Union Power in the Nigerian Textile Industry

Labour Regime and Adjustment

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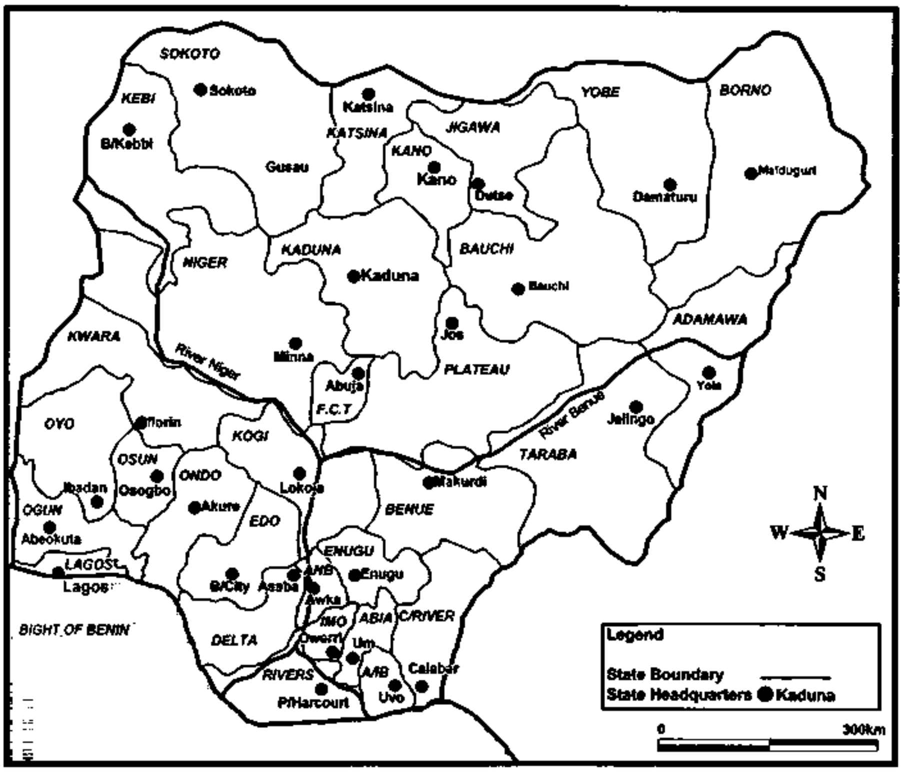
ABBREVIATIONS

ABU—Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria
AGS—Assistant General Secretary (NUTGTWN)
CBN—Central Bank of Nigeria
DGS—Deputy General Secretary (NUTGTWN)
Exco—Executive Committee of a factory branch of NUTGTWN
FRN—Federal Republic of Nigeria
GS—General Secretary (NUTGTWN)
IAP—Industrial Arbitration Panel
ICFTU—International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
MAN—Manufacturers' Association of Nigeria
MD—Managing Director
N—Naira. The Nigerian currency
NDC—National Delegates Conference (NUTGTWN)
NEC—National Executive Council (NUTGTWN)
NIDB—Nigerian Industrial Development Bank
NLC—Nigeria Labour Congress
NNDC—Northern (later "New") Nigerian Development Corporation (later "Company")
NNIL—Northern Nigeria Investments Limited
NPC—Northern People's Congress
NTGTEA—Nigerian Textile, Garment and Tailoring Employers' Association
NTMA—Nigerian Textile Manufacturers' Association
NTUC—Nigerian Trade Union Congress
NUTGTWN — National Union of Textile, Garment and Tailoring Workers of Nigeria
PPIB—Prices, Productivity and Incomes Board
PM—Personnel Manager
RF—Redundancy Files (NUTGTWN)
SAP—Structural Adjustment Programme
SSS—State Security Service
TGW—Textile and Garment Worker. Official Journal of NUTGTWN
ULC—United Labour Congress
WFTU—World Federation of Trade Unions
ZR—Zonal Reports: Quarterly, half-yearly, or annual reports of the zonal officers of NUTGTWN (see *Note on union sources* on p. 318).

Note on abbreviations: Acronyms are widely used for companies mentioned in the text. These are not our own abbreviations but the way in which these companies are normally identified, i.e. their "names". We have therefore excluded the acronyms from the above list to avoid making it unnecessarily long and cumbersome.

NIGERIA'S 30 STATES



A Note on Currency and Exchange Rates

By 1980, one Nigerian Naira (N), backed by petrol earnings, was allowed to reach a peak level of over USD1.8. It then slid fast, although, for periods, an official exchange rate was decreed much above the actual market rate. A major official devaluation took place in 1986 and by 1990 the rate was almost N10 to the USD. The slide accelerated in the early 1990s and by the middle of the decade one dollar was traded at around N80 where it had stabilized for over two years when this book was concluded in 1998.

Preface and Acknowledgements

By the end of the 1990s Nigeria's political crisis appears more intractable than ever. A series of inept military rulers and their domestic and foreign accomplices have held the country to ransom, causing political paralysis and economic decay, obstructing undoubted potentials for national development. The fall has been great. In the 1970s, the country was considered a promising regional economic and political power. Foreign investors were lining up, induced by the new found oil wealth and undeterred by proudly nationalistic economic policies. Other features reinforced the great expectations, a large population, a well-educated and assertive middle class, a resourceful domestic business community, a commercially experienced peasantry, and a proud heritage from a pre-colonial past of extensive territorial political formations, urbanization, long-distance trade, crafts and high artistic achievements. The Nigerian nation was brimming with self-confidence. By the late 1990s it had been reduced to an international pariah, partly as a result of the gross human rights violations of its government, but largely because of the failure to generate a political leadership capable of containing and reversing rather than aggravating the process of decline.

This book covers developments in Nigeria during two trying decades of deepening economic and political crisis. It is not, however, an additional tale of decay. On the contrary, it reports on remarkable progress in crisis management, industrial adjustment, institution building and conflict regulation, although under constant threat from an unpredictable and repressive national leadership. This threat has not abated but the study points to the capacity of institutions at the level of the economy and civil society to cope with drastic changes in the economic and political environment. It suggests a rather different and more hopeful dimension of developments in Nigeria than the miserable charade of its official "transition" politics.

Our focus is on Nigeria's leading manufacturing sector, the textile industry, its entrepreneurs, unions, and its mode of organizing labour for production. We follow the industry from the heyday of the oil boom of the late 1970s, through successive phases of erratic "structural adjustment" to the import liberalization and global competition of the late 1990s. We document a process of successful industrial restructuring, suggesting that industrialization is still very much on the African agenda, despite disclaimers. We point to the active role of trade unions in restructuring and their ability to defend workers' interests and rights in the course of that process. While crises and adjustments initially brought heavy cuts in employment and real wages, some of the losses were recovered, along with the successful institutionalization of a union-based labour regime.

How was this possible in the face of a deepening economic and political crisis at the national level? The main concern of this book is to discuss the nature of the social forces that help explain this remarkable and unexpected achievement which was "counter-cyclical", also in the sense that it seems to run against dominant tendencies world-wide where labour and union rights are undermined by economic liberalization. We explore the social origin of union power in Nigerian society, looking at structural features specific to the local political economy as well as at state-union relations at the national level. We use the concept of "labour regime" to define how labour is regulated in society, not just through the formal institutions of the labour market, labour laws, and collective agreements but through the power relations on which such institutions and practices are premised. We argue that the consolidation of union-based labour regime can be explained by the union's successful mediation between the militant self-organization of the workers and the labour-controlling strategies of state and capital.

The outcome and the forces at work are discussed from a joint perspective of political economy as well as in the light of specific concerns arising from our respective disciplinary backgrounds. GA, as an economic geographer, pays particular attention to issues relating to the role of labour in industrial restructuring and its determinants at the local and regional level, drawing on current theorizing about the spatial division of labour and the political economy of place. BB, as a political scientist is particularly concerned with the power relations that inform the trade unions, including their relations to the state, and discusses the findings in terms of theories of interest mediation and corporatism.

The study would not have been possible without the cooperation of management and staff of the textile companies, the Nigerian Textile Manufacturers Association (NTMA), its affiliate, the Nigerian Textile, Garment and Tailoring Employers Association (NTGTEA), and, in particular, the active support and encouragement of the officers of the National Union of Textile, Garment and Tailoring Workers of Nigeria (NUTGTWN), the textile workers' union, who took a keen interest in the work from the very beginning and who read many of the chapters in draft and contributed comments and corrections. The list of people who have assisted us is long and the contributions of individual officers are partly acknowledged in the numerous references to interviews inside the text itself and summarized in the list of interviews at the end of the book. The unionists also helped organize interviews with workers and administer questionnaires and, not least, gave us unrestricted access to union files. The high quality of most of the "Zonal Reports" produced by union staff on the development in individual companies on a quarterly, half-yearly or yearly basis gave a unique insight into the workings of the "labour regime".

Adams Oshiomhole, the resourceful General Secretary of the textile workers' union, is as the reader will soon discover, a key actor in this story.

His readiness to discuss union affairs with us has been decisive for the whole exercise. Other union officials with whom we had frequent discussions were Alhaji Shittu, Umaru Mohammed, Patrick Dabo, Samson Omoruan, John Bull Oyo, A.B. Dania, and E.A. Olaleke. We are thankful to them and to all the unionists who assisted us, from shop stewards and branch executives to national presidents. We were given a great deal of assistance from the officers of the union's Education and Research Department, at first from Ugochukwu Ene, and in recent years from Issa Aremu and Salihu Lukman, both former student activists from ABU. We hope to meet them all and discuss our findings, critically, when the book is published.

