

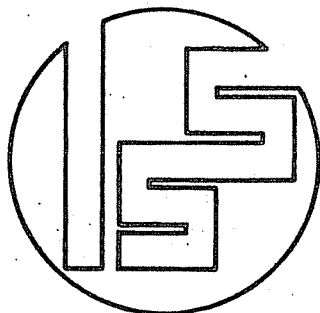
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## OCCASIONAL PAPERS

**Communist Theory in the Nigerian Trade Union Movement**

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# COMMUNIST THEORY IN THE NIGERIAN TRADE UNION MOVEMENT<sup>1</sup>

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## 1. APPROACHING THE NTUC

### 1.1. The subject

The subject of this paper is the Nigerian Trade Union Congress (NTUC), the Communist trade union organisation in Nigeria. More specifically, it is about the central leadership of the NTUC, since the organisation is in origin and structure a central, national and Lagos-based federation of trade unions. Even more specifically, it concerns the theoretical activity of this group, its view of Nigerian society and its organisational strategy. While this focus might seem excessively narrow for the study of a trade union organisation, it is perhaps justified for examination of a Marxist-oriented group. A true understanding of their environment has traditionally been considered a prerequisite of effective political action by Marxists. And Marxists working in the trade unions have traditionally paid great attention to organisational strategy.

### 1.2. The approach

The approach adopted is implicitly Marxist. This means that it has Marxist ambitions and invites judgement against Marxist standards. The requirements of a systematic and rigorous Marxist approach to Third World politics and society have not yet been set out.<sup>2</sup> And whilst this might be weak as an excuse, it must stand as an explanation for the failure to set out an explicit approach here.

On the other hand, the evident shortcomings of the empiricist and liberal approach that dominates those studies in which the NTUC figures encourages adoption of this alternative one. Whilst each of these works has its own particular virtues, each is limited by the undefended assumption - implicit or explicit - that Nigeria is a 'developing country'.<sup>3</sup>

Taking a Marxist approach to the NTUC implies, minimally, putting it into a real Nigerian and world social structure and history. This means seeing it as part of a developing international labour movement and a part of a developing (or, rather, 'under-developing') Nigerian political economy. It means adopting a partisan position, making a conscious theoretical intervention intended to bring about certain practical developments considered necessary - and claiming to be more scientific because of this.

### 1.3. The background<sup>4</sup>

#### 1.3.1. Economic

Economically, Nigeria has followed the classical path from colony to neo-colony. The export-crop and food-crop producing agricultural sector has remained in a stagnant colonial position because of the failure to reinvest even that part of the extracted surplus retained by the Nigerian state. Meanwhile, the great monopolistic colonial trading companies have exemplified the new pattern of foreign capital investment by transforming themselves into specialised importing-advertising-marketing and import-substituting firms.<sup>5</sup> The new pattern of investment is in capital-intensive industry, producing consumer or intermediate goods, frequently of the luxury type. The 1960s saw

a great development in this type of investment, mostly in Lagos, and to a more limited extent in six or seven other centres. The rapid economic recovery of Nigeria after the Civil War, and its comparative stability since, has been due not to these sectors, however, but to the dramatic development of oil extraction, making Nigeria the world's 12th largest petroleum producer. It is oil revenue that has made it possible to avoid the economic and political crises that have plagued Ghana and Senegal over the past few years, and that has made it possible for Nigeria's rulers to ignore the deepening structural cleavages.

### 1.3.2. Social

Socially, one most distinguish between the surplus-expropriating class and the masses. The surplus-expropriating class consists of the 'traditional', 'entrepreneurial' and 'functional' elites that, despite appearances, overlap each other and have a common origin in the colonial order. Created as intermediaries between the colonial companies and administration on the one hand, and the people on the other, this class now plays the same role for the international corporations, international capitalism and its multifarious military, political, academic, professional, ideological (lay or religious) and intelligence agencies.

The masses consist of the largely self-employed farmers (approximately 70% of the labour force), the manual workers and lower-paid intellectual workers (approximately 3%), and the mass of petty-traders and craftsmen (approximately 25%) who outnumber the workers even within the cities.<sup>6</sup> The milking-off of the agricultural surplus through low export-crop prices and high taxes has prevented clear social groups developing amongst a peasantry otherwise differentiated by region, language and market situation. But the fact that it is political decisions on taxation rates and marketing board crop prices through which the surplus is expropriated puts all farmers in a homogeneous relationship with the state.

Equally excluded from the surplus-expropriating class is the vast mass of craftsmen, petty-traders and small entrepreneurs. Discriminated against in favour of the manufacturers and merchant traders, they are also linked with the workers and farmers upon whose incomes they depend, amongst whom they live, whose style of life they share, and to whom they are linked by family ties.

More will be said of the workers later. Here we may point out briefly that expansion of both public and private sectors led to a three-fold growth in their numbers between 1955 and 1967; that they are united by their common dependence on wages that can only be increased through collective action against the employers and state; that this brings them together in trade unions within common industrial or national federations. I would also assert that this at the same time distinguishes them from the administrative, technical and executive grades which can be considered part of the exploiting class; and, finally, that they are linked by common residence, origin, mutual dependence and frequent interchange with the rest of the urban and with the rural poor.

### 1.3.3. Political

Politically, we must distinguish between rulers and ruled. The ruling class is formed of the same elements that make up the surplus-expropriating class, although it should be remembered that this group shares power with an external force to which it is 'distinctly feebler ..... and deeply subservient'.<sup>7</sup> Pre-eminent within this class have been the politico-business and bureaucratic-military groups that have successively governed Nigeria.

The regionalisation of politics by the British during the period of withdrawal in the 1950s successfully drew the teeth of Nigerian nationalism, i.e., the possibility of multi-class, inter-ethnic, mass pressure at the centre. It made the politico-business group dependent on alliance with the 'traditional' leaders controlling the village vote, and divided it into regional and ethnic splinters, each concerned with a localised struggle for resources. Such a system was indeed 'incompatible with even minimal bourgeois rationality and efficiency',<sup>8</sup> and Nigeria staggered from one crisis to another before the coup de grâce was administered by the military in 1966. The new regime has been plagued by all the diseases of the old (expressed, in most virulent form, by the Civil War), save the costs and risks of the bourgeois-democratic rites of consultation. It has, however, reduced the size and influence of regions, imposed discipline upon other sections of the ruling class, established central control, thus providing a climate suitable for modern types of foreign capital investment.<sup>9</sup>

Only sporadically have the under classes cracked the 'tribal mask' of politics in post-colonial Nigeria. In June 1964 there occurred a General Strike, the first nation-wide social conflict. But an attempted political strike in December 1964 was a failure. And the 1971 strike wave over the Adebo award was uncoordinated nationally.<sup>10</sup> In 1965 and 1968 general uprisings took place amongst the cocoa and food-crop farmers of Yorubaland, both directed against the property and persons of the privileged, and the authority of the government. Whilst the first was contained within limits of ruling-class politics, the second broke through, reaching new heights of self-organisation, and severely frightening the regime.<sup>11</sup> But the simple non-coincidence of date suggests the underlying reality: so far no class or class alliance has been capable of putting ruling class - and, therefore, imperialist - control in doubt.

### 1.3.4. The trade union movement<sup>12</sup>

Nigerian labour history may be broken down into the following phases: (1) struggle for conditions and basic rights (1897-1943); (2) the birth of working-class nationalism (1940-45); (3) the labour-nationalist alliance (1944-50); (4) the political isolation of labour (1948-60); (5) the first independent labour challenge (1966-70); (6) the revival of economic militancy (1970- ). This schema provides a counterpoint to the history of Nigeria's ruling class. But it conceals the deep and permanent structural weaknesses of the movement.

