation and an intensifying dislocation of Nigerian society, not unlike, but more drastic in impact than, previous shifts in the colonial period.

The Nigerian government has shown little capacity to cope with the strains imposed. An ossified Gowon regime was overthrown in July 1975 and some of the 'fruits' of the oil boom for the first time made public. Gowon's successor, Brigadier Murtala Muhammad, encouraged an atmosphere of more critical thinking, particularly about relations with the West, and tried to impose higher standards of probity in the administration, but he had not come to grips with the fundamental structural problems of his country before his assassination in February 1976. Under General Olusegun Obasanjo, the country appeared to drift back to pre-coup inertia. While austerity measures were introduced, they were rather modest in their bite. Forrest has written that 'I am doubtful if the bureaucratic, commercial and managerial elements in the Nigerian bourgeoisie would support any attempt to restructure' existing fiscal patterns. The legislation
of political parties in October 1978 seemed to herald a return, not merely to Gowon’s regime, but to the squalid machine politics of the First Republic (1960-66), once civilian rule is restored this coming autumn. If anything, the restoration marks the failure of the army to substitute itself for the politicians in finding an effective path to development.

As the dream of oil wealth fades, Nigeria has turned with growing urgency to foreign loans in order to sustain the budget, a subject little discussed until very recently in the Nigerian press. At the end of 1977, Nigeria, which had, two years previous, been a net exporter of capital, began to negotiate for a 3.5 billion dollar loan, to be supplied, in roughly equal parts, by an international bank consortium headed by Chase Manhattan, through supplier credits, and from the World Bank. Late in 1978, the proposal was transformed into one for a loan in Eurodollars and Euromarks for an eight year period. The World Bank was now planning a loan to Nigeria for 500m dollars a year over five years. (There has also been a substantial expansion of internal borrowing.)

World Bank negotiations were not purely a financial transaction. The World Bank has moved into Nigerian agricultural development on a very large scale and loans will be tied to World Bank projects in Nigeria. The Bank is now heavily involved in cocoa and oil palm production in the south, in groundnut and cotton production in the north and in food production in a dozen projects throughout the country with unexplored implications for social relations in rural Nigeria. Most spectacular are the programmes for ‘large-scale integrated agriculture’ set up initially in the Gusau, Funtua and Gombe. The Gusau area alone embraces a region with a population of 620,000. In Kaduna and other states, the role of the World Bank in agriculture has become steadily more pivotal, notably since the visit of Robert MacNamara in 1977.

The oil boom, which apparently began by benefiting Nigeria through a dramatic improvement in the terms of trade, can best be understood as advancing the role of Nigeria in the extended reproduction of the world capitalist system. Fundamental contradictions in Nigerian society have measurably widened in recent years with the growing possibility of intensified class conflict. ‘Development’ has, in reality, brought crisis. Out of crisis, it also brings the hope of the emergence of energies that can shatter the chains that have shackled the growth of productive forces and social democracy in Africa’s most populous country. It is to this, rather than to improvements in the trade balance, that Nigeria will have to look for progress.

Sources
THE WORLD BANK AND NIGERIA

John Peter Olinger

The World Bank, together with its affiliates the International Finance Corporation and the International Development Association, is now the world’s single most important source of development funds. Paired with the International Monetary Fund at Bretton Woods in 1944, the Bank was conceived as one of a number of new international institutions that would revive the world capitalist economy after the disruption of the crisis of the 1930s and the Second World War and open up the European colonial empires to American capital. The seriousness of the crisis, the destruction brought by the war, and the growing influence of Keynes’ ideas led to a re-examination of international economic relations. Much of Europe would have to be rebuilt, but it was not a simple question of physical reconstruction. A general economic reorganisation resting on the American belief in the Open Door was needed to provide the means for extended development. The Bank and the IMF were to attempt to fill this role.