On the employers' side, we would like to mention in particular the assistance we received from Victor Eburajolo of NTGTEA and NTMA who granted us frequent interviews and facilitated our contacts with individual managements. Many others are mentioned in the references whose cooperation we also gratefully acknowledge, including officials of public development companies with a stake in the textile industry, such as the NNDC and the NIDB. Auwalu Ilo, the president of the Kano Chambers of Commerce, a textile trader and manufacturer, was particularly helpful in clarifying the intricacies of the "informal" ("unofficial") cross border trade in textiles within the wider West African region, on which the Nigerian producers increasingly depended.

The study was commenced in the mid-1980s when BB was a member of the teaching staff and GA was a visiting research fellow at Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria. We are grateful to Professor A.D. Yahaya, as the Head of Political Science and Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Science, and Professor Akin Fadahunsi, as the Director of the Centre for Social and Economic Research, for assistance in getting the project started. ABU, at that time, was a centre of political economy-oriented scholarship and much inspiration and support was received from colleagues, students, and friends there. Subsequent field work was undertaken during visits to Nigeria from our home base at the Departments of Human Geography and Political Science, Stockholm University. We thank our departments for support, including the administration of the research grants generously provided by SAREC, the Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation with Developing Countries. At the Swedish end inspiration was drawn from the joint work within the Uppsala-based AKUT Group and its "Labour in Development" programme coordinated by Inga Brandell. Preliminary reports were discussed and published in that context. It also involved an important workshop in Algiers where we were able compare Nigerian and Algerian experiences. The labour regime and trade union orientation has been further developed as part of the Politics of Development Programme at the Department of Political Science, Stockholm University, reinforcing a broader comparative context of African, East and South East Asian studies, including a joint project with the Institute of Development Studies at the University of

Zimbabwe, coordinated by Lloyd Sachikonye. We have benefitted from participating in the research programmes of Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, Uppsala, on "The Political and Social Context of Structural Adjustment in Sub-Saharan Africa", coordinated first by Peter Gibbon, later by Adebayo Olukoshi, and on "Urban Development in Rural Context in Africa" coordinated by Jonathan Baker. We have contributed to the "Crisis, Adjustment and Social Change in Africa" programme at UNRISD, the United Nations Institute for Social Development in Geneva, and received valuable comments from its coordinator, Yusuf Bangura. Part of the work was discussed and published in the context of the International Standing Group on Textile Geography.

Since the late 1980s our primary affiliation at the Nigerian end has been Bayero University Kano (BUK) and we are grateful to Attahiru Jega and the Department of Political Science for facilitating this link. The Kano connection has been further strengthened with our participation in the work of the Centre for Research and Documentation which was established in 1996 and runs a joint programme with the Politics of Development Group (PODSU) at the Political Science Department, Stockholm University, with SAREC-funding. It is coordinated by a labour scholar, Yahaya Hashim, and particular attention is paid to issues of organized labour, civil society, and democratization.

At a more personal level, we wish to acknowledge the decisive contribution of all friends, colleagues and former students and their families, who we have been able to follow over the years, who have helped us to keep track of developments in Nigeria, and who have taken such good care of us during our visits. They have offered us a sense of belonging which has been vital in sustaining our work and our commitment to Nigeria.

Stockholm 15 May, 1998

Gunilla Andræ and Björn Beckman

Chapter 1

Trade Unions and Industrial Adjustment

1. TURMOIL AT KTL

Our involvement with Nigeria's textile workers dates from 1984. In January that year the workers at Kaduna Textiles Limited (KTL) took the General Manager hostage and marched on Government House in Kaduna, the northern Nigerian "capital" city and one of the main industrial centres of the country. They protested against the attempted imposition of half-pay "to save the factory from closing down" (Yusuf, 1985; Bangura, 1987). Nigeria's manufacturing industry, which had expanded under the auspices of the oil-boom of the 1970s, was in deep crisis, like the import-dependent economy as a whole, as the world prices of petrol plummeted and markets contracted. Textiles were by far the most important manufacturing industry in Nigeria, as in most early industrializing countries, with some 100,000 workers employed at the peak around 1980. At the time the KTL workers were out in the streets, international credits to Nigeria had been suspended, and the civilian, elected government had just been overthrown in a military coup, with the junta promising to "restore Nigeria's international credit worthiness". KTL, the second oldest textile mill in Nigeria, had already begun production before Independence in 1960. By the late 1970s it was facing major difficulties due to ageing machinery, changing demand, competition from newer plants and smuggling fuelled by oil-distorted exchange rates. In the early 1980s, KTL ran heavy losses and, in addition, like the industry as a whole, was hit by a 100 per cent increase in the official minimum wage. Employment which peaked at almost 5,000 in 1979 was down below 3,000 by 1984. In 1982 workers were forced to accept annual leave in advance because of shortage of cotton. Periods of compulsory leave with reduced and/or suspended pay were again imposed in 1983. By mid-1983, the financial crisis of the company was particularly acute and management threatened a complete close down. The union therefore accepted that the workers would forego 50 per cent of their pay on the understanding that full pay would be restored and that part of the pay foregone would be treated as savings and paid back (GS NUTGTWN to Military Governor, Kaduna State, 18 January 1984). The company, however, failed to meet its obligations. In December 1983 it threatened again to close down unless the half-pay arrangement was continued. Management simultaneously sought to pressurize the owners, the NNDC, a major state conglomerate, to release funds in order to "assure employees of full settlement of all their entitlements on closure" which was seen as "the only way to avert any serious violent reaction of workers and possible damage to the company's assets and perhaps, even assaults on Management staff" (MD KTL to Chairman NNDC, 15 December 1983). The union rejected the extension of half-pay—"a nonsensical piece of nonsense"—insisting that the company was free to close down "provided they pay workers all entitlements before the gates are closed" (GS NUTGTWN to Military Governor, Kaduna State, 18 January 1984). The union knew, of course, that there was no such money and that it therefore might be a lesser evil for the company to keep paying wages until the problems of long-term financing and raw materials had been resolved. The union applied to the police for a permit to stage a demonstration to the NNDC headquarters and to the State Governor's Office. The new military rulers had made bold promises to attend to the workers' grievances and the new Military Governor in Kaduna State, one of the 19 states that at this point made up the Federal Republic of Nigeria, had even sought to convey a somewhat radical, pro-workers image to the public.

The police permit was refused and the Managing Director made an attempt to side-step the union by appealing to the workers directly at a mass meeting to accept half-pay to avoid close down. He was booed and jeered at. The workers took to the streets, carrying the MD along as hostage to present their case to the Governor. They were confronted by heavily armed riot police who were allowed to "liberate" the captive MD on condition that there would be no further police interference with the march. Once the MD was set free, however, the police attacked. After hours of street battle workers regrouped and turned on the Police Headquarters to "smash it" and to recapture the MD. Adams Oshiomhole, the General Secretary of the National Union of Textile, Garment, and Tailoring Workers of Nigeria (NUTGTWN), with its headquarters in Kaduna, tried to stop another bloody confrontation. He was beaten up by some workers who thought he was a government agent before he was recognized and rescued by others. In the end, the workers were beaten and dispersed by the police. Some were arrested and given short prison sentences (Yusuf, 1985).

The management of KTL had been given a golden opportunity to "solve" its problems and dismissed all the workers, offering to reemploy only those who had been "screened" and were willing to sign an undertaking to accept an indefinite 25 per cent reduction in pay. The company invited new workers to apply and some 4,000, according to the union, turned up at the gates. The union, however, appealed successfully to the old workers not to submit themselves to screening or to sign any undertaking. Picket lines were organized that were at least partially effective. In the end, management was forced to negotiate with the union. The screening was dropped and no workers were dismissed or victimized. Workers accepted the 25 per cent cut for nine months on condition that it was treated as a compulsory saving and paid back the following year. The union demanded and obtained an assurance from the owners that they were to provide finance for the reconstruction of the company (MD NNDC to GS NUTGTWN, 24 February 1984).

2. UNION POWER AND ADJUSTMENT: ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

This study explores the emergence of a union-based labour regime in the Nigerian textile industry during a period of national economic crisis, liberalization and adjustments. The focus is on the role of unions in contesting the relations of domination that regulate the utilization of labour and the implications for industrial adjustment and restructuring. We suggest that the growth in union power reflects a deepening of the capacity of Nigerian society to manage conflicts, the emergence of a new constitutionalism, premised on contractual relations between collectively organized, representative agents, recognized and sanctioned both from above and from below. The relations which constituted this emerging social order were neither consensual nor hegemonic, to use Burawoy's (1985) terms, but intensely contested and inherently unstable. They were sustained by the balance of forces in society and therefore dependent on the ability of these forces to reproduce themselves while constantly having to renegotiate the contract. To understand how this was done is at the centre of the concerns of this study.

We explore the determinants of union power at the level of economic structure and politics as they vary between firms and localities. We pay particular attention to the function of place, as an analytical category, in ordering the structural and political determinants of union power. Enterprises with a certain type of labour regime emerged in specific locations because of local differences in social organization, culture, class and power relations. In exploring these issues, we draw on recent theoretical work in economic geography on industrial restructuring and location. The argument is illustrated with a comparison between Kaduna and Kano where we seek to demonstrate how major differences in the labour regimes of the two cities are related to distinct historical processes of class and state formation that have affected forms of entrepreneurship, managerial practices, labour recruitment, modes of subordination and resistance in the labour process as well as the reproduction of labour in society at large.