Whilst these will be dealt with later, a suggestive illustration of the situation may be given here. The number of individual trade unions has advanced faster than the number of unionised, with the result that average membership of the 550 unions in 1964 was around 64 - and far less if one could distinguish those who actually pay from the claimed membership.<sup>13</sup>

### 1.3.5. The NTUC

The NTUC fits into this picture as the latest and longest-lived (almost ten years) of the radical trade union centres that have competed with the moderates since 1945. It has behind it the traditions of the 1945 General Strike, the alliance with radical nationalism, the economic and organising struggles of the later 1950s when the moderates collapsed into regionalism. But, although it was created before Nigeria's first Soviet-approved Communist Party, the Socialist Workers and Farmers Party (SWAFP), it was a specifically Communist creation. The men who created the NTUC were either union leaders whose sympathies and links with Communism went back to 1945 or earlier,<sup>14</sup> or they were from the Nigerian Youth Congress, itself largely created and controlled by men who had been associated with the British Communist Party.<sup>15</sup> The formation after the NTUC of the Labour Unity Front (LUF) was a direct result of the expulsion or self-exclusion of leaders who would not accept Communism.<sup>16</sup>

The size and influence of the NTUC is difficult to assess, due to the exaggerated and competitive claims that the unions traditionally make in Nigeria. In 1968 it listed 209 affiliates and in 1963 'at least 250,000 members'. But many of those affiliates were in Biafra and 250,000 is nearly the total official figure for trade union membership in Nigeria. Probably it had equal influence with its major rival, the right-wing United Labour Congress (ULC), which made similarly exaggerated claims. In 1972 the NTUC had functioning regional offices in the major cities south of the Niger-Benue confluence. But for the other half of Nigeria it had only one, in Kaduna, and this did not even attempt to sell the NTUC paper. The organisation has nonetheless, considerable resources. These are its core of experienced leaders (secretaries of one or more unions), its younger militant organisers, a head office, school and newspaper, its recognised status (since the First Coup) vis-à-vis the regime, its foreign sponsor, and its radical ideology.<sup>17</sup>

The NTUC was planned as a central national leadership that would act as the Communist organ in the trade union movement. Whilst there sooner or later appeared such other satellite organisations as the Nigerian Farmers Congress, the Youth Thinkers Club (and friendship or solidarity organisations with as many countries or movements as were at any particular time approved by the Soviet Union) the NTUC played a special role. Those Communists working in the unions were the only ones who had social roots, experience of the struggle, and influence amongst a section of the masses.

## 2. THE THEORETICAL ACTIVITY OF THE NTUC

### 2.1. The NTUC analysis of Nigeria

#### 2.1.1. The general environment

The NTUC has long considered Nigeria to be in a neo-colonial situation. The meaning of this was spelled out most clearly in the documents of its founding conference, the first Revolutionary Convention, held in 1963. Nigeria, it was said, might appear to be independent,

But the masses of the Nigerian people know...that behind the paraphernalia of Nigerian Administrators are unseen foreign hands - British and American - that control the life of every Nigerian.<sup>18</sup>

The same report listed the forms of neo-colonial control: a British chief of the security services; British military commanders; British traditions in the diplomatic service; British domination of imports and exports; British, Swiss and American domination of banking; domination of cultural life through the Peace Corps, the United States Information Service, the Central Intelligence Agency and the British Council: and such a dependence on foreign private investment that 'it is clear that Nigeria's economy will remain basically dependent on the imperialist countries'. This analysis was endorsed by the Second Revolutionary Convention in 1965. The Presidential Report made a detailed attack on the current economic policy, declaring that the heavy industry necessary for a truly independent Nigeria 'shall never receive the backing of the Anglo-American financiers and their allies'.

The Third Convention, held in early 1970, introduced a note of ambiguity. The Presidential Address talked of the 'success of the Nigerian Federal Military Government over the forces of neo-colonialism headed by US imperialism', and in accord with this new note the various reports termed Nigeria an 'under-developed' or 'developing' nation, rather than a neo-colonial one.

The social structure of Nigeria was presented by the NTUC as consisting of 'two distinct and opposing societies'. The exploited were the workers and farmers, as well as the 'Market Women and Petty Traders ... Students ... Progressive Intellectuals and Professionals of Nigeria'. The exploiters were the foreign companies, the feudal rulers ('through excessive tax assessment, seizure of communal land and indiscriminate use of the native courts'), and the few Nigerian big businessmen. The latter were broken down according to source of income into the nominal directors of foreign firms, diverters of public funds, and the directly exploiting middlemen, buying agents, owners of schools, houses, transport and trucking companies:

In short, from the cradle to the grave, our life is regulated by the few rich Nigerians, their foreign supporters, and the Obas, Emirs and the Obis.

Once again the analysis was endorsed by the Second Revolutionary Convention and ignored by the third, which did not even have a report devoted to economic and social conditions.

Analysis of the political system began with the foundation of the NTUC and was up-dated with each significant change that occurred. The First Revolutionary Convention condemned the British for creating an undemocratic constitution with three competing regions, to weaken the 'true representatives of the people' and strengthen their own agents and supporters. Referring to attempts being made to introduce a preventive detention act and do away with parliamentary opposition, another report declared that:

those who preached the doctrine of liberal democracy have destroyed its basis with their own hands.

It also warned that the answer of the Government to the serious problems facing the country was:

the large-scale recruitment of more policemen and soldiers in anticipation that the masses out of frustration shall rise one day so that the Army and the Police will supply them with bullets instead of bread. Instead of feeding, they plan to kill the people.

Despite the distinctions drawn between them,<sup>19</sup> the parties were condemned en bloc:

They are dominated, controlled and financed by the agents and representatives of the rich classes. They only use the people - the workers and farmers - as ladders to climb into power. Once in Power they turn their backs to the people and use the Power to oppress the people.

Analysis of military rule had to wait the Third Revolutionary Convention in 1970. The General Secretary's Report presented the coup of January 15, 1966 as a 'patriotic military action by the Nigerian Army'. This had, however, a 'tribal content', which gave rise to the counter-coup of July, to Eastern secession and civil war. Responsibility was pinned on imperialism, which was accused of encouraging the dismemberment of Nigeria, and backing Biafra overtly or covertly.<sup>20</sup> The Presidential Address went into some detail on the nature of the Gowon regime, declaring that

the composition of the Federal Military Executive Council is so far the most democratic and representative in the history of this nation.

It praised the regime for its victories over the 'forces of neo-colonialism headed by US imperialism' and its good relations with the Soviet Union. It commended the creation of a new state structure and other democratic and antitribalist measures. It defended the regime against accusations of corruption and the suggestion that it was no better than its civilian predecessor and should therefore be replaced. The regime, it said, 'is positively against corruption', and 'Gowon today is the most acceptable rallying point for a national democratic revolution'. When the Government announced its Four Year Development Plan, the NTUC General Secretary, Wahab Goodluck, made certain limited criticisms of it at the 1970 Convention but declared that it 'lays foundation for an economic take off in a developing country' and that the Congress was 'Committed to see the full implementation' of the Plan.

#### 2.1.2. The working class.

The first analysis of the nature of the working class (as distinguished from its condition) was also made during the 1963 Convention. This spoke of the low concentration outside public sector employment, the workers' fear of the 'thousands of hungry-looking unemployed adults perpetually hanging around the premises of factories', and the 'police protection offered to foreign investors' through their tear-gassing and beating of strikers. The result, it was suggested elsewhere, was the following:

The workers seem to lack confidence in themselves. They conceive themselves probably as a class of impotent weaklings who exist solely to be exploited and trodden underfoot....

There is a widespread if only falacious feeling among the workers that if the capitalists should desist from exploiting their labour power for one moment they, the workers, would not last the next minute.

The next analysis, made at the 1965 convention, was more ambiguous. On the one hand it was claimed that as a result of the 1964 General Strike the workers were more and more realising the necessity for



political power, and on the other hand it was stated that in failing to vote for SWAFP in the 1964 General Election they showed 'very strong but sentimental attachment' to the old parties. Despite these cautious statements, however, Goodluck still apparently felt at the 1970 Convention that the working class was capable of ruling the country, stating that 'the Congress has advocated time without number the need for the working class to take political power'.