The Bank would provide loans for reconstruction in the short term and development in the long term. The early rehabilitation of Europe was critically important to the capitalist economy of the United States which had created a great productive capacity during the war. Peace presented the American economy with the frightening prospect of unneeded capacity and a return to the interwar crisis. Clearly Europe needed much that the United States could provide; just as clearly it did not have the means to pay. Thus the Bank could provide the funds, first for immediate reconstruction and then for extended development.

The IMF was given the complementary task of creating a stable international system of trade and finance. The interwar crisis had shown the importance of a currency system based on some defined standard, not necessarily gold and perhaps more liquid than gold, if stable relations among national currencies were to continue. The American dollar was in 1945 the obvious candidate and the IMF consecrated the dollar’s position at the centre of the new monetary system. Currency stability was an important condition for revived trade but it was not sufficient, and the IMF was also charged with gradually ending exchange controls and eliminating tariff restrictions. It was trying to create a new international order, to reduce national autonomy in monetary affairs, and to prevent a renewed slide to autarkic systems. In theory, as in practice, the Bank and the IMF were to work together. The Bank through its influential position in international capital markets and its control over a large share of development funds, could reinforce the expansion of the capitalist system, its funds serving on the international level the same general purpose as increased government spending on the national level. Especially in its first twenty years the Bank administered a massive international Keynesian public works project to refuel capitalism.

Before the Bank could play any great role in the immediate reconstruction of Europe it was pre-empted by programmes such as the Marshall Plan largely because American officials, frightened by Communism, were reluctant to leave this important task to an untried and international organisation. Thus the Bank found itself left with the problem of funding economic development. The Bank’s approach to economic development was conditioned by the dominant role of American monopoly capital in the post-war years. The continued expansion of
American monopoly capital depended on the increased export of its capital-intensive technology, and the Bank interpreted development mainly in terms of the provision of economic infrastructure in the form of electric power and transport projects. Further, the Bank was unwilling to support the development of nationalised industry or land reform, movements that threatened both the integrity of American capital overseas and the concept of private enterprise that was a basic element of the ideology of American capitalism. Finally because the Bank had to raise its funds primarily in the American capital market it had to establish its concern for the profitability of its investments and could not afford to be seen supporting projects of dubious value to monopoly capital.

In the 1950s the Bank focused most of its attention on the developed countries so that by 1957, 52.7% of the Bank’s lending had gone to a limited number of developed countries. This distribution reflected the Bank’s concern with profitability, and the fact that few of the underdeveloped countries were seen as suitable recipients of the type of development that the Bank sponsored. Nevertheless the Bank did take an interest in those areas of the Third World that showed some promise of development, and the Bank’s activities in Nigeria, even at this stage, clearly demonstrate the development of Bank policy.

The Bank has had a long association with Nigeria, beginning in 1952 when the colonial government asked the Bank to prepare a general economic survey of Nigeria. The survey was carried out in 1953 and published in 1954. It was discussed at length in Nigeria, particularly its central recommendation that public expenditure in the infrastructure should be greatly expanded. The Bank mission felt that the period from 1955 to 1960 was the time when the foundation for further economic growth should be laid. The economy was strong and the colony had built up large reserves from the sale of its agricultural exports. The Bank recommended that these reserves be run down to provide the money for increased investment. It also proposed increased taxation, an independent Nigerian currency and a central bank. In 1958 the World Bank provided Nigeria with its first loan, $28,000,000 for the construction of a new railway through Bauchi to Borno. Nigeria’s first independent loan was also to improve transport. This time the Nigerian Ports Authority received a $13,500,000 loan for the improvement of Lagos port in 1962.