The KTL crisis of January 1984 occurred as we were about to commence research on the Nigerian textile industry (Andræ and Beckman, 1984). We were at the time both affiliated to Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria, some 60 km north of Kaduna, BB as a member of the teaching staff in the Department of Political Science and GA as a Visiting Research Fellow at the Centre for Social and Economic Research. The textile industry with its link to domestic cotton production seemed a particularly promising case for exploring the dynamics of the prevailing Nigerian crisis. In a first report, *Industry*

Goes Farming (Andræ and Beckman, 1987), we focused on the raw material crisis, developing arguments on the agro-industrial relationship from our earlier work on Nigerian food policy—the "Wheat Trap" (Andræ and Beckman, 1985). At both ends of the link, high production and labour costs seemed to be a principle problem, causing Nigerian produced textiles to be undercut by the massive smuggling of cheap Asian goods while cotton and synthetic fibres were imported at the expense of domestic farmers. A major cause was domestic price inflation and distorted exchange rates precipitated by the oil boom (the "Dutch disease"). But there was more to it. Our primary concern at that point was the extent to which the poor competitive performance of both industry and agriculture at the African end could be attributed to the social relations of production and the way these affected productive forces and productivity. There were obvious differences in the way in which labour was formed, qualified, subordinated, organized, and reproduced in different parts of the world economy. These were issues which we had been discussing in a wider comparative context as part of the labour studies programme of the AKUT research collective at our Swedish home base (AKUT, 1983; Brandell, 1991a and b; Björkman et al., 1988; Southall, 1988a). What was specific to Nigeria in these respects, as compared to other locations within the world economy? What distinguished Nigeria from the new industrial countries of Asia where capital had been so effective in subordinating labour to extreme forms of regimentation and productivity?

The variety of "East Asian" labour regimes and the rapid changes they had undergone with growing prosperity were of course not fully captured by "ideal-types" of repression and subordination as illustrated by factories where teenage girls, without access to unions, were subjected to tightly supervised, "despotic" or paternalistic regimes. Yet, the impression we had when first entering Nigerian textile plants in Kaduna in 1985 was of a distinctly different labour regime where a predominantly educated, mature, male labour force with family responsibilities seemed to have considerable autonomy in the work place, for themselves and their unions. As our studies of the Nigerian textile industry proceeded, we learnt that this was not always the case, yet, the contrast was there, inviting reflection. Were Nigerian workers putting up more effective resistance to despotic labour regimes and if so, what was the source of that strength? Was it due to the "weakness" of the agents of subordination, differences in patterns of ownership and management, in institutions and state intervention? Or could the differences be explained in terms of the place of wage work in the wider economy, including the options available to the workers? Were East Asian workers more effectively "captured", with fewer "escape routes" outside the wage sector? How was the formation and subordination of wage-labour at the African end affected by the predominance of small independent commodity producers, farmers, crafts people, and traders? Did it bring different predispositions and values into the work place, contributing to greater autonomy? Were escape routes retained to a larger extent, including retreats from wage work into the informal sector and farming? Was the dependence on wage work less because it could be supplemented by farming and trading on a part-time basis? Were the institutions of state and capital too "weakly" constituted in the Nigerian political economy to have the capacity to subordinate and mould labour according to the "requirements" of capitalist production?

When exploring the predominant labour regime of the Nigerian textile industry we were struck by the strong presence of constitutional, contractual and "participatory" features. We were curious about the way in which these were rooted in the Nigerian political economy and by what balance of social forces they were sustained. Were these really the features of an unproductive, inefficient and uncompetitive statist developmental model, based on overprotection and subsidies, supposedly typical of post-colonial industrialization in Africa? Were trade unions the entrenched "vested interests" inherited from the old, discredited post-colonial order, standing in the way of market forces and the restructuring of the economy on the basis of comparative advantages? What was the "victory" of the union in the confrontation at KTL worth? Were the workers at KTL fighting a losing battle in defence of an obsolete enterprise and a defunct development model? What was the direction of industrial restructuring? Did unions have a place in it?

3. THE PARADOX: "COUNTER-CYCLICAL" GROWTH IN UNION POWER

At the centre of our study stands the *National Union of Textile, Garment and Tailoring Workers of Nigeria* (NUTGTWN), its experiences, problems and achievements in a period of dramatic changes. We trace the struggle to unionize the textile industry and the resistance it encountered. It involved maintaining and defending union presence as well as extending and deepening the sphere of work place legality and union influence. We explore the mediating role of the union, pressurized by workers' militancy from below, and constrained from above by managerial power and state intervention. We discuss power relations within the organization, the position of the union bureaucracy and the internal democratic process.

Periods of economic crisis commonly cause a shift in the balance of forces in society, opening up for radical changes in policy, which themselves tend to further reinforce the shift. In the advanced industrialized countries, economic stagnation and mass unemployment have undercut the bargaining power of trade unions and prepared the way for legislative reforms that eliminate some of the rights and gains that have been achieved. Labour regimes are reconstituted to the disadvantage of organized labour. Is the same true for Africa and other less industrialized parts of the third world?

The prolonged crises of post-colonial economies and institutions have brought about a dramatic shift in relations between the post-colonial state and its foreign patrons and creditors inviting notions of re-colonization and debt-peonage. What are the internal implications? Foreign intervention has tended to shift the balance of forces, weakening the institutions associated with the crisis-ridden state sector. The interventions have been hostile to trade unions and other interests identified as "vested" or "special" and seen as opposing reform because of their stake in a state sector that is scheduled for cuts and privatization. The low level of industrial development and the numerical weakness of the industrial workers may suggest that they would be particularly vulnerable and that labour regimes would be revised to their disadvantage. Third world trade unions, according to Thomas (1995:ix–x), in a study sponsored by Dutch trade unions and aid agencies, face gloomy prospects. They are up against "overwhelming odds" and poorly equipped to meet the new challenges posed by structural adjustment and liberalization. The strength they once had is gone. The pessimistic mood probably mirrors views widely held within the European and North American labour movement about their own predicament in the face of "globalization", "informalization", "casualization", and "flexibilization".

Our study of the Nigerian textile industry from the late 1970s to the early 1990s, a period of deepening and unresolved economic and political crisis, suggests a rather different picture. While the industry experienced significant losses in both employment and real wages, we see a "counter-cyclical" process of the emergence and consolidation of a union-based labour regime, an expansion rather than a contraction of union power. Our main preoccupation in this book is to document this process, discuss its significance, and explore the sources of union power. In line with the prevailing orthodoxy of neo-liberal adjustment thinking, the strength of the union could be taken as evidence of the persistence of an unproductive, statist-cum-corporatist post-colonial order, reflecting the power of entrenched interests and the weakness of the agents of reform such as private enterprises and reform-oriented state institutions. One would expect such union power to be associated with an ailing and stagnating industry incapable of engaging in the necessary restructuring demanded by changing world market conditions and new policy regimes.

Contrary to such expectations, our study suggests that the consolidation of a union-based labour regime was consistent with the modernization of Nigeria's substantial textile industry, making it more productive and competitive. The study documents the process of restructuring and adjustment, both for the sector as a whole and for individual companies. The transformation at the level of the labour regime, however, has significance beyond industrial restructuring, raising issues about the institutional preconditions of development. It is evidence of a wider process of the constitutional regulation of conflict in society with implications for both state formation and democratization. In recent years, it has been widely realized, not least by the advocates of neo-liberal "adjustment", that "correct" economic policies are of little use unless carried out by institutions capable of implementing and sustaining them. The realization has partly resulted in a short-term, manipulative concern with the promotion of "pro-reform" and the containment of "anti-reform" coalitions but also, increasingly, a preoccupation with long-term problems of "governance" and institutional reform (Nelson, 1989, 1990; Lancaster, 1992; World Bank, 1989, 1997; Beckman, 1992). The emergence of institutions capable of regulating conflict and entering into social contracts at the level of production should be of particular importance within a longer-term perspective.

In this wider context, the question of union power also becomes a matter of "civil" power, that is, power at the level of "civil society", a notion which we use with some hesitation in view of all its ideological overload (Beckman, 1993, 1996). It commonly refers to social agents and organizations with some degree of autonomy vis-à-vis the state and with some capacity to influence it (White, 1994). The notion is increasingly invoked in attempts to explain diverging political and economic performances by countries with seemingly similar "initial" material endowments. The strength and depth of civil society are also at the centre of discussions on the "successes" and "failures" of current political and economic transitions in Eastern Europe and other formerly socialist societies (Rueschemayer, Stephens and Stephens, 1992). The literature on African development is replete with lamentations over the failure of the institutions of the post-colonial state and the absence or weakness of civil society. Our study suggests that more attention should be given to the actual forces at work within society and their struggles to construct legality and constitutionalism from below. Union power in Nigeria's textile industry is indicative of the strength and resilience of societal forces in the face of an increasingly brutal and incompetent state. It suggests the growth of a capacity to regulate conflicts, develop modes of representation, and institute social contracts. The process depends ultimately on the capacity to build organizations with a viable popular base, in defence of collective interests, often in conflict with both state and capital. This we believe is also the basis for the democratic reconstruction of the state (Bangura and Beckman, 1991; Beckman and Jega, 1995).