### 2.4.3. The labour movement

The 1963 Convention considered the Nigerian labour movement to be 'drifting aimlessly and circuitously', the prey of opportunism and of an 'unconscious flighty, planless and drifting' style of work. Reasons for this were apparently: (1) the idea of the 'so-called "gifted few" in the inner circle' of the trade unions, (2) the belief of the centres that what mattered was the number of unions affiliated, not the number of battles led, (3) the chain of financial dependence, in which union leaders, 'most of them workers', begged the centres for money, threatening 'disaffiliation if we do not buy them off', and the centres followed suit by begging from their overseas counterparts,<sup>21</sup> (4) the check-off system, which was encouraging 'complacency and inertia among certain union officials'.<sup>22</sup>

Explanation was also given for the ideological divisions within the movement. The absence of a single trade union linked with a government party was put down partly to the existence of competing regional parties and a government uninterested in trade union unity, and partly to the 'American Dollar Trade Unionism' of the International Confederation of Trade Unions (ICTU)<sup>23</sup> which, with the connivance of the government 'foredoomed any attempt to reconcile the two factions' within the movement. The right-wing United Labour Congress was seen as a mere satellite of the regime and of imperialism, bribing union leaders to win them over, supporting the government's anti-working class policies, and gaining in return 'Government recognition, Board appointments, free trips' and other favours. The 'neutralists' (not identified, but clearly those who created the LUF) were attacked as a 'spineless collection of labour chameleons' who helped the enemy whilst claiming to stand between the two wings of the movement. The 1970 Convention saw no mention of LUF and only a brief and indirect mention of the ULC. Whilst this reflected the general softening of attitudes towards LUF that had been going on for some time, the same cannot be said of attitudes towards the ULC, which had been subject to continuous and violent attack throughout the intervening period.<sup>24</sup> As for NTUC itself, the Communists claimed that:

The Nigerian Trade Union Congress represents a revolutionary trade union trend whose policies are governed by scientific analysis of the society and based on the class struggle of the working people. The dynamic force of this theory of the NTUC is always directed towards combat actions from which it derives its revolutionary character.<sup>25</sup>

### 2.2. The organisational strategy of the NTUC

The split in the radical Independent United Labour Congress (IULC) that preceded the creation of the NTUC was due largely to differences between the socialist and specifically Communist trade union leaders.<sup>26</sup> But as suggested above, it was also an attempt to overcome the general

weaknesses of the Nigerian trade union movement. The new organisation was thus supposed to differ from the traditional left-wing organisations not simply in its policy but in its structure and forms of behaviour.

### 2.2.1. Creating a 'Revolutionary Trade Union'

The very creation of the NTUC, at the significantly-named 'First Revolutionary Convention' in 1963, embodied a strategical option. The revolutionary nature of the new organisation was clearly supposed to lie in its contrast with both the Independent United Labour Congress (IULC) from which it had issued and the right-wing ULC. A theoretical justification for creating such an organisation was never set out. The practical purpose seems, however, to be revealed in the documents of the founding convention:

... our Revolutionary Convention aims at awakening the workers' political consciousness on their own political platform, put an end to political and organisational disunity for which bourgeois parties, neo-colonial divide-and-rule and semi-feudal tribalistic instincts have been responsible.

And:

Above all, the criterion for admitting unions into our fold should be the latent existence or demonstration of revolutionary potentialities.

In so far as it was set out, the aim of the new organisation therefore appears to have been the creation through a national trade union centre of a conscious revolutionary working-class elite.<sup>27</sup>

### 2.2.2. A new type of structure

The formal structure of the NTUC is unremarkable. Many of its organisational aims could also have been those of any other trade union anywhere in the world: to organise the unorganised, revive moribund unions, work towards amalgamations, provide common central offices and staff for affiliates, etc. But past shortcomings of the Nigerian trade union movement led to special emphasis on several points. Democracy was to be strengthened through control on decision-making by the Central Executive Committee, a majority of which was to consist of unpaid officials. Specialised sub-committees on education, organisation, etc., were to be set up to tap the 'natural aptitude of individual rank-and-file leadership'.

The 1970 Convention drew attention to a feature of Congress organisation unmentioned in the Constitution. This was its force of 'cadres',<sup>28</sup> the paid trade union officials who 'are the front-line activists of our movement'. In an apparent desire to overcome the trade union entrepreneurship which has long bedeviled the Nigerian movement,<sup>29</sup> these were to have 'dual responsibility', to be 'employed in the services of individual trade unions while at the same time remaining loyal to Congress'. The report mentioned the practice by which the NTUC would subsidise its cadres only until they could find financial support from unions they themselves organised. Finally, it stressed the necessity for them to be carefully chosen, well educated and frequently consulted.

### 2.2.3. The question of unity

Recognising that much of the Nigerian labour movement lay outside its confines, the NTUC paid particular attention to the question of unity. The road to a re-established unity was seen by the 1963 Convention as coming through working-class struggle, thus overcoming the problems of 'personalities and territorial ambitions'. Independent action by revolutionary workers would win over the others, it was said, whilst trusting 'right-wing forces and labour judases' would lead to failure. As for the issue on which the struggle should take place, the 1963 Convention was clear:

The demand of wage changes is uppermost in the minds of the workers... The struggle will sort many things out; because all those who are for the unity of the workers will inevitably unite with them ... while those who are opposed to the workers will join forces with the enemy and try overtly or covertly to betray and defeat the workers' struggles.

By 1970, however, this concept had been almost abandoned in favour of 'unity by decree'.<sup>30</sup> The argument that this was undemocratic was considered a trick 'to deny the working class of its aspirations'. Whilst it is true that the NTUC had never rejected the concept of an administrative unification by government fiat, it was now presenting this as the most favourable perspective:

The Congress is to intensify its agitation for a decree on labour unity in the Country. It is the contention of the Congress that a decree ... will prevent future splits in the Nigerian trade union movement.

Two other paths to unity were mentioned at the 1970 Convention, however. One was revival of a Joint Action Committee,<sup>31</sup> the other 'unity by elimination of the weaker by the stronger'.

### 2.2.4. International relations

Considering that disunity in the labour movement was caused largely by imperialist intervention, the NTUC sought a means of bringing this to an end. Its strategy was one of formal affiliation to the All African Trade Union Federation (AATUF),<sup>32</sup> whilst reserving the 'right of fraternal relations' with non-African trade unions. The NTUC urged the ULC to adopt a similar stance by disaffiliating from the ICFTU. There was, furthermore, to be a break with past dependences on foreign funds: the Nigerian workers were now to bear 'first and foremost the responsibility of sustaining their own organisation'.<sup>33</sup> In 1968 the NTUC was still insisting that:

the Congress has upheld and will continue to uphold the policy of the AATUF on the question of non-affiliation ... The position of the NTUC has not changed.<sup>34</sup>

Ten weeks later it had applied to join the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU),<sup>35</sup> a change of strategy justified only retrospectively and in such a vein as to suggest that for the NTUC relations with the international blocs and unions were governed by no significant principle or strategical consideration.<sup>36</sup>

### 2.2.5. The workers' own party

The most dramatic distinction between the other Nigerian trade union centres and the NTUC was clearly in the latter's decision to combine with other groups to launch the SWAFP. Whilst socialist aims and political intentions had been declared by many earlier trade union centres in Nigeria,<sup>37</sup> the NTUC differed in proposing to create what turned out to be a specifically Communist party.<sup>38</sup>

Whilst the question of party-union relations naturally became less important following the ban on political parties after the January 1966 coup, the matter was considered important enough to be mentioned in 1970. Attacking the 'hypocritical and colonialist conception of only economic Trade Unionism', S.U. Bassey declared that:

the Nigerian Trade Union Congress shall be independent of all creeds, political groups and Governments except the political party of the Working Class.

The exact relationship between the two organisations was nowhere spelled out by the NTUC. The only statement that relates to this is when it was said in self-justification at the 1965 Convention that:

It will be necessary for us to note that in Great Britain, from where we have copied most of our political and social institutions, the British Trades Union Congress takes part in active, partisan politics.<sup>39</sup> The British TUC is a supporter and member of the British Labour Party.

## 3. A THEORETICAL CRITIQUE

...our party is guided by a science of society - the science of Marxism-Leninism. This is a science which brings together all the experiences of mankind in struggle and from there draws lessons for the guidance of the common people in their fight to overthrow capitalism and imperialism and build socialism. It is a science which enables the people to know the roots of their poverty and weakness, to see through all the deceits, confusions, pretences and lies of the ruling classes. It reveals to the people the actual realities of the situation.<sup>40</sup>

The above declaration by Nigeria's Communists provides us with one standard for assessing the theory of the NTUC. In the following pages we can therefore compare its analysis and strategy with the views of other Marxists on Nigeria, its workers and unions, or on the experience of the working class movement in other places and other times. To use only this standard, however, would be inappropriate. The NTUC was not after all, a party (although the line between the two was blurred). It was a trade union centre engaged in leading practical every-day struggle over bread and butter issues. It will therefore be necessary to also consider whether the analysis and organisational strategy of the NTUC was appropriate to these tasks.