The Bank’s concentration on the developed countries and large-scale, capital-intensive projects aroused criticism within the Bank’s membership. The poorer, developing nations, initially those in Latin America, wanted the Bank to adopt a more liberal lending policy. Most of these countries could not meet the Bank’s criteria for loans which tended to focus on the short term returns from the loan. Furthermore, the Bank avoided sectors that needed protection to develop; this discriminated against industry in developing countries. Agriculture was largely ignored despite its obvious importance. The Bank’s charter limited it to lending for foreign exchange needs and so it could not support projects that relied on local suppliers. Thus Bank-supported projects encouraged further imports and did little to encourage local industry in the Third World. The Bank’s policy of lending only for specific projects worked against those countries which needed more generalised aid or did not have the resources to prepare project studies. The poorer countries wanted the Bank to fund what the Bank called programmes; broad aid schemes to meet the cost of equipment and imports for national development plans.
The World Bank resisted these complaints. It did not want to compromise its financial respectability by funding what might be seen as risky or unprofitable programmes. Nor did it want to support government intervention in the economy. As much as possible it wished to continue its policy of funding the development of the infrastructure which it recognised private enterprise would be unable to build itself.

While the Bank was unwilling to change its own policies it was willing to set up new organisations, affiliated with it, in order to meet some of the criticisms. The first of these new institutions was the International Finance Corporation which from its inception in 1956 directed its activity towards the developing countries. It proposed to aid private enterprise in these countries by arranging loans for them with commercial lenders and by providing equity capital. It also helped to establish development and industrial finance institutions in Third World countries.

Continuing pressure brought about the institution of the International Development Association in 1960. The IDA was intended to act as a 'soft loan' body, making loans on easier terms for projects that did not meet the Bank's criteria. Although the governing body of the IDA is the same as that of the Bank, it has adopted a more liberal attitude towards its lending. Nonetheless, many poor countries still find it difficult to borrow from the Bank, IFC, or IDA.

The Bank Group's activities are not limited solely to providing loans. From its inception the Bank has provided technical assistance, economic survey missions as in Nigeria, as well as consultative groups to coordinate development plans for individual countries.

Despite the criticisms by the developing countries the Bank was slow to change its emphasis. Until the early 1970s transport development received the greatest share of Bank funds. The Bank also continued to promote electric power projects and a limited number of industrial projects. This reflected its pre-occupation with the export of capital-intensive technology. The Bank's lending to Nigeria from 1962 to 1974 follows this pattern.

In 1962, the same year as the ports loan, the new government asked the Bank to set up a consultative group for the country. The purpose of the group, which included Belgium, Canada, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States, as well as Nigeria and the Bank itself, was to coordinate assistance from the member countries, to examine the problems and needs of the Nigerian economy, and to establish loan priorities. The group met under Bank auspices from 1963 to 1965, but the Nigerian government was disappointed with its results. The government wanted the group to raise funds, but the Bank replied that this was not the purpose of consultative groups. In 1965 the government appointed a special Commissioner-General for Economic Affairs, Chief Simeon Adebo, in the hope that he could persuade the Bank to adopt a more active policy. He failed in his task. After February 1966 the Nigerian group did not meet again for five years. Adebo's one success was the visit of George Woods, the Bank president, to Nigeria in 1966.

The Bank first became involved with electric power programmes in Nigeria in 1962 when it paid part of the costs of the feasibility study for Kainji dam. This was followed by a $30,000,000 loan in 1964 to the Electricity Corporation of Nigeria to extend the national power grid and a second loan, in the same year, of
$82,000,000 for the construction of Kainji dam, which the Bank described as the cornerstone of Nigeria's national development plan.

In 1964 the Bank set up a resident mission in Lagos, and although the Bank's advisor to the Federal government ended his work in the same year, a new man from the Bank's Development Advisory Service began work as economic advisor to the Mid-West government. The mission carried out several surveys for road building throughout Nigeria and in 1965 it began an assessment of the national development plan. This was an active period for the Bank and its affiliates in Nigeria. The IFC provided capital for the establishment of the Nigerian Industrial Development Bank in 1964. The IDA provided a $20,000,000 credit for educational development. A second IDA credit, of $15,500,000, was furnished for road development in the Northern Region. The Bank also agreed to carry out a survey of roads in the Western Region for the United Nations Special Fund and in 1965-1966 granted two new loans for roads totalling $32,000,000. By the end of 1966 Nigeria had received six Bank loans totalling $185,000,000 and two IDA credits of $35,500,000, all for transport, power supply or education. This made Nigeria the sixteenth largest recipient of Bank financing out of a total of eighty eight recipients.