4. LABOUR REGIME: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Our focus is on the role of trade unions in the regulation of the relations between capital and labour or "labour regime" for short. We wish to understand how labour relations are constituted within a wider framework of power relations in society. We therefore distance ourselves from conventional notions of "industrial relations", agreeing with Hyman (1989:15) when he suggests that even if one chooses to study collective bargaining one needs to include the "broader structures of power" by which it is confined. We have settled for "labour regime" in our attempt to develop a conceptual framework for theoretically situating unions within such broader context (Andræ and Beckman, 1992). It is an attempt to relate our Nigerian observations to theories of regulation regimes, mostly originating in the "French" regulation school (Aglietta, 1979; Lipietz, 1986) and developed, for instance, in studies of industrial restructuring in Europe (Storper and Scott, 1992; Tickell and Peck, 1992) as well as on third world industrialization (Brandell, 1991b). Much of the theorizing within this tradition is prompted by the crisis of "Fordism" in the advanced industrial countries and the efforts to identify both the causes of its demise, and the likely "post-Fordist" successors. The concept of Fordism has been used to designate the dominant "accumulation regime" in the post-World War II period, characterized by standardized mass production and Taylorist production processes, supported by the active involvement of an interventionist state with social programmes that serve to maintain levels of demand and production. Wage levels are determined collectively, which enhances workers' bargaining power, effective demand, and economic growth. Unions have a central place in the Fordist model and tacit or open social pacts between employers, unions, and the state at the national level have ensured the political stability of the accumulation regime. The crisis of Fordism has been linked to the specialization of production technologies and markets and the accelerated internationalization of capital, undermining national regulation regimes. Post-Fordist developments are associated with notions of "flexible specialization", a decline in the regulatory involvement of the national state, the privatization of social security, individualized and "flexible" conditions of employment, a weakening of trade unions, and the dissolution of the more or less "corporatist" social pacts that had sustained the Fordist regime.

How relevant is the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism for an understanding of developments in the Nigerian textile industry? Some of the same global forces which have prompted the assault on Fordism are clearly also at work in that context. There are some apparent common aspects like the crisis of national state regulation and the pressures for industrial restructuring in the face of intensified world market competition. But there are also significant differences, especially in terms of the way in which wage labour is "reproduced", outside the wage economy, in a household and wider family economy, primarily based on self-employment in agriculture and in urban and rural services and crafts (the "informal sector"). It has important consequences for the development of labour relations within the factory. Our interest in "regulation theory" stems primarily from its concern with the embeddedness of factory production within the wider social and political relations in society, what is termed the "mode of social regulation" (Tickell and Peck, 1992). The concept "accumulation regime" stands for a combination of the two. A "labour regime", as we see it, can be understood as a central feature of such a mode of social regulation. We draw inspiration in this respect from Burawoy's (1985) studies of the "politics of production" where he emphasizes the link between forms of domination at the work place, in the way in which the labour process is organized, how labour markets are segmented and in the way wage labour is reproduced, in the company itself or in the society outside, with more or less state involvement. To illustrate this complex framework, he identifies a set of "factory regimes" where a key characteristic is the balance of responsibilities between the state and the employer in providing for the reproduction of the workers. These include the "company state regime" of a Zambian mining company where workers are entirely dependent on the employer for their reproduction; the coercive, "market despotic" regimes of "bloody Taylorism"; the regime of bureaucratic despotism of "state socialism" in Hungary; and finally the regime of hegemonic consensus based on a corporate welfare state which has taken over part of the reproductive functions from the employers and where unions give workers a strong bargaining position in production (Burawoy, 1985).

We use the concept of labour regime to summarize the complex of institutions, rules and practices that regulate the relations between labour and capital as they manifest themselves in the work place. Our primary concern, however, is to understand how the character of this "mode of regulation" is influenced and conditioned at the level of society at large, by the nature of enterprises and entrepreneurial classes, local and national politics, the interventions of the state and organized interests, as well as by the way in which labour is recruited, trained, and supported by family, community, and state outside the work place. Although we identify the labour regime at the enterprise level we generalize our observations to groups of companies and to specific locations because of common traits. In this sense we speak of the labour regime of the Nigerian textile industry or in Kaduna or Kano. More tentatively, we also say something about the Nigerian labour regime. These higher level applications of the concept are partly empirical generalizations, that is, as aggregations of observations from individual work places. But not only this, they are also arrived at by theoretical deduction, that is, how we think that the character of labour relations is moulded by the dynamics of the wider society.

Central to labour regimes is the need of capital to make labour perform in accordance with the requirements of production. They are relations of domination as well as contestation. They are more or less repressive, more or less contractual. Domination may be exercised, to use Burawoy's (1985) terms, through coercion or through consensus or hegemony, that is, in the latter case, the acceptance of subordination by the subordinated. The mechanisms for securing labour's compliance may be situated at the technical level of the labour process (e.g. the conveyor belt) or in the modes of supervision and work-place control. The division of labour based on the segmentation of the work force may be an important element of labour control, drawing support from ideologies of gender and ethnicity. Labour regimes may be sanctioned or contested at the level of interest mediation (unions, collective bargaining) and regulated by the state through factory laws, labour laws, and ad hoc interventions.

Labour regimes are premised on a complex balance of social and political forces. The terms under which labour is ready to make itself available and willing to comply are determined by its bargaining power, in the work place as well as in the labour market. It reflects skills, availability, options, and ability to inflict costs on capital and management through non-co-operation or disruption of production. It may also reflect differences in aspirations and ideology related to the segmentation of the labour market. Organization is critical in enhancing the potential bargaining power of labour. It makes the regulation and control of trade unions a central feature of labour regimes. The granting or withholding of "recognition" of unions by state and management, by legislation or in practice, generate sources of union power independently of membership support. We speak of a process of "incorporation" signifying the subordination of unions, reducing their autonomy vis-à-vis state and management. High autonomy in this respect, does not by itself signify that unions express the interests of their members. They may also have secured a high level of autonomy from pressures from below.

The duality of unions as more or less representative agencies of the workers and as mediators or "managers" of capital–labour relations is also reflected in state–union relations. In "corporatist" regimes unions are granted more or less monopolistic rights by the state to represent the workers in exchange for accepting constraints on industrial action. Schmitter (1979) distinguishes between more state-centred and more "societal" forms of corporatism, reflecting the extent to which interest groups enter into a deal with the state from the strength of their own societal base or if the arrangement is imposed from above. The former is illustrated by the "social democratic" labour pacts of welfare capitalism, the latter by the authoritarian labour regimes under fascism and in much of the third world (Malloy, 1977). How relevant is this "neo-corporatist" model for an understanding of the Nigerian situation? Hashim (1994) criticizes its indiscriminate application in an African context and demonstrates how some of its key features are missing in the Nigerian context. We agree with him; yet, we think that there are enough of these features present to warrant a discussion in corporatist terms, even if a Schmitter-style typology fails to capture what is characteristic of the Nigerian variety.

5. LABOUR REGIME AND PLACE: THEORIES AND COMPARISONS

We were struck at an early point by the difference in work place labour relations between the two big northern cities, Kaduna and Kano, where we did much of our field work. It was graphically brought home to us in the different reception we were given by factory managers when approached by us for interviews. Those in Kano were mostly hostile and gave the impression, and some were explicit about it, that they did not want us to spy on their way of handling their workers. In contrast, the Kaduna managers were relaxed and cooperative, as if confident that they did not have anything to hide.

The dominant labour regime in the Kaduna factories was union-based, with acceptance of collective bargaining and union rights. In Kano, resistance from patriarchal and clientelistic forms of labour regulation had been only partially overcome. How could the differences be explained? Clearly the structure of the industries mattered, including size, produce orientation, production processes, and patterns of ownership. But why did such industry-specific features agglomerate (Andræ and Beckman, 1991)? We argue that much can be explained with reference to the distinctiveness of the local political economies, that is, the historical formation of urban production systems and their entrepreneurial and working classes, as well as their integration within wider regional, national, and global "modes of social regulation". Thus in Kano, the family-owned, mostly indigenous or Lebanese textile companies operating in an urban environment dominated by informal commercial and craft activities had generated informal modes of labour recruitment, clientelistic relations between labour and management, and workers' perceptions of options which all constrained the scope for unionization. In Kaduna, on the other hand, the formalization of labour relations and unionization were facilitated by the absence of such strong local links and the predominance of large-scale state and foreign capital in a newly settled urban environment.

The contrasting labour regimes confirmed the relevance of much current theorizing in economic geography on the political economy of "place", including the attempts to situate it in relation to the tradition of "regulation theory". Let us briefly review some of the perspectives which inform our own understanding of the dynamics of place as it has affected the formation of a union-based labour regime in the Nigerian textile industry.

The study of politics of production at the local level has had a revival since the early 1980s within what has become known as "the restructuring approach", drawing in particular on the path-breaking work of Doreen Massey (1984) on the spatial differentiation of national economic development in its adjustment to processes of global economic change. She integrates earlier ideas on the articulation of the "social" and the "spatial" in socio-economic change with ideas on how spatially differentiated divisions of categories of employed and relations of production give rise to "spatial divisions of labour". She attributes prime importance to the availability of labour as a factor that guides companies in their decisions to adjust or relocate and she studies how this spatial division undergoes successive changes—rounds of adjustment—in response to changes in patterns of investment. By focusing on labour, Massey simultaneously places the emphasis on the local level where labour is recruited, reproduced and socialized. It is also at the local level that the impulses for workers to organize will be generated, in response to conditions in production as well as outside the work place.

The approach to regional restructuring represented by Massey has inspired work within theories of industrial location and regional development (Scott and Storper, 1986). Of particular relevance for our work in Nigeria are the theoretical debates on local developments in Thatcherite Britain, generated by a spate of "locality" studies concerned with impact of globalization and the crisis of the Fordist accumulation regime (Cooke, 1989; Lovering, 1989; Johnston, 1991). We were particularly inspired by Warde (1988) whose study of an industrial town in Northwest England offers a useful framework for the study of the politics of places. It follows the traditions of the regulation approach in emphasizing conditions in the labour market and the sphere of labour reproduction as well as the role of the state, national as well as local, in regulating relations in the production and reproduction spheres. Like Burawoy (1985), Warde speaks of the "politics" of both production and reproduction and like Arrighi (1983) he shows how politics in these two spheres inter-relate and partially substitute for each other. Warde's particular contribution lies in deepening the analysis of the structures and relations in the sphere of reproduction as a base for understanding urban political practices. In a way highly relevant for analyzing African realities, he thereby adds to the tradition following on Castells (1977) with its strong emphasis on relations around the provisioning by the state of collective consumption goods.