### 3.1. The view of Nigeria

#### 3.1.1. The general environment

Until 1966 the NTUC had a crude but coherent analysis of Nigerian society quite adequate to its self-imposed tasks. Nigeria was a neo-colony, economically, socially and politically. It was divided

dichotomously into exploiters and exploited. Its state was the instrument of the external and internal exploiters. Its political parties and political developments revealed the contradictions within and the contradictions of the neo-colonial order. This analysis is not far from the one presented in section 1.3. above. It represented a remarkable attempt by Nigerian trade unionists and their intellectual allies to theorise the experience and interests of Nigeria's masses. And it provided a striking alternative to the dominant conservative ideology that underpins imperialist domination in Nigeria.<sup>41</sup>

From the time that Gowon came to power, however, general analysis of Nigerian society was all but abandoned and the regime was judged solely by political, foreign policy or, indeed, moral criteria. The NTUC analysis of the war largely coincided with that of the regime itself,<sup>42</sup> and it went further in approval of the Four Year Development Plan than many Nigerian and foreign liberals. The new NTUC analysis of Nigeria began to approach the traditional ULC one<sup>43</sup> and its 'Marxist-Leninist' colouring is difficult to discern.

We may contrast the approach of the NTUC to the military regime with that of serious foreign analysts who have continued to use the Marxist one. Whilst there are significant differences amongst them, there is a broad area of agreement. The change of regime is interpreted as a shift from a politico-business to a military-bureaucratic type of rule, the latter implying a reduction in consultation of the masses, a rationalisation in the interests of the local bourgeoisie as a whole, and an increase in external imperialist control.<sup>44</sup>

### 3.1.2. The working class

The analysis made of the working class has undergone no analogous change. It is, however, weak and superficial and appears inadequate for the trade union strategy of a militant class organisation. That a working class could be simultaneously (or even in close succession) possessed of hegemonic capacities and lacking even corporate consciousness suggests a failure of perception, of analysis, or both. The statement that the working class was capable of ruling Nigeria was not a momentary excess. Similar sanguine expectations had been expressed by Goodluck after the 1964 General Strike.<sup>45</sup> Swinging between this extreme and the other, the NTUC was incapable of considering the real extent and limits of working-class consciousness.<sup>46</sup> To do this it would be necessary to distinguish at least three strata among the workers, (1) the clerical and lower-professional workers mostly in the public sector, (2) the casual labourers in public and private employ, and (3) the manual workers in private industry, the railways, etc. All three might be in the group earning under £ 500 per year in 1970, and recognised by the elite itself to be in a condition of 'intolerable suffering'.<sup>47</sup> But their work situations, life opportunities and values differ significantly.

The first group is 'concerned to defend and advance their real wages', but 'are more concerned than are factory workers to seek the favour of their seniors ... in so far as their promotion structure is more favourable'.<sup>48</sup> The second group - the 'semi-proletarianised peasantry'<sup>49</sup> are prevented from becoming proletarians. They may have a consciousness of themselves as unemployed and even attempt to organise themselves as such.<sup>50</sup> But it is now generally agreed on the basis of both African and Latin American experience that they are

incapable of combining in their own interest, even if they can provide a force d'appui for movements of the working or other classes.<sup>51</sup> The third group<sup>52</sup> may be only recently or temporarily urbanised and commonly aspire to quit wage labour for trading. But they are dependent upon wages to obtain the necessary capital to buy themselves into a trade or craft. And, in the meantime, they are in the classical proletarian situation - concentrated in large factories in big industrial estates, suffering the miseries of planless urbanisation, experiencing rapid wage erosion (the quasi-universal scourge of the modern proletariat). Due to the practice of national wage settlements following government wage commissions, they frequently identify the state, as well as individual employers, as their opponent. Despite their rural backgrounds and petty-bourgeois ambitions, they are capable of sustained wage struggle, though not, perhaps, of determined struggle on union rights. Thus, in a paper that reveals the ineffectiveness of the national trade unions during a Lagos strike, Adrian Peace nonetheless concludes that

any attempt to examine the potential for a broader-based social movement should acknowledge as a central element the rise of a politically sophisticated African proletariat.<sup>53</sup>

### 3.1.3. The labour movement

The NTUC set out to explain the general weaknesses and then the specific ideological divisions within the labour movement. For the first it provided a catalogue of vices, for the second political explanation. The vices are real enough and the description of the ULC - partisan though it might seem - is accurate, being confirmed in important parts by the American labour experts. We may pass over the attacks on the LUF and the favourable self-portrait, since they will be dealt with later. What is, perhaps, most seriously lacking is an attempt to root the weaknesses and divisions in the nature of the class and of Nigerian neo-colonial society.

The nature of the working class is the basis, in fact, for a series of deep-rooted structural divisions in the movement.<sup>54</sup> There exists a series of cross-cutting but mutually reinforcing fractures. Division between leaders and members is evident even at enterprise level. Widespread illiteracy combines with the patron-client relations (common to 'modern' as well as 'traditional' sectors in Nigeria) to incline the workers towards choice of a more-educated workplace leader. Complex bureaucratic bargaining procedures imported from the metropolis reinforce the necessity for qualified officials. The widespread employer practice of promoting or sacking workplace militants makes the existence of the 'external secretary' wellnigh inevitable. Trade union leadership is thus professionalised at ground level, creating even here a clash between leadership as a vocation and as a career.<sup>55</sup> It is therefore not surprising to find at national level the oligarchy, bureaucracy and careerism typical of the US business union.<sup>56</sup> This is a pattern to which the ULC closely corresponds. It may be that factory-level militancy in Nigeria is repeatedly producing leaders who reject this pattern.<sup>57</sup> But the common (if not universal) professionalisation of such leaders into a career combining the entrepreneurial and bureaucratic values of the Nigerian elite repeatedly prevents militant surges from translating themselves into solid organisations with consistently radical leaders. This last point has obvious implications for the NTUC to which we will return later.

### 3.2. The organisational strategy

If one examines the NTUC's organisational options one can discover that they touch on a number of crucial issues for radicals working in the trade union movement. These are (1) the role of revolutionaries vis-à-vis the trade union movement, (2) party-union relations, (3) trade union leadership and (4) working-class internationalism. These have been a traditional and central concern of Marxists in the labour movement outside (and sometimes inside) Nigeria. In each case positions taken throw a critical light on the NTUC's strategy.

#### 3.2.1. Revolutionaries and trade unions

The Communist option for a separate 'revolutionary' organisation was criticised within Nigeria by the socialist activist, Eskor Toyo.<sup>58</sup> Toyo's belief was that there was a programme of the working class that could not but find expression in any united organisation:

It is not so much a question of adopting a progressive programme as the question of fighting for one already - tacitly - in existence in the consciousness of every worker.<sup>59</sup>

It was, he said, sheer ignorance of Marxism and Leninism that caused 'certain elements around the NTUC' to fail to distinguish between communists - the vanguard of the working class - and the working class itself:

These men think that workers can be carried for revolutionary action only on the day ... when every trade union has been won into the fold of the 'socialist' NTUC.<sup>60</sup>

He continues,

The need to have a distinct socialist revolutionary party of individuals does not imply the need to have a 'socialist' trade union front separate from the other trade union organisations of the working class. Apart from fighting for socialism, the trade unions exist in the first place to fight for the day-to-day economic and social interests of the working class against the capitalist class. The fight for socialism requires a definite consciousness in the working class. This consciousness, as experience has shown in country after country, cannot be imparted by a trade union faction dominated bureaucratically by socialist-minded officials who shout Marxist phrases. For working class revolutionary consciousness to develop, for militant socialist consciousness to emerge in the working class as a whole, the socialist cadre must do his work, not through the struggles of an exclusive 'socialist' trade union faction but through the joint struggles of the working class as a whole.<sup>61</sup>

Toyo's position here would seem to find support in Lenin, whose Left-Wing Communism devoted a whole section to the question of whether revolutionaries should work in conservative trade unions. Lenin declares:

We cannot but regard as ... ridiculous and childish ... nonsense that Communists cannot and should not work in reactionary trade unions, that it is permissible to turn down such work, that it is necessary to withdraw from the trade unions and create a brand-new and immaculate 'Workers Union' invented by very pleasant (and, probably, for the most part very youthful) Communists....<sup>62</sup>



Lenin's position is officially endorsed by the contemporary Communist movement.<sup>63</sup> Thus, the basic option of the Communists in setting up the NTUC would appear to contradict not only a 'classic' position, but even that of the contemporary movement to which they are attached. Whilst there might have been a justification for this option in terms of special African or Nigerian conditions, none was ever laid out.