From 1966 to late 1968 no new loans were negotiated for Nigeria. In November 1968 the Bank resumed its activity with a $14,500,000 loan to the Niger Dams Authority for further work on Kainji Dam. The following year it provided a $6,000,000 loan to the Nigerian Industrial Development Bank. Formerly the NIDB had been assisted by the IFC, but now the Bank took over and in 1970 furnished a further $10,000,000 to the NIDB. Transport facilities received renewed attention with a loan of $10,600,000 in 1969 and a loan of $25,000,000 in 1970 both for road rehabilitation and reconstruction. In 1971 Nigeria and Bangladesh were granted special rehabilitation loans by the Bank. Normally the Bank did not lend for broad, undefined programmes such as rehabilitation but it made these two exceptions. Nigeria received $80,000,000.

Despite the importance of agriculture to Nigeria's economy the Bank did not grant any agricultural loans until 1971 because of its reluctance to support agricultural programmes. But in 1971 a project to rehabilitate cocoa farms and develop training facilities for cocoa extension workers received $7,200,000 from the Bank. This first move into agriculture was not followed up for another three years. In the meantime the Bank returned to its more traditional pre-occupations, transport and electricity. A new loan to rebuild or construct new roads to meet the demands of increasing traffic provided the government with $26,300,000 in 1972. To improve Lagos port the Nigerian Ports Authority signed a loan of $55,000,000 in 1973. The National Electric Power Authority negotiated a $76,000,000 loan in 1972 to expand its service. The Bank also increased its support for education with loans in 1972 and 1973. The 1972 loan supplied $17,300,000 for school and teacher training development and the 1973 loan of $54,000,000 provided funds for the expansion of secondary institutions in the North and for the expansion of the Institute of Education at Ahmadu Bello University. By this time the Bank had granted 18 loans and two IDA credits worth $602,900,000 since its first loan to Nigeria in 1958. The majority of these loans were for electric power and transport development, in line with general bank policy.

By the middle of the 1960s the Bank's attitude towards Third World countries
began to change. The Bank president, George Woods, and others in development institutions realised that despite their efforts most Third World economies had failed to develop, and they began to question the assumptions of the development strategies with which they had worked. The first result of this was an increased interest in population control measures. But it soon became clear that agricultural lending, long neglected by the Bank, would have to be increased if developing countries were to overcome their problems. This realisation coincided with the boom in agribusiness. Manufacturing corporations used their position as producers of farm implements or fertilisers or as distributors to enter more deeply into commercial agriculture itself. The process of integration, long the rule in other sectors of monopoly capital, was now being applied to agriculture on an extended scale. Many of the older food producing companies began to divest themselves of their uneconomical landholdings since they did not need to own land as long as they controlled credit, marketing and processing. Commercial agriculture came to resemble other sectors of monopoly capital more and more. Suddenly, agricultural development appeared to be profitable and susceptible to the type of capital-intensive development that the Bank favoured.

Agricultural development received a further stimulus with the appointment of Robert McNamara as President of the World Bank in 1968. This was the man who, as Secretary of Defence, had attempted to stem the tide of communism in Southeast Asia and who had, by 1968, realised the failure of American policy. McNamara had been part of the group which implemented Kennedy’s foreign policy in the Third World which was based on counter-insurgency. By the time that McNamara had turned to Vietnam, the ‘insurgents’ there were already well established and active in the countryside. In the view of the Pentagon the Americans were inheriting the failures of an earlier colonial regime that had not done enough to help the peasants. Recognising the failure of the Vietnam policy based on a military response, McNamara carried the battle to a higher level at the Bank. At this point, counter-insurgency and agricultural development converged. The key to a more sophisticated and successful counter-insurgency programme lay in creating a strong class of capitalist farmers capable of defending their class interests. In the rhetoric of the time ‘hearts and minds’ became ‘basic human needs’, ‘strategic hamlets’ became ‘enclaves of development’. For McNamara and the American policy makers whom he represented it was not simply a question of the profitability of agricultural development, although this was important for a former president of Ford, but of its necessity if future Vietnams were to be avoided.