These attempts to theorize the relations between labour markets, spheres of production and reproduction, and state intervention at the local level, also draw on the "French" regulation school which was mentioned above as a source of our thinking on labour regimes. Here the focus has been on identifying "local regulation regimes" (Painter, 1995). In a similar vein, our comparison of Kaduna and Kano allows us to identify local characteristics of the labour regimes. It confirms the usefulness of combining political economy with a place theoretical approach on the line of Warde and others. Our concern with place, however, is not only one of understanding the differences in labour regimes between Kaduna and Kano. It is also a question of situating what is specifically "Nigerian" in a global context. We return in the concluding chapter to a discussion of some of the possible specificities of a "Nigerian labour regime", without any pretence to proper comparative theorizing. A particular challenge is to handle a complex political economy, where modern industry coexists and interacts with the surrounding peasant and urban informal economies. The comparison between Kaduna and Kano also has some relevance in this context as it points to possible stages in the consolidation of a dominant labour regime. While the regime has retained features of an earlier coercive and/or clientelistic regime it has been transformed on increasingly formalized, constitutional lines, despite a context of profound national and industrial crisis. How can such a process be understood in a global context preoccupied with post-Fordism, flexibility, and the decline of unions?

7. AN OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

The study is organized in two parts. The first (Chapters 2–6) reviews the experience of the industry at the national and sectoral level as well as in six companies selected for closer study. We begin in *Chapter 2* by looking at developments from the late 1970s with its oil boom, overvalued currency, and import spree, through the slump of the early 1980s, with austerity policies, import squeeze, and industrial contraction. In the case of textiles, the crisis had already begun before the oil slump and a process of restructuring was already well on its way in the first half of the 1980s. It involved technological upgrading, cutting labour, and product differentiation, as well as backward integration into spinning and cotton production. The latter half of the decade was marked by structural adjustment policies and massive devaluations. The textile industry saw some modest recovery, due both to successful restructuring and to an opening for exports, especially to other West African countries, a windfall due partly to the overvaluation of the CFA Franc. The deterioration of Nigeria's national economic management and the deepening political crisis in the early 1990s raised questions about the sustainability of this recovery.

What could the union do to protect the interests of its members throughout successive crises and adjustments? In *Chapter 3* we review the experience of collective bargaining at the national and company level. In the first half of the decade, the union pursued a rearguard action against closures and retrenchment. The situation was aggravated by a "successful" general strike in 1981 for a sharp increase in the official minimum wage. The import squeeze caused shortages, of raw material in particular, and led to a stop–go situation in production. As in the KTL case narrated above, the union had to negotiate the conditions for temporary closures, reduced working hours, and reduced pay. The state imposed a wage freeze and inflation kept cutting real wages. The concern of the union was therefore how to circumvent the freeze and secure non-wage benefits. As the freeze was lifted with the liberalization of economic policies, the textile union was in the lead in pressing for wage compensation, spearheading a new major upward revision of the minimum wage in 1991–92. This time the industry seemed quite prepared to absorb the increase, especially as wage costs had shrunk to a minor part of total costs. The gains, however, continued to be undermined by an inflation which was primarily caused by reckless government spending. We conclude the chapter with a discussion of the coping strategies of workers in response to falling real wages, including alternative sources of livelihood outside the factory. We report on a survey among the workers which we undertook with the help of the union.

The impact of crises and adjustment policies, the response of management and union, as well as the nature of industrial relations varied greatly between companies and cities. In *Chapter 4*, we review the differentiation of the industry in terms of the product-orientation, technology, ownership, size of employment, and location of the firms. We outline the industry profile in these respects for the three main textile cities, introducing the history and political economy of each; Kano, an ancient merchant city; Kaduna, a colonial new-town and a centre of military and bureaucratic power; Lagos, a cosmopolitan metropolis; each with their distinct entrepreneurial classes and patterns of investments in manufacturing. We also discuss the local formation of the labour force, drawing on our survey which compares workers in Kaduna and Kano in terms of age, education, work experience, rural links, and supplementary income. The contrast was particularly graphic when it came to methods of labour recruitment, largely formalized and impersonal in Kaduna and informal and personalized in Kano. It gives a strong indication of the differences in labour regime which we pursue in the following two chapters.

In *Chapter 5* we look more closely at the experience of six firms, our case companies, three in Kaduna and three in Kano, examining the impact of the crises, their strategies of adjustment, and their labour relations. We begin with our opening case, KTL, the large, old, state-owned Kaduna plant with its run-down machinery and major management and financial problems. Its difficulties are contrasted with the successful restructuring, consolidation, and continued expansion of UNTL, the Chinese controlled Kaduna giant. In both these plants we find a union-based labour regime, more acrimonious in the case of KTL, while UNTL served as a model of accommodation. A contrasting Kaduna case, a small, Indian-owned carpet firm, Chellco, had major problems with adjustment but was made to accept the union, if only reluctantly. On the Kano side hostility to the union was the norm rather than an exception. We first look at NTM (not to be confused with a large Lagos company with the same name) which used to be owned by a local Lebanese businessman but was taken over by an ex-colonial trading conglomerate. It had a record of contraction and heavy retrenchments and of keeping the union at arms length. Our second Kano company, Bagauda, was owned by a leading local businessman, Ishiaku Rabiu, with a history of reckless management, violence against union officials, and a claim to a "fatherly" concern for the workers. It showed little flair for responding constructively to the external strains. In contrast, our third Kano case, Gaskiya, also with a local businessman as majority owner, succeeded in establishing itself in the middle of the crisis, as a large, technically advanced plant. Although originally hostile to the union, in line with the prevailing Kano pattern, it soon adapted to a policy of accommodation more in line with the large Kaduna plants.

The case studies are presented in some detail and we therefore begin *Chapter 6* with a summary of the findings, especially as they relate to variations in labour regimes at the individual company level. We discuss the determinants of these variations which can be largely explained with reference to company traits such as size, production process, and type of ownership. These features, however, varied clearly with location, pointing to the connections between labour regimes and city-specific political economies, including the local formation of entrepreneurial classes and state institutions. We also look at the insertion of wage labour in the local political economies and how it affected the workers' support for the union (or lack of it). This was also influenced by differences in organizational experience related to the origins of the process of unionization in the sectors controlled by the state and the large transnational firms. We conclude the chapter, and the first part of the study, by discussing the impact of crises and adjustment on the development of the labour regime.

The *second part* of the study (Chapters 7–12) looks at the union, beginning in *Chapter 7* with a discussion of its history and the institutional and legal framework within which it operated. Federal legislation in the late 1970s introduced a comprehensive, corporatist structure, with one single central union organization, the Nigeria Labour Congress, and industrial unions with exclusive rights to represent the workers in their sphere of operations and collect union fees at source, that is, from the employers. For the textile industry, it meant the compulsory amalgamation of a range of separate "house unions" and earlier federations with partial coverage. We discuss the nature of these reforms which were not mere state impositions but held real advantages for the unions, a "corporatist pact". In *Chapter 8* we examine the process of unionization in the textile industry, how union presence was established and defended, resisting managerial despotism and expanding the sphere of work place constitutionalism. We show how this process was also sustained and reinforced in the context of industrial crisis and structural adjustment.

Unionization was an uneven process and achievements varied between firms as well as between locations. We return to Kano in *Chapter 9* and its history of management hostility to unionization backed by local power elites as well as by the local representatives of the state, labour officials, police and law courts. During our field work in Kano we witnessed several instances of acute confrontation. However, even in the case of Kano we found a decisive shift during the period under study towards the acceptance of a union-based labour regime.

Another pocket of resistance to unionization was in garments which, interestingly, happened to be the only part of the industry with a substantial female work force. When we planned our study we assumed that work in the Nigerian textile industry would be gendered in line with patterns elsewhere, that is, with a strong female component. We had also expected to find that gender segmentation was an element in strategies of labour subordination, as suggested in gender-sensitive regulation theory. To our surprise, we found very few women either in the large factories in Kaduna and Lagos or in the smaller ones in Kano. While in the latter case, the Islamic environment may have constrained women's participation in the work force, this was not a good enough reason for the dominance of educated, mature men in the industry as a whole. We realized, however, that this male dominance was in the textile industry proper, that is, in spinning, weaving, and printing, which was the part of the industry mostly covered in our study. It did not apply to the garments firms, especially not the smaller ones, often totally out of reach of the unions, employers´ associations, not to mention state labour officials and industrial courts. At this end of the spectrum, manufacturing gradually tapered off into tailoring and crafts production, with numerous intermediary forms. The big garments firms, on the other hand, were clearly pockets of resistance to unionization, and gender was an issue, not least in the recomposition of the labour force in a male direction which accompanied structural adjustment (Olukoshi and Olukoshi, 1989). Why did a high proportion of women in the work force coincide with a low level of unionization? Our original survey material from Kaduna and Kano did not provide any answers. A separate study of women in the Lagos garments industry has been commenced by GA (for the preliminary results, see Andræ, 1997).