### 3.2.2. Party-union relations

The relationship between a Marxist party and the trade union movement is dealt with extensively by Lenin in 'What is to be Done?'. Here he distinguishes between trade union consciousness and revolutionary consciousness, the one arising spontaneously from the self-activity of the masses and being expressed within the union, the other arising from scientific activity and being expressed through a revolutionary party. Bearing in mind the special case of Russia, Lenin insisted that 'there can be no question in free countries of the organisation of trade unions coinciding with the organisation of the ... Party'.<sup>64</sup>

Whilst the relationship between the NTUC and the SWAPP was left unclear, it would seem from the fact that the union helped create the party, that the two organisations did 'coincide' and that the leadership of the latter was intended to be the leadership of the former. It is, in this context, significant that the only justification the NTUC ever gave for its second most important organisational decision should also be the only one that defers to British example, that the example should be singularly inappropriate, and that its premise should be false.

### 3.2.3. Trade union leadership

Once again, Toyo's position contrasts with that of the NTUC. Against the concept of the cadre as the model leader, Toyo poses that of the 'worker unionist'.

The real workers' leader is the man on the trade union executive who is also a worker in the establishment....

If one looked for the most sincere, the most honest, the most educated and the most disciplined unionists in Nigeria one would find them among the worker unionists.<sup>65</sup>

There is also an implicit criticism of the cadre concept in Toyo's attack on the 'trade union tycoon' who can make substantial gains by organising numerous trade unions. This type of man becomes an 'empire builder' and

a petty bourgeois bureaucrat, complete with an independent source outside his unions and with a split personality. Being independent of his unions he is less inclined to consult them; having a split personality (serving two masters) he becomes unreliable, hypocritical and inclined to dogmatic, subservient and unrealistic standpoints on questions of ideology touching the interests of his foreign principles as he understands these interests.<sup>66</sup>

Once again, the position of Toyo finds support in the 'classics', this time in Rosa Luxemburg as well as Lenin. Both concerned themselves with the professionalisation of the labour leadership. Picking up Engels' concept of the 'labour aristocracy', Lenin declared that it now applied not to a section of the working class itself but to



the labour leadership occupying the numerous paid posts in and around the movement.<sup>67</sup> Examining the German labour movement in 1906, Luxemburg considered that a growth of 'a regular trade union officialdom'<sup>68</sup> along with the expansion of the unions was understandable, but warned against its dangers in these words:

The specialisation of professional activity as trade union leaders, as well as the naturally restricted horizon which is bound up with disconnected economic struggles in a peaceful period, leads only too easily, amongst trade union officials, to bureaucratism and a certain narrowness of outlook ... In close connection with these ... tendencies, is a revolution in the relations of leaders and rank and file. In place of the direction by colleagues through local committees ... there appears the businesslike direction of the trade union officials. The initiative and the power of making decisions thereby devolve upon trade union specialists, so to speak, and the more passive virtue of discipline upon the mass of the members.<sup>69</sup>

#### 3.2.4. International relations

At one time the NTUC seems to have recognised the negative effects of foreign financial aid on Nigerian trade unionists in general and of ties with the WFTU on Nigerian trade union unity. It decided to become financially independent of foreign sources and to avoid formal links with the WFTU. Its resumption of ties to WFTU suggests a reversal on both fronts. But this was never recognised as such. On the contrary, the NTUC's strategy implies that aid from and ties with the Communist countries and their unions, or with movements approved by these (as AATUF was) have positive effects.

Such assumptions can be criticised from a number of angles. There is, firstly, a question of whether the Soviet Union is capable of recognising the interests of trade unions in other countries at all. An Italian Communist has implied that the behaviour of Communists towards the Third World has been basically determined by raison d'état:

In the general clash between imperialism and socialism an important weight was and continues to be attached to state relationships and initiatives by states.... [H]as not all the development of the real internal dialectic of the social and political forces been subordinated to a certain international alignment of this or that state?<sup>70</sup>

In a general study of attitudes towards African trade unions in the era of independence (with special reference to those of Nkrumah's Ghana) it has been suggested that Communist approaches mirrored rather than opposed Western approaches, and that Communist aid might retard, rather than stimulate trade union strength, maturity and unity in Africa.<sup>71</sup> This leads to the question of the effect of foreign ties on the struggle for unity.

At least two trade union centres in non-European countries, both of them Marxist-led, militant, and dominating their respective movements, have decided against formal links with WFTU. One is the Chilean CUTCH.<sup>72</sup> The other is the Japanese SOHYO. The latter specifically declares that

we consider that international policy lines are closely related to the question of unification of labour fronts at home and that it is erroneous to promote division in the ranks of trade unions on the question of international policy lines.<sup>73</sup>

Both these elements are present in the analysis of Eskor Toyo. Toyo does not attack the international strategy of the NTUC as such. But he declares that foreign organisations are interested in the different Nigerian trade union centres both for genuine internationalist reasons and 'for reasons of the world power struggle between the socialist and capitalist groups of states and between the competing European and American sectors of the capitalist world'. It is this latter motive that leads them to seek their own spheres of influence. This, he implies, encourages disunity:

The local head or heads of the empire will hear nothing of labour unity ... [since] ... each group of trade union emperors will lose the reason for their own existence ... [and] ... there is the risk that the foreign power will lose interest in financing a centre that has lost its significance as a separate unit.<sup>74</sup>

#### 4. SOCIO-HISTORICAL DETERMINANTS

A theoretical critique is not the same as a socio-historical explanation. If the theory of the NTUC was not only distant from the Marxism it espoused but inadequate for a sound and developing trade unionism of any kind,<sup>75</sup> then an explanation can be sought in the two environments of most importance to the leadership, that of Nigeria itself, and that of the world Communist movement.

##### 4.1. The Nigerian context

Nigerian society forms both an external and internal problem for the NTUC leadership. Externally, it represents a process and structure to be analysed. Internally, it determines the capacity to analyse. Let us consider these in turn.

Marxists have recognised the ambiguous role of the post-colonial state in Africa as both an instrument of imperialist control and a possible means of struggle against imperialism.<sup>76</sup> Both Nkrumah's Ghana and Nyerere's Tanzania moved at a certain time from a relationship of complete harmony to one of considerable tension with imperialism. Nigeria might seem to fall into a different category from either of these. Yet there exists for Nigerians also the case of Egypt, where a vocally anti-imperialist regime under military-bureaucratic rule has been carrying out a considerable industrialisation and a certain social transformation also. Whilst the NTUC's early analysis might have had shortcomings, it was adequate for its purposes. It was the collapse of the extremely pro-capitalist and pro-imperialist civilian regime, the coming to power of the military, and the civil war, that created an objective problem of analysis for the NTUC. Whilst for its analysis of the civilian regime the NTUC could borrow from analyses made by Communists of Europe and Asia,<sup>77</sup> there was little precedent for the military regime and none for the civil war. Indeed, there has not yet been a halfway convincing analysis of the civil war by Marxists anywhere.<sup>78</sup> So much for the objective problem.

In talking of the internal or subjective aspect we are referring to the basis Nigerian society provided for the creation of a revolutionary leadership capable of making a scientific analysis. It has already been pointed out in 3.1.2. and 3.1.3. that Nigeria's working

class and labour movement provided a weak base for such a leadership. But, as the history of China, Vietnam and Guinea-Bissau suggest, the absence of a solid working class base is no obstacle to the production of profound and original Marxist, or Marxisant, analyses. The production of these depends directly on the existence of revolutionary intellectuals, who may, of course, be of working-class or peasant origin. Unlike the previously mentioned countries, Nigeria lacks a revolutionary situation (provided in all of them by savage and overt exploitation of the peasants) and a revolutionary intelligentsia (stimulated in all of them by foreign oppression).<sup>79</sup> Nigeria had before independence the makings of a radical intelligentsia. But those who during the early postwar years had been radical nationalists or even Communists were with a handful of exceptions, during or after the transfer of power absorbed into the rapidly expanding political, commercial, administrative or academic establishments.<sup>80</sup> It is significant that the outstanding Nigerian analysis of neo-colonial society, and politics, Achebe's A Man of the People, is the work of a novelist rather than a social theorist.

#### 4.2. The world context

The NTUC leadership is part of the Nigerian labour movement. It is also part of the world labour movement. More specifically, it is part of the Communist section of this movement. Many of the NTUC leaders have had contacts with the world Communist movement from long before the NTUC was brought into existence. Others became leaders after training in youth or trade union courses and schools in the Communist countries. Given the weak local basis for a revolutionary socialist leadership, it is unsurprising that Nigerian labour radicals should seek support from the most visible, vocal and influential radical tendency within the world labour movement. But what has been the result? We may consider the impact of the Communist movement on the NTUC in terms of the ideology it professed, the models it provided, and the aid it offered.