Thus the Bank’s attitude toward agriculture changed because of the new needs of monopoly capital in agriculture and the perception of the political importance of rural development. Previously the Bank had lent mostly for large scale irrigation and livestock projects, benefiting rich farmers and ranchers; short term credit had not been provided. But by the end of the 1960s, the Bank was willing to give short term credit and it began ‘integrated small-holder development’ programmes, which centre either on the production of a single cash crop or on the overall improvement of a particular region. The new emphasis on agriculture should not, however, conceal the fundamental continuity in Bank policy which has been to support capital-intensive imports, for all these programmes rely heavily on imports of equipment, seed, fertilizer, and expertise.

With the exception of the one cocoa loan in 1971 the Bank did not become
interested in Nigerian agriculture until 1974. Early in 1974 the Bank fixed a new loan of $20,000,000 for cocoa development and this began the real upsurge in Bank investment in Nigeria's agriculture. In December 1974 the Bank signed five loan agreements to cover agricultural projects throughout Nigeria. A $21,000,000 loan was directed towards the development of livestock raising on seven state-owned ranches. Northeast State received $21,000,000, North Central State $29,000,000, and Northwest State $19,000,000 for projects to provide agricultural roads, dams, village service centres, marketing services, and training centres that were to be located in selected areas in the states. East Central State and Southeastern State shared a $17,500,000 loan for the development of swamp and river valley agriculture. Next the Bank turned to palm produce. In June 1975 it completed three loans to increase production of palm oil for domestic use and palm kernels for export. Western State received $17,000,000, East Central State $19,000,000, and Mid-West State $29,500,000. Smallholders and agricultural labourers in these states were to develop three high-yielding palm estates.

After this burst of activity no new loans were negotiated in the 1975-76 financial year. Indeed the Bank's Annual Report noted that the increase in Nigeria's foreign reserves was beginning to level off. Nigeria returned to the Bank in 1977 for financing for two more agricultural projects, one in Benue State, the other in Plateau State, to establish mixed farming schemes. The loans were for $35,000,000 and $27,000,000 respectively. The following year a palm oil estate and mill project in Rivers State received a $30,000,000 loan. In June 1978 the Bank granted the Nigerian Industrial Development Bank a further $60,000,000 to be used to support twenty-five small manufacturing or service companies. This is the most recent loan to Nigeria.

As of June 1978 the World Bank had made thirty-one loans to Nigeria worth $912,400,000 and two IDA credits worth $35,500,000. As a result of the recent series of loans agriculture now accounts for the largest share of Bank financing.

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<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>205,900,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>202,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>91,300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehabilitation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>80,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Institutions</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>76,000,000</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>$947,900,000</td>
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Nigeria has emerged as the largest recipient of Bank finance in sub-Saharan Africa and the seventeenth largest of the total of 116 countries to which the Bank has lent money. Except for the two early IDA credits all the Bank lending has been in the form of the more stringent Bank loans and Nigeria has been able to meet the stricter criteria of these loans. Obviously in the Bank's view Nigeria is an important investment. It is the most populous state in sub-Saharan Africa and at the moment the only state that can combine great wealth with a large population, a fertile field for investment by monopoly capital. As the most powerful black African state its influence in African affairs is potentially very great and both the Bank and the American government realise this. Nigeria has often been compared with Brazil, a revealing comparison, for just as Brazil has been singled out as the dominant local power in Latin America, so Nigeria seems
destined to play this role in Africa. If this is to be true, the instability that would result from a complete collapse of Nigerian agriculture must be avoided. This explains the systematic approach the Bank has recently taken to the problems of Nigerian agriculture. Nigeria has become a vast, national enclave of development in sub-Saharan Africa.
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