Unions may serve other purposes than protecting workers' interests. Some are co-opted by management or the state, others serve the self-interested pursuits of the labour bureaucrats. On whose behalf was the union participating in the management of labour relations in the Nigerian textile industry? *Chapter 10* discusses how the union mediated the relations of subordination, resistance and accommodation within the labour regime. We emphasize the role of shop-floor militancy in constraining the co-optive potential as well as providing a basis for union power. The question "whose union?" is further probed in *Chapter 11* where we look at the internal power relations within the union, including the functioning of union democracy. Power was often intensely contested at the shop-floor level, with both management and the national union officials taking sides.

In May 1993, the national headquarters of the textile union in Kaduna was attacked and partly burnt down in an onslaught by a large crowd of angry workers. They had been made to believe that they were cheated in the recently concluded negotiations and that union leaders had put part of the wage award in their own pockets. A few days later, the recently completed Lagos headquarters was targeted for a similar attack. These traumatic events occurred after we had concluded our final rounds of field work and were back in Nigeria to solicit comments on the draft chapters from those who we had interviewed. The events raised fundamental questions about some of our findings. We had been impressed by the quality of union leadership and the vitality of union democracy. Had we been misled? Whose union was it? Whose interests did it serve? Were we justified in speaking of "the consolidation of a union-based labour regime"? The events obliged us to carefully review our arguments. In *Chapter 12* we discuss what happened and discuss the implications for our understanding of the union and the labour regime.

In *Chapter 13*, we summarize our findings while broadening the discussion to what may be seen as characteristics of a "Nigerian" labour regime. Our investigation of variations and dynamics at the level of companies and places has allowed us to identify structural and political features of a wider society, national and local, which influenced the nature of the labour regime. Some were of obvious importance such as, for instance, national labour legislation and the institutions set up for its implementation. These too need to be explained. Was there anything typically "Nigerian" or "African" in all this?

Our concluding argument explores the interplay between specific modes of corporatist regulation associated with the post-colonial state and the autonomous organization of social forces. It had generated a labour regime which was characterized by high levels of both state regulation and union autonomy. Where did this autonomy come from? Why was it not preempted by state repression? We look for tentative answers in the way in which pockets of wage labour and modern industry are constituted within a context dominated by small independent producers. But is this not true of most early industrializing societies? Why would it generate strong unions in the Nigerian case? What constrained state and capital from enforcing a variety of the "despotic" labour regimes characteristic of most early industrializers? Why were both state and capital willing to accommodate organized labour? In seeking answers to these questions we return to some of the theoretical perspectives on "accumulation regimes" discussed above, and especially to the "mode of social regulation" within which production is embedded, arriving at a tentative "model" of a "Nigerian labour regime". Were its constitutive features assets or liabilities to Nigeria's industrial development? It is commonplace to argue that strong unions make industrial restructuring more difficult. In our conclusions we argue the opposite. Nor is industry alone in benefiting from strong unions. In societies where both state and capital are weak, strong unions may play a role in strengthening both.

Chapter 14 is a post-script which was added after a visit to Nigeria in late 1997. It is a brief update on the fateful two years that had passed since our previous visit, a period characterized by continued economic decline and heightened political repression. The textile industry faced shrinking markets and new competition as the ban on imported textiles was lifted. The union-based labour regime was under siege and the textile union fought to defend its achievements, steering a precarious course between accommodation and resistance.

Chapter 2

Crises and Adjustments in the Textile Industry

1. THE NIGERIAN TEXTILE INDUSTRY

A large, fast-growing population, officially some 60 million by Independence in 1960 (possibly twice that by the mid-1990s), and a successful peasant-based export economy (cocoa, palm oil, groundnut, cotton) made Nigeria an ideal case for import-substituting industrialisation in the decolonization phase and, as elsewhere, textiles were the early leading sector. Consumers gave them a high priority, not just for basic clothing, but for a wide range of ceremonial purposes. Personal wealth and social status in the peasant economy were reflected in the quantity and quality of cloth stored and occasionally displayed. As decolonization approached, the colonial commercial firms could no longer count on privileged access and rushed to invest in manufacturing in order to get a share of this lucrative, protected market. Textiles were a priority also for regional and federal state investors, drawing on the accumulated surplus appropriated by marketing boards during the agricultural export boom of the late colonial period. State investments were undertaken in partnership with transnational firms as well as with international finance institutions (World Bank, International Finance Corporation) which offered credit and technical advice through state development companies such as the Nigerian Industrial Development Bank (NIDB) and the Northern (later "New") Nigerian Development Corporation (later "Company")—the NNDC. Indigenous private entrepreneurs with roots both in pre-colonial and colonial commercial classes went for their share (albeit a minor one), often as the junior partners of state and foreign private capital.

The end of the agricultural export boom of the 1950s and the subsequent fiscal and political crisis, culminating in the civil war (1967–70), did not put an end to this industrialisation drive. On the contrary, nationalist economic policies during and after the war offered new incentives. The importation of textiles was banned during the war as a foreign exchange saving device and the ban was reintroduced in 1977 as it was now argued that existing productive capacity had reached a level of self-sufficiency. An even stronger incentive was the expanding income from petroleum as investments in prospecting in the early 1960s began yielding dramatic results. From an average output of some half million barrels a day before the civil war, production had increased three times when the war ended and fourfold at the time of the big hike in world market prices in 1973/74. The impact was extra-ordinary, as average prices had jumped from 2 USD per barrel before the war to 14 USD by the mid-1970s, keeping close to that level until the new price hike in 1979. From the onset to the middle of the decade, export earnings from oil increased ten times (Kirk-Green and Rimmer, 1981).

Nationalism in the 1970s brought restrictions on foreign ownership through successive indigenization laws, but foreign capital was not deterred, even when obliged to exercise managerial control with less than a majority shareholding. After the second round of indigenization in 1977, the garments industry was expected to have 100 per cent Nigerian control, printing at least 60, while the minimum in spinning and weaving was 40 per cent. Indigenous firms proliferated, although most of the large ones remained under foreign control—with or without Nigerian “fronts” (Biersteker, 1987; Forrest, 1993:153ff). Despite chaos, waste and bottlenecks Nigerian industrial markets expanded fast. Not all could be captured by Nigerian based producers. While the importation of textiles was banned officially in 1977, smuggling was rampant and growing, fuelled by oil-fed inflation and the appreciation and overvaluation of Nigeria’s currency, the Naira (N). Overall manufacturing output grew at an average rate of 9 per cent per annum during the first half of the decade and by 23 per cent during the second half, if we are to believe official statistics, which are certainly unreliable but may still capture the general trend (Forrest, 1993:135). An NIDB report, drawing on Central Bank data, suggests that value added in cotton textiles doubled from 1972 to 1980 and increased ten times in the case of synthetics (NIDB, 1986). It was an erratic process, causing much frustration and economic loss, not least because of excessive overheads and financial difficulties due to the failure of the state to provide reliable basic services. Frequent power failures disrupted production for long periods and forced industry to invest heavily in stand-by generators (NIDB, 1986).

By 1980, Nigeria had become an industrial giant by African standards, with the largest textile industry after Egypt and South Africa (ITMF, 1984). The share of the textile industry in employment and value added in manufacturing were estimated at 20 and 15 per cent respectively (FGN, 1981). The NIDB report from 1986 suggests that the share of value added had risen to 22 per cent, which may also be explained by a decline in other sectors. The official statistics on the industry are based on Federal Office of Statistics survey data and companies reporting to the Central Bank. They relate to a small number of irregularly reporting, mostly large companies. The Nigerian Textile Manufacturers Association (NTMA) had some 70 members by the early 1980s, covering most of the large firms. Many smaller ones and a few big firms were not members, not counting the mass of informal enterprises, particularly in the garments (tailoring) sector. The textile union claimed some 75,300 members in 1980, a reasonably reliable figure based on check-off payments of membership dues (GS Report, 1983). In its own estimate, which is at best an informed guess, the union organized some 75 per cent of the industry (TGW, No. 2, 1981) which may suggest an industry of some 100,000 workers, again leaving out the informal sector. While the biggest number of factories were in Lagos (38 out of 64 NTMA members in 1985), some of the largest plants were in Kaduna (7 members), the administrative centre of northern Nigeria, and a favoured site for large-scale public investment, including the crisis ridden KTL of our opening scenario. Kaduna was the headquarters of the Chinese-owned UNTL, the dominant group of the industry, and of the textile workers' union. Kano, another large northern city and an ancient commercial centre, was also a major textile city with nine NTMA members as well as many non-members in 1985 and with a strong input of indigenous Nigerian and naturalized Lebanese capital. The federal character of state investment policies as well as the regional differentiation of the business class also encouraged the dispersion of factories outside these three main centers. In terms of number of plants, Indians were the single largest group of private owner (30 NTMA members) with a particularly dominant position in Lagos. In terms of output, however, the Chinese Cha group was the largest private owner. With indigenization, federal and state development companies, especially the NIDB and the NNDC, had increased their shareholdings throughout the industry. Data on size, ownership, and types of plants are presented in Chapter 4 (Table 4:1).