##### 4.2.1. Communist ideology

Speaking of African radical movements in general, Yves Benot clearly reveals the contradictory influence of Communist ideology during the independence era:

... if, at an earlier stage, it was able by its very rigidity, power and certainty, to seduce them, and even enable them to rapidly obtain certain principles of action and a certain basic doctrine, it had nonetheless the result of leaving them disarmed both at the level of specifically African facts and in perspectives for the struggle following formal independence.<sup>81</sup>

This is Stalinism qua ideology. And Benot's comment goes far to explaining the origins of the crude but coherent analysis possessed by the NTUC, as well as the reasons for its collapse at the time of the coups. For it was an ideology, not a methodology, with which the Communists provided their Nigerian followers.

##### 4.2.2. The Communist model

Communism offered the NTUC not merely an ideology, it offered models for the creators of the NTUC to follow. The first type was that of the Soviet Union itself. From the end of the stormy trade union

debates of the 1920s trade unions in the Soviet Union have existed as control instruments of Party and State, primarily concerned with increasing production, whilst carrying out certain social welfare and inspectorate functions. Attempts to develop them beyond this (as in Yugoslavia after 1948, Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia 1968) have either been condemned or crushed by the Soviet Union itself. The second type is that exemplified by the French CGT<sup>82</sup> or the Italian CGIL, each of which was brought as far as possible under the control of their respective Communist parties.<sup>83</sup> Whilst the first pattern was offered with disastrous results to Ghana, the second was offered to Nigeria.

It is now possible to understand why the organisational principles of the NTUC conflicted with the classical theory. They did so because Communist practice conflicted with Communist theory. Thus, the educational materials of the WFTU, used on courses for Nigerian trade unionists, recommended to them the principles of the syndicat de masse et de classe as exemplified by the CGT.<sup>84</sup> A 'mass and class trade union' is meant to be one neither sectarian nor opportunist, open to all workers, yet class conscious. But, in practice, as the NTUC leaders were no doubt aware, the CGT was and is controlled by the French Communist Party.<sup>85</sup> Given the absence in Nigeria of any such memory of pre-Stalinist traditions as existed in France, it was not even necessary for the creators of the NTUC to pretend that their trade union movement was independent of their party.

#### 4.2.3. Communist aid

Communism, however, did not merely provide the NTUC with a theory and a model. Through the trade unions of the Communist countries and the WFTU it was a supplier of aid in cash and kind, a provider of trade union and even university education, and a generous source of air tickets for conferences, seminars, tours and celebrations. We may take two linked cases that demonstrate the effects of such aid.

(1) The Communist countries have been financing the construction of a fully-equipped, four storey 'Socialist Publishing House' in Lagos, three-quarters completed in 1972. This was to make it possible to publish the NTUC-SWAFF organ, Advance, daily, and to provide offices for the NTUC, linked organisations, and the societies for friendship with Communist countries. In July 1971 the current editor of the paper stated that 5,000 copies were being printed at a cost of £250 per issue, and that from sales they were getting back £6.<sup>86</sup> It seemed evident at that time that the costs of producing the paper (never mind upkeep of the building) would be beyond the capacities of the NTUC, that it would remain dependent on Communist finance, and that the paper would continue to serve largely as a publisher of handouts from Communist embassies.

(2) Soviet money was for many years used by SWAFP to provide Dr. Tunji Otegbeye, leader of the organisation and chief ideologist of Advance, with a clinic that was to free him from financial worries and contribute to the funds of the movement. In 1968 the clinic even had a Soviet doctor.<sup>87</sup> When, in 1970, Otegbeye was accused by his comrades of misusing the funds, there was a crisis amongst the group of NTUC leaders and others who had formerly led SWAFP. The Soviet embassy then intervened, unsuccessfully, to reconcile the two factions that had formed. Otegbeye was forced to withdraw from the leadership group. In June or July 1972, in a classical Nigerian labour coup,<sup>88</sup>

Otegbeye and his supporters took over Advance, denouncing Goodluck and his supporters - somewhat exotically - for a 'Wahabism', which apparently consisted in equal measure of both 'Leftism' and 'economism'.

Given the ideology of the Western (mostly American) backers of the ULC, it is not surprising that they were satisfied to provide its activists with educational qualifications and living standards echoing those of the local elite, demanding by way of return little more than enthusiastic devotion to the 'free world' and a vociferous anti-Communism.<sup>89</sup> Communist aid was analogous in almost every possible way. This, of course, is why aid went to the leadership of the NTUC and not to the theoretically more orthodox tendency represented by Eskor Toyo.

#### 4.3. Escaping determinism

We have seen how Nigerian social structures block the development of a Marxist labour leadership capable of working out an original and relevant strategy. We have also seen how one group of radicals within the Nigerian labour movement turned to international Communism as an additional or alternative base. We can now see how international Communism provides further obstacles to the development of a Marxist leadership: it has been reinforcing rather than undermining the bourgeois and bureaucratic culture that surrounds the labour movement in Nigeria. The circle seems viciously closed and the prospect distinctly bleak.

Yet the example of Eskor Toyo, shortlived and inconclusive though his contribution might have been, is there to suggest that there is no iron determinism working here. There are, moreover, tens of professional trade unionists, and hundreds of worker unionists in Nigeria who resist the false shortcuts offered by the ULC and the NTUC respectively.<sup>90</sup> Whether the NTUC is capable of recognising the obstacles to its self-development and therefore overcoming them must - given the history of the organisation - remain doubtful. But this paper is in part addressed to the NTUC leaders and has been sent to them. Their reactions may tell us more.

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#### FOOTNOTES

1. This is a revised and condensed version of my M.Soc.Sci. dissertation, 'Neo-Colonialism, Communism, and the Nigerian Trade Union Congress' (Centre of West African Studies, Birmingham University, 1972). Many people commented on the content and style of the draft. But particular thanks for painstaking and perceptive criticism must go to Robin Cohen, Bill Warren and the editors of Politics and Society. Financial support during the period I was researching the NTUC was extracted from the surplus value produced by the workers of the Communist countries (whilst working for the World Federation of Trade Unions in Prague, 1966-9), those of Great Britain (whilst doing my Master's course in Birmingham, 1969-70), and the peasants and workers of Nigeria (whilst employed by Ahmadu Bello University, Nigeria, 1970-72). None of the above mentioned classes, institutions or individuals need feel themselves responsible for the views expressed here.

2. An attempt to do this in a work on labour protest in Jamaica is currently being made by Ken Post of the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague.
3. See, amongst others, W. Ananaba, The Trade Union Movement in Nigeria (London: Hurst, 1969); R. Cohen, 'The Role of Organised Labour in the Nigerian Political Process', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Birmingham University, 1971); G. Lynd, The Politics of African Trade Unionism (New York: Praeger 1968); R. Melson, 'Marxists in the Nigerian Labor Movement: A Case Study in the Failure of Ideology', unpublished Ph.D. (MIT, 1967). Melson is the most serious offender, for his study depends on the bare assertion that the Marxists' view of Nigeria as a neo-colony was 'ideological', and the implicit allied assumption that the alternative is 'non-ideological'. Assumptions apart, the work contains valuable information on the Nigerian Labour Party (NLP).
4. My analysis here draws extensively on Gavin Williams, 'The Political Economy of Colonialism and Neo-Colonialism in Nigeria' (Sociology Department, Durham University, 1972, mimeographed).
5. P. Kilby, Industrialisation in an Open Economy: Nigeria 1945-66 (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 65.
6. Figures based on T.M. Yesufu, 'Labour in the Nigerian Economy' (Lagos: Nigerian Broadcasting Company, 1967, mimeographed).
7. R. First, The Barrel of a Gun (London: Allen Lane, 1970), p. 101.
8. R. Murray, 'Militarism in Africa', New Left Review (1966):38:54.
9. Ibid.
10. See, for the June 1964 strike, E. Braundi and A. Lettieri, 'The General Strike in Nigeria', International Socialist Journal (1964):1: 598-609; for the December 1964 strike, Melson, loc.cit.; and for the 1971 strike, A. Peace, 'Industrial Protest at Ikeja, Nigeria' (British Sociological Association Conference, 1972, mimeographed).
11. For the background to and fullest account of the second uprising see C. Beer, 'The Farmer and the State in Western Nigeria' (Ph.D. thesis, Ibadan, 1971).
12. Surprisingly few works have been produced on the Nigerian trade union movement. The basic general work on industrial relations remains T. Yesufu, An Introduction to Industrial Relations in Nigeria (London: Cambridge University Press, 1962). The publication of Cohen's thesis (op.cit.) will help close the gap.
13. Figures based on Ministry of Labour Annual Report 1964-5 (Lagos, Ministry of Information), App. VIII, cited Cohen, op.cit.
14. The basis for this assertion is a series of interviews with senior NTUC leaders Wahab Goodluck, S.U. Basse, Hudson Momodou, and Richard Aghedo, carried out in 1968 and 1970-71.
15. A leading figure was Ademola Thomas, one-time President in London of the West African Students Union, a Vice-President in the mid-1950s of the Prague-based International Union of Students. Thomas broke with the Communists shortly after the creation of the NTUC. Interview, 1971.
16. For the LUF see Cohen, op.cit. and Melson, op.cit.

17. For the NTUC claims see NTUC National Seminar, March 11 - April 9, 1968 (Lagos: Eko Printers, 1968) and 'Welcome Address ... to ... First Revolutionary Convention' (Lagos, 1963, mimeographed). Other information concerning the NTUC is based on observations and interviews, 1970-72. For more detail on the ULC, see below.
18. Detailed reference for citations from NTUC Convention documents would be tedious here. They can be found in my above-cited dissertation. The documents concerned are for each Convention the mimeographed statements of various NTUC officers.
19. Distinctions were, in fact, made by both the NTUC and the SWAFP. For a SWAFP analysis of Nigeria's parties in terms of feudalism, the comprador bourgeoisie, national bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, see T. Otegbeye, Ideological Conflicts in Nigerian Politics (Lagos: Ribway Printers, 1964), pp. 12-16. For an NTUC analysis of the Western Region uprising in terms of two phases - capitalist versus feudalist and socialist versus capitalist - see Goodluck's address of welcome to the 1965 Convention.
20. For more detailed analyses, see the article by Otegbeye in the NTUC/SWAFP paper, Advance, 10 December 1967 and 23 June 1968.
21. Whilst the chief offender was considered to be the right-wing leaders, it was suggested that the militants had used the same method.
22. Legalised in Nigeria in 1961, the check-off permits a union-employer agreement that dues be subtracted from wages by the employer on the union's behalf.
23. Brussels-based, reformist and anti-Communist, the ICFTU plays a free-world crusading role in Africa. See I. Davies, African Trade Unionism (London: Penguin, 1966), pp. 188-218.
24. Founded in 1962, moderate and Western-linked, the ULC was deeply involved in the regionalist and tribalist politicking of the Nigerian elites. For evidence from its own documents, see the report of H.P. Adebola, 'Presidential Address to the Bi-Annual Congress of the United Labour Congress, Port Harcourt, 1965' (mimeographed). Dissatisfied with this reality, the NTUC used forged letters to imply in 1968 that the ULC had contact with Biafran trade unionists and was involved in a CIA plot to topple Gowon. It was accused of libel, forced to settle out of court, to apologise, and admit the false basis of its charges. See Advance, 28 April 1968, 12 May 1968, 5 January 1970, as well as the Lagos-based African regional paper of the ICFTU, African Labour News, 1 May 1968 and 16 November 1969.
25. Advance, 18 February 1968.
26. For the background to the split, see Cohen, op.cit.
27. This is not a unique case. A similar conflation of mass union and revolutionary elite occurred in the late 1960s in Congo-Brazzaville. See P. Waterman, 'Towards an Understanding of African Trade Unions', Présence Africaine (1970):4:96-112.
28. The term has been long current in the world Communist movement, where it refers to the potential future leaders of the movement.



29. There is a powerful tendency in Nigeria for trade union secretaryship to be considered simply one way of earning a living, the professional organisers continually seeking to add to their 'portfolio' of unions as a means of increasing their income. See Cohen, op.cit., and the criticisms of Eskor Toyo in 3.2.3.
30. This idea has been discussed in Nigeria since the Morgan Wages Commission that preceded the General Strike in 1964. It was revived during the Civil War by Nigeria's leading industrial relations expert, Professor T. Yesufu, in 'Labour in the Nigerian Economy', op.cit.
31. This was the short-lived but effective coordinating committee behind the 1964 General Strike. See Ananaba, op.cit., 228-62, and E. Toyo, The Working Class and the Nigerian Crisis (Ibadan, Sketch Publishing Company, 1967), passim.
32. This was founded in 1964 by the radical Pan-Africanist unions in Africa. It was organisationally independent of the international trade union centres, though supported by the radical African regimes (primarily Nkrumah's) and the WFTU. See Davies, op.cit., 202-9.
33. Report of Sidi Khayam to the First Revolutionary Convention.
34. Advance, 1 September 1968.
35. Advance, 10 November 1968. Created as a single trade union international in 1944-5, the WFTU was abandoned by the world's reformist unions in 1949. Since then it has followed every twist of Soviet policy. A single exception proves the rule. In August 1968 the WFTU Secretariat voted, with the sole exception of the Soviet representative, a resolution condemning the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. At the December 1968 Council Meeting of the WFTU in Berlin the Soviet representatives reached a gentlemen's agreement with those organisations that had voted the resolution, that the invasion be not discussed. The attempt by Maoist trade unionists from Japan to nonetheless raise the issue was prevented by not circulating to cabin translators the English version of the speech. The original resolution is now a dead letter.
36. 'The majority of affiliated members ... have come to the conclusion that the presence of the NTUC in WFTU is most desirable', W. Goodluck, 'Speech to the Seventh World Trade Union Congress, Budapest, 1969' (mimeographed).
37. The first TUC called in 1945 for nationalisation. The National Nigerian Federation of Labour declared in 1949 for a socialist government and a 'world parliament of the working class', and the All-Nigerian Trade Union Federation proposed in 1953 to create a political wing of the workers movement. Detailed accounts of these and other projects can be found in Cohen, op.cit.
38. The First Revolutionary Convention had adopted current Soviet strategy for the third world by talking of the necessity for going through a 'national-democratic phase'. The new party was closely modelled on existing Communist parties, complete with Soviet-Marxist ideology and democratic-centralist structure. See The Manifesto of the Socialist Workers and Farmers Party of Nigeria (Lagos: Ribway Printers, 1963) and Constitution of the Socialist Workers and Farmers Party of Nigeria (Lagos: Ribway Printers, 1963).



39. The TUC is not a member or constituent part of the Labour Party, even if many of its member unions are. For a comment and comparison, see E.M. Kassalow, Trade Unions and Industrial Relations: An International Comparison (New York: Random House, 1969) pp. 61-3.
40. Manifesto of the SWAFP, op.cit., p. 13.
41. For the shortcomings of this ideology, see S. Osoba 'Ideological Trends in the Nigerian National Liberation Movement ... 1934-1965', Ibadan, 27 (1969):October: 26-38. The NTUC's analysis wears better, also, than that of the many liberal-empiricist academics who wrote on Nigeria during the same period. We may consider one much quoted example. Describing the greedy and incompetent ruling elite that brought Nigeria to disaster, James O'Connell feels it 'a mistake and unfair to underestimate the positive contribution that they made'. Amongst these contributions was, apparently, the 'impression of political stability and the dominantly pro-Western policies' that encouraged Western oil investment. Recognising the failure of the regime to realise Western values then current, O'Connell could imagine no other force than the civil service to bring about a 'situation of predictable social integrity'. See J. O'Connell, 'The Political Class and Economic Growth', Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies, 8 (1966):1:137-40.
42. As one disappointed African Communist commented, 'one looks in vain for the role of the working class in the present crisis'. See A. Zanzolo, 'Africa in 1969', African Communist (1969):36: 11-24.
43. The ULC sees Nigeria simply as a developing nation, believes in foreign investments as being essential to Nigerian economic development, sympathises with the need to create the objective atmosphere, politically, for the inflow of such capital, and believes in allowing the employer to live, to expand his business, to increase employment. See Y. Kaltungo, 'The Role of Labour in Building a Stronger Nigeria' (Lagos, 1970, mimeographed); H.P. Adebola, 'Presidential Address to the Bi-Annual Congress of the ULC, Port Harcourt, 1965' (mimeographed); and 'A Programme for the Future' (Lagos, ULC, 1962, mimeographed).
44. For variant forms of this analysis, see The Other Side of Nigeria's Civil War (Cambridge, Mass.; Africa Research Group, 1970), R.First, op.cit. and Murray, op.cit.
45. On that occasion he thought that the situation 'with a developed Marxist-Leninist party, could have led to a proletarian revolution'. See, W. Goodluck, 'Nigeria and Marxism', African Communist (1964): 18:49-59.
46. For discussions of variations in working-class consciousness in the context of trade union struggle, see for Europe, R. Hyman, Marxism and the Sociology of Trade Unionism (London: Pluto Press, 1971), and for Africa, I. Clegg, Workers' Self-Management in Algeria (London: Allen Lane, 1971), pp. 95-115.
47. First Report of the Wages and Salaries Review Commission, 1970 (Lagos: Ministry of Information, 1970), p. 11.
48. G. Williams, op.cit.