2. CRISIS BEFORE THE CRISIS

The first half of the 1980s was a period of crises and turmoil in the Nigerian textile industry. By 1985, the textile union had lost one-third of its members (GS Report, 1986). Fifteen major firms surveyed by NIDB (1986) were operating at an average of 37 per cent of their capacity. The position for the textile industry as a whole was worse. Both employers and union sources speak of capacity utilization below 30 per cent. Much of the decline occurred *before* the national economic crisis "officially" set in with the sharp drop in petroleum prices and export earnings. For Nigerian industry, and for textiles in particular, the crisis, if measured in financial losses, retrenchment, closures, and underutilized capacity, had already reached alarming proportions during the latter years of the oil boom. This "crisis before the crisis" was integral to the very mode of industrial expansion that had been promoted by the sharp rise in oil income. New textile companies mushroomed and old ones expanded to meet demand in a booming, oil-fuelled domestic market. The realization of this market potential, however, was undermined by the distortions which followed with the oil boom. Externally the Naira was strong, but domestically it was eaten up by oil-fed inflation. While the procurement of foreign machinery and inputs should have been facilitated by the overvaluation of the Naira, the rush for imports caused serious congestion (and corruption), including in import licensing, customs and ports handling, adding heavily to import costs. With big swings and uncertainties in world oil markets, the foreign exchange management of the Nigerian government was characterized by stop–go policies that added to the decline.

The cost of putting the imported inputs to productive use also continued to rise. Production costs in industry were exacerbated by numerous bottlenecks, not least in power supply. Also wages were a stop–go affair, with government intervening intermittently either to impose wage freezes or to concede, administratively, big wage hikes, compensating for long periods of declining real wages. With the explosion of economic opportunities the labour force was unstable and difficult to discipline. Skills were lost through the rapid turnover of labour. Many textile workers resigned because they found better work elsewhere (Alu, interview 1987). Managements in their turn were destabilized by the successive indigenization reforms.

High domestic production costs and a strong Naira were, of course, an invitation to the importers of consumer goods for whom tariffs and other restrictions, including outright bans on textile imports as in 1977, were obstacles that could be overcome through informal and parallel channels (Cotton Council International, 1986). A vastly expanded textile industry was thus unable to reap the fruits of its investments. The market share appropriated by smugglers was growing, while competition among the locals for the remainder intensified. Individual companies were affected differently, depending on line of products, the conditions of machinery, and the quality of management and labour. The industry as a whole, however, faced a serious cost and market crisis, precipitating strategies of adjustment including closures, take-overs, mergers, retrenchment as well as efforts to introduce more competitive products and up-grade technology and productivity.

Unsold stocks were piling up. In one big Lagos firm, the union reported that stores were filled to the brim and much of the stocks had not moved for the past two years (ZR, Enpee, in TGW, 1982). For some firms costs were excessive and products uncompetitive because of run-down machinery in old plants. Nortex in Kaduna had started out with second-hand machines which by the end of the 1970s were considered as “scrap”. It had lost over half of its 2000 workers during the decade. Each machine experienced so much disruption that each worker could only handle one or two looms, according to Suleiman, the union President who had been a Nortex worker (interview 1987). This was an extreme case, but even the industry as a whole was highly uncompetitive. An international report estimated that in 1981 the typical number of looms per worker was only 18–24 in Nigeria as compared with 160–190 in Japan and 40–60 in Singapore (Cotton Council International, 1986).

The slump in the trade in domestically produced textile goods resulted in mass retrenchments (TGW, 1981). Union membership data show a fall by one-third from 75,300 in 1980 to 50,300 by the end of 1982 (GS Report, 1983). Both industry and union clamoured for protection. The slump was primarily blamed on smuggling which, according to the union, had reached "a height unknown in the history of this nation". The union quoted estimates suggesting that smugglers had captured 60 per cent of the textiles and garments market (GS Report, 1983). The NIDB (1986) had a more modest estimate of 30 to 35 per cent for the 1978–83 period. Both figures are guesses but reflect prevailing perceptions in the industry. The union accused the government of "indifference and criminal apathy". It saw the real source of the problem in "the oppression of the workers in the Free Trade Zones of Asia". It was "economically nonsensical and morally absurd", it claimed, to allow goods to enter the country that are produced under such "absolute subjugation of human rights" (GS Report, 1982).

While the union attributed the slump to dumping, smuggling, and corrupt customs officials, a sharp increase in wages added greatly to the vulnerability of the industry. After a major wage hike in the mid-1970s (the Udoji Award), the military government imposed a wage freeze to hold back the inflationary surge (Forrest, 1993). Compensation for the subsequent erosion of real wages was therefore the first demand of the Nigeria Labour Congress, the new central labour organization, which was established in 1978. The civilian government, elected in 1979, increased the monthly minimum wage from 60 to 100 Naira in 1980 but the NLC demanded N300. After a partially successful general strike in May 1981, the government conceded another N25, more than doubling the pre-1980 level (Otobo, 1981; van Hear, 1988).

The NLC, the central federation, was dominated by the public sector unions that were largely unexposed to international competition. But its wage demands were generalized throughout the formal wage economy, irrespective of the carrying capacity of different sectors. While the textile union publicly criticized NLC's policy on the minimum wage, it felt obliged to make sure that its own employers complied. A senior unionist claimed that "workers prefer to eat now and die" (Egbe, interview 1987). The new minimum wage was a disaster for a textile industry already in deep crisis. Union zonal reports speak of a sharp reduction in employment in "nearly all" companies; many threatened to fold up (ZR Lagos, Ogun, Ondo 1982). Some companies "closed down immediately we concluded negotiations on the National Minimum Wage" (ZR, Ninetco, 1982). Others retrenched, with many shedding more than half of their work force over a period of two to three years. While the reasons were many, the wage hike exacerbated an already problematic situation. 1982, according to the General Secretary, was the most difficult in the history of the union so far (GS Report, 1982). More problems were to come.

3. OIL SLUMP, AUSTERITY, AND THE RAW MATERIALS CRISIS

The peak in oil fortunes in 1980 was followed by a steep decline as world oil markets contracted. Nigeria was launched on the road to a profound recession from which the country, almost two decades later, is yet to recover. Nigeria's export earnings, of which oil made up 96 per cent on average over the decade, dropped from an index of 100 in 1980 to 43 in 1983, and after a slight recovery, to a terrible rock bottom of 24 in 1986, a drop by half in both volume and unit value. The full impact was first kept at bay with greatly expanded borrowing. The debt which was moderate at the onset of the period, grew by 10 billion USD over the first half of the decade (Forrest, 1993:134,147,214).

The government decided belatedly and half-heartedly in April 1982 to put on the brakes, launching an "austerity programme" (Olukoshi, 1991, 1993; Forrest, 1993). It did not halt the bleeding. The scope for commercial borrowing was exhausted by mid-1983 as Nigeria was blacklisted by major foreign export guarantee institutions. After a costly and acrimonious general election which further undermined the political credibility of the regime, the civilian government was overthrown at New Year 1984 by generals who promised more austerity and discipline and the "restoration of Nigeria's credit worthiness".

Industry and trade were profoundly affected by the long-term contraction of purchasing power and local markets. The most immediate problem, however, was the supply of raw materials and other inputs as the import capacity of the economy deteriorated. The textile industry, drawing on Nigerian produced cotton, had in the past been less import-dependent than other industries. But the impact of the oil-boom and the appreciation of the Naira had redirected demand towards external sources of supply, including a growing proportion of synthetic yarn. Domestic cotton production was constrained by high labour costs and an outflow of labour from agriculture which were other side effects of the oil boom. The situation was further aggravated by the decay in the administration of the marketing board system. The decline in domestic cotton production accelerated in the early 1980s. From an average output of almost 52,700 tonnes of cotton lint during the second half of the 1970s output dropped to by more than two-thirds to an average of 16,100 in the first half of the 1980s (Andræ and Beckman, 1987:30).

Raw material shortages overtook high costs and smuggling as the main, perceived threat to the survival of the industry. The austerity policies of 1982 paralysed an already erratic system of import licensing and foreign exchange allocation, creating additional bottlenecks and bureaucratic distortions. Production was repeatedly disrupted. Capacity utilization declined to its lowest point, perhaps some 30 per cent for the industry as a whole by 1983. The employers claimed that the allocation of import licenses for 1984 was merely 25 per cent of what they had asked for, and only 12 per cent of what would be needed if the operational capacity of the industry were to be satisfied (NTGTEA letter to the union, as quoted in GS Report, 1986). The supply situation was unpredictable and companies were unable to plan production. Licenses which had been obtained often turned out to lack Central Bank cover, others lapsed without being revalidated. The struggle over access to government allocations intensified and managers complained bitterly over the need to "hang around for months" in Lagos and never getting what they asked for (Abubakar, MD, KTL, interview 1987). Some companies were better placed than others (better connected or more unscrupulous) in securing access through the state. Enpee, for instance, a large Lagos firm, was able to operate its normal three shifts because of its "management's luck" in the licence gamble while other companies in the zone were suffering (ZR, 1984). Some had the advantage of being part of transnational networks with their own private supply and credit lines which did not depend on state patronage (Cotton Council International, 1986; Abubakar, interview 1987).

The union joined management in the struggle for licenses and letters of credit. "The faith and progress of our members and the organization in general", declared one union report, "rest solely on the availability of raw materials" (Igalu ZR, 1985). The union appealed to the state. Zonal officers demanded that the union leaders must meet the State Governors, the Minister of Industries "and possibly the Chief of Staff" (the strong man of the new military government) to "let them know the unbearable difficulties" (Isolo ZR, 1984). It was not the shortage of foreign exchange in an absolute sense but its allocation and misuse that was the real problem, according to the union. It condemned the siphoning off of funds through fake imports by powerful people who deposited their "kick-offs" in foreign banks (Oshiomhole, 1982). It lashed out against government spending on prestigious buildings in the new federal capital being constructed in Abuja when the needs of industry should be given priority (GS Report, 1982).