49. This useful term is used by G. Arrighi, 'International Corporations, Labor Aristocracies, and Economic Development in Tropical Africa', in Imperialism and Underdevelopment: A Reader, R. Rhodes, ed. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), pp. 220-67.
50. See for Nigeria, P. Gutkind, 'The Energy of Despair: Social Organisation of the Unemployed in Two African Cities: Lagos and Nairobi', Civilisations, 17 (1967):3+4:387, and for Ghana, E.A.Cowan, The Evolution of Trade Unionism in Ghana, n.p., n.d., (Accra: Ghana TUC, 1961?), p. 50.
51. See for Latin America, J. Petras, Politics and Social Structures in Latin America (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1970), pp. 13-36, and for the African context, R. Cohen and D. Michael, 'The Revolutionary Potential of the African Lumpen-Proletariat: A Sceptical View', Bulletin of the Institute of Development Studies (Sussex), (January 1973).
52. My own observations in Kaduna during 1970-72, find general reinforcement in the research of Gavin Williams in Ibadan, Paul Lubeck in Kano, and Adrian Peace in Lagos. Sources are respectively, G. Williams, 'The Political Consciousness of the Ibadan Poor' (British Sociological Association, Edinburgh, 1972, mimeographed); P. Lubeck, Sociology Department, North Western University, (verbal communication); and A. Peace, op.cit.
53. Ibid.
54. See Cohen, op.cit.
55. Interviews with professional trade union secretaries in Kaduna and Lagos suggest that they can expect to earn (irregularly if there is no check-off) perhaps double the local official minimum wage.
56. See S.M. Lipset, Political Man (London: Heinemann, 1969), p. 391.
57. This is suggested by A. Peace, op.cit.
58. Toyo was associated with the Labour Unity Front and the Nigerian Labour Party. He co-edited at one time the newspaper of the non-Communist socialists, Socialist Worker. He left Nigeria in 1967-8 and was, in 1971, a Research Fellow at the Central School of Planning and Statistics in Warsaw. For details of the earlier part of his career, see the biographical note in Melson, op.cit., Ch. VII.
59. E. Toyo, The Working Class and the Nigerian Crisis (Ibadan: Sketch Publishing Company, 1967), p. 101.
60. Ibid., p. 77.
61. Ibid., p. 79.
62. V. Lenin, Lenin on Trade Unions (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970), p. 357.
63. It is emphasised in the anonymous introduction to Lenin, ibid., p. 17.
64. Ibid., p. 128.
65. Toyo, op.cit., pp. 103-5.
66. Ibid., p. 64.

67. Lenin, op.cit., pp. 294-6.
68. R. Luxemburg, The Mass Strike, The Political Party and the Trade Unions (London: Merlin Press, 1960), p. 81.
69. Ibid., pp. 82-3.
70. R. Ledda, 'Some Problems of Analysis', Marxism Today, 13 (1969):9:266.
71. See Waterman, 'Towards an Understanding ...', op.cit.
72. On the nature of the CUTCH (Central Unica de Trabajadores de Chile) see A. Angell, Politics and the Labour Movement in Chile (London: Oxford University Press, 1972). Although dealing with external relations, this book unfortunately ignores the affiliation of the CUTCH to the CPUSTAL (Congreso Permanente de Unidad Sindacale de los Trabajadores de America Latina), founded in 1964 by radical socialist and Communist trade unions, and based in Chile.
73. This is SOHYO: Japanese Workers and their Struggles (Tokyo: SOHYO, 1967), p. 86.
74. Toyo, op.cit., p. 62.
75. This is suggested by my research and I hope to demonstrate it in a further paper.
76. See, for example, R. Murray, 'Second Thoughts on Ghana', New Left Review, 42 (1967):25-39.
77. Thus, the class categories used in footnote 19 above have been current in the world Communist movement for many decades (see, for example, their use in African, Asian and Latin American contexts by O. Kuusinen, ed., Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1961), pp. 487-522.
78. For a discussion of the problems involved, see P. Waterman, 'Structure, Contradiction and the Nigerian Catastrophe: Elements of an Analysis', Présence Africaine (1971):77:191-207.
79. For the role of a revolutionary petty-bourgeoisie in Africa see A. Cabral, Revolution in Guinea (London: Stage One, 1969), pp. 46-61. For an example of an African petty-bourgeois revolutionary, consider Cabral himself.
80. For the nature of the Nigerian intelligentsia, see C. Dennis, 'Sociological Theory in Nigeria: What For?' (First Conference of the Nigerian Anthropological and Sociological Association, Zaria, 1971, mimeographed).
81. Y. Benot, Ideologies des independances africaines (Paris: Maspero, 1969) p. 22.
82. For a critical study by a former leader, see A. Barjonet, La C.G.T. (Paris: Seuil, 1968), particularly pp. 124-37.
83. Only recently has the practice-theory gap been recognised by the CGIL. For its changing conception of trade union-party relations, see its News Bulletin (1969: March-April) and Statuto della CGIL: Approvato dal VII Congresso Nazionale 1969 (Rome: Editrice Sindacale, 1969), p. 7.
84. The views of the CGT, as relayed to African trade unionists, can be found in 'What is a Trade Union? 3. Trade Union Principles' (Education Department, WFTU, Prague, 1968, mimeographed).

85. The nature of the relationship is shown in A. Kriegel, The French Communists: Portrait of a People (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), pp. 147-70.
86. Notes of interview with Jimmy Chijioke, Lagos, July 1971.
87. The clinic was one of a series of commercial projects proposed or realised by the NTUC-SWAFP. Amongst the realised ones was the Executive De Inn, near the NTUC headquarters in Yaba, Lagos. Other projects included clubs and laundries. Whilst the initiative for such projects might have come from Nigeria (where almost every urban family has one member in trade, and where the line between trade unionism and commerce has always been narrow), they are consistent with foreign Communist practice. The commercial activities of the French Communist Party are mentioned in A. Kriegel, op.cit., pp. 205-7. The Italian Communist Party controls agencies engaged in trade with the Communist countries. For other cases see C. Levinson, International Trade Unionism (London: Allen and Unwin, 1972), p. 164.
88. It was by a similar action that the Communists and their allies took over the IULC from Michael Imoudou and his group. See Cohen, op.cit.
89. For a liberal (and therefore doubly convincing) account of the way in which American trade unions promote both the ideology and the financial interests of American multi-national corporations amongst trade unions of the third world, see a Jamaican case study by J. Harrod, 'Multi-National Corporations, Trade Unions and Industrial Relations: A Case Study of Jamaica', in Transnational Industrial Relations, H. Gunter, ed. (London: Macmillan, 1972), pp. 173-94.
90. To flesh out this assertion, let me quote extracts from notes on one such professional trade unionist, secretary of one or two unions, and regional leader of LUF in a provincial city. 'No means of transport. One office-bedroom. Decorated with portraits of the Webbs, Marx and Mao. A mission-educated one-time type-setter, he was the first professional organiser in his region. Has produced at own expense what may well be the first pamphlet on trade unionism in a Nigerian language. Financial support for this refused by Lagos headquarters and local reps of other national centres. Supported regional trade union organisation in early '60s as result of failure of Lagos centres to act locally, and in hope of creating regionally unified movement. Author of many unity projects. Acts as adviser to ULC-affiliated unions whose leaders fail them in times of crisis. Appreciates the militancy of NTUC but rejects its sectarianism and in-fighting. A major consumer of foreign-financed tours and education (Cairo, Peking, Canada, Britain, Soviet Union), he shows no sign of the foreign-dependence syndrome, although his ideas on trade unionism appear (like his icons) somewhat eclectic. A real trade union organizer...?'