As the import squeeze set in, employment continued to go down. A survey of 17, mostly large, companies showed a drop in employment from 40,100 to 30,400 between 1983 and 1986 (NIDB, 1986, Annex 2–5). Overall union membership during the same period fell more moderately by another 5,000 to some 45,000 which was the bottom line for the period studied by us (NUTGTWN, 1986). The union figure underestimates the drop in overall employment as new members had been added through unionization. A survey made by the textile employers' association showed that in 1984 one quarter of a sample of 47 factories employed below 50 per cent of their full labour force. Only about one-third employed over 75 per cent, while the overall reduction in employment for the sample was about 40 per cent (Eburajolo, interview 1985).

The main reduction, however, was not in overall numbers but in effective working time. Workers were sent on "compulsory leave" during temporary closures, with or without pay or with part-pay. Sometimes closures lasted several months while waiting for raw material, affecting either the factory as a whole or certain departments, depending on the product. A detailed report on "Direct and indirect application of redundancy" in 25 Lagos factories in mid-1984 by the union's Lagos office points to reductions in the number of shifts and working hours, with various levels of cuts in pay (NUTGTWN, 1984). For instance, workers did only a half day's work in Five Star and only two weeks per month in ITI, in both cases with 75 per cent pay.

While workers continued to be laid off, overall employment did not fall in tune with the decline in capacity utilization. The latter dropped by over 50 per cent when employment fell by 40. Why was this so? We return below to the role of union strategy in making redundancies more costly and therefore less attractive to the companies. But there were also other reasons. A drastic trimming of the labour force had already taken place and outright redundancies were less relevant as a means of dealing with the problem of irregular and unpredictable supplies. The employers' association claimed that their members had an interest in retaining a body of competent and trained labour, even if it could not be effectively utilized all the time (Eburajolo, interview 1985). But equally important was the stabilization of the market situation despite the drastic contraction of overall consumers' demand. The foreign exchange squeeze did not only affect the imported inputs required by the manufacturing industry, it also hit the imports of ready made goods, smuggled or otherwise, which now tended to price themselves out of the mass markets (NIDB, 1986). The leading textile manufacturers felt therefore that, unlike before, they could sell whatever they managed to produce. The increased costs of scarce inputs were compensated by higher sales prices in combination with reduced labour costs and productivity gains from restructuring.

4. THE POLICIES OF "STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT"

The first military government under General Muhammadu Buhari (1983–1985) refused to submit to the IMF prescriptions and sought unsuccessfully to escape from the foreign payment crisis by entering into barter agreements for the supply of imports (Olukoshi, 1991, 1993; Forrest, 1993). This added another complication in the administration of the foreign input requirements of the manufacturing industry. Although bred on protection and wary of liberalization, the textile industrialists therefore welcomed, at least in principle, the "homegrown", World Bank sponsored, structural adjustment programme (SAP) which was introduced in 1986 by the new military regime of General Ibrahim Babangida (1985–1993) who seized power in a palace coup. The principal feature of SAP was the massive devaluation of the Naira through foreign exchange auctions (Olukoshi, 1991, 1993). While the Naira had been allowed to depreciate gradually during the first half of the decade, from equalling almost two US Dollars to less than one, the auctions caused it to drop almost immediately to five Naira to the Dollar, "stabilizing" (with Central Bank assistance) for the latter years of the decade around seven (Fadahunsi, 1993).

Trade liberalization and devaluation radically altered the operating conditions of the protected and import-dependent Nigerian manufacturing sector. The deflated Naira rather than tariffs became the main source of protection. Firms were "free" to import whatever inputs they were capable of paying for with the help of foreign exchange bought from bankers bidding on their behalf in the weekly auctions. Costs of imported inputs rocketed, but not quite at the same rate as official devaluation because pre-devaluation exchange rates did not give the true picture of actual costs to importers if unofficial "surcharges" and the costs caused by an erratic system of allocation are included. Officially, industry welcomed the liberalization of foreign exchange management although it was generally felt that the rate of devaluation was excessive (Eburajolo, interview 1990; MAN, Half-Yearly Economic Reviews, Pre-Budget and Budget Memoranda 1986–1992; Fadahunsi, 1993). Firms had problems in financing the sharply increased costs of foreign exchange, whether for inputs, maintenance or investments. Additional unofficial costs were added because of the monopoly position of the banks in the new allocation system. But on the whole industrialists seem to have been pleased that at least the unpredictable import licensing system was gone (Abubakar, interview 1987).

The industry was divided over trade liberalization. While all were in favour of high tariffs or outright ban on imported garments and prints, the NTMA members differed sharply on the issue of imported inputs. Firms with spinning capacity wanted protection for domestically produced yarn, whether based on natural fibres or synthetics. The weavers, on the other hand, wished to import yarn with as little hindrance as possible. However, the dominant members of the association were combined spinners and weavers and some also had a foot in the newly liberalized domestic cotton market, which opened up for a compromise (Ilo, 1986; NTMA, 1987). Industries were also differently placed to cope under the new foreign exchange regime depending on the level of import dependence, type of products, conditions of machinery etc. Some were also more able than others to pass on increased costs to customers. Although the devaluations from 1986 onwards reinforced the strong recessionary tendency of the economy, the textile industry seems to have been in a better position than most to adjust to changing conjunctures and policy context. A review prepared by a leading commercial bank with strong commitments in the sector concluded in 1987 that the industry continued to be profitable with good prospects for further development. The report praised managements for having been remarkably skillful in steering the industry through successive crises (CMBNL, 1987).

5. INDUSTRIAL RESTRUCTURING: WEAK TECHNOLOGY, HIGH COSTS

The oil-led expansion of the 1970s was itself a source of restructuring. While for some product lines it meant merely producing more of the same thing, new lines were opened up to meet demands in an increasingly differentiated and sophisticated consumers' market. The technology which was introduced by the first generation of investors in the late 1950s and early 1960s had become dated and uncompetitive. The gradual appreciation of the Naira intensified competition from imports but also encouraged fresh investments in more competitive technology as the relative costs of imported capital goods declined. The chaotic situation at the turn of the decade with the oil-boom peaking and collapsing therefore coincided with a period of technological upgrading. Some of the investments which had been initiated during the oil-boom matured only after its collapse, as in the case of the large modern Gaskyia plant which began producing in Kano in 1985.

The increase in the minimum wage in 1980–82 accelerated restructuring. It enhanced vulnerability from smuggling and the firms with the least competitive outfit, either in technology or labour process, were the first to collapse. Only a few closed down permanently, while others underwent reconstruction including in some cases take-overs by financially stronger firms where viable bits were singled out and rescued while others were scrapped. In some cases, the take-overs aimed at creating an integrated production with more stages in the production cycle from fibre to finished product under the same hat. The Chinese-owned UNTL group strengthened its position in the industry in these ways.

The overvalued Naira at the beginning of the decade had made imported inputs cheap and domestic labour expensive. Industrialists, especially after the 1980–82 wage increases, spoke of labour costs as constituting as much as half of the production costs. Industrial surveys by the Federal Office of Statistics point in a similar direction (FOS, 1983, 1984). Cutting labour costs was therefore central to the restructuring exercise of most companies during the first half of the decade. It was accomplished by different means. At the onset, when imports were still cheap, new, less labour-intensive machinery was an obvious answer. But also within the confines of a given technology much was done to raise productivity by shedding labour and intensifying labour-utilization. The union speaks of increasing "over-loading" as the production process was speeded up and workers were obliged to man more machines (Egbe, interview 1987). The process forced an upgrading of labour skills.

The marginalization of labour in the cost structure of the textile industry was reinforced by a sharp decline in wages both in real terms and in relation to the rising costs of other inputs, especially those imported but also domestic ones, like electricity and fuel. The suppression of wages was actively promoted by the state which imposed wage freezes and wage controls from 1982 onwards. In real terms the 1981 minimum wage had been cut to one quarter by the end of the decade. But the share of wages in total production costs dropped even more drastically. An official spokesman of the textile employers suggested that it had been reduced to some mere five to six per cent by 1990 as compared to 50 per cent or more after the wage hikes at the beginning of the decade (Eburajolo, interview 1991).

6. BACKWARD INTEGRATION: SPINNING AND COTTON

Backward integration was an important aspect of restructuring, affecting the links not only between the various stages of manufacturing but also between industry and agriculture. The expansion of domestic spinning capacity, making the industry less dependent on imported yarn, had already begun during the oil-boom, largely as a result of nationalist policy pressure. The outgoing military regime declared in 1979 that the importation of yarn would not be allowed after a five-year period (NISER, 1983; Ilo, 1986). Taxation was graduated so as to reward industries for high local value added (NIDB, 1986) and investments in spinning were given priority in the allocation of import licenses and credit guarantees.

As the import squeeze set in these incentives were reinforced. Companies without spinning departments were particularly badly hit by the squeeze and new commercial opportunities were opened up for those producing yarn. In some companies, workers "pinned all their hopes" on the expected arrival of new spinning machines (Hong Kong, ZR 1985). The spinning capacity of the industry was expanded. Some firms cut down on weaving and expanded spinning or dropped weaving altogether (Bello, interview 1987—on Atlantic; Suleiman, interview 1987—on Nortex). They could make more money from selling the yarn to other weavers rather than using it themselves (Aisagbonhi, interview 1987). Major new spinners came on stream (Gaskyia, Globe, Aflon), and others were modernized and expanded (e.g. Newspin, President, Unitex, Supertex) (Jibrin, interview 1990). Transnationals with alternative access to foreign exchange markets through their own networks were the principle investors (Modibbo, interview 1990). NIDB, the public development company with holdings in the textile industry, recorded 22 spinning mills by the middle of the decade although only half the spindles were operational, either because they were obsolete (20 per cent) or because of lack of raw material and spare parts. State capital also played a role in the expansion. NIDB itself con-centrated its resources on spinning. All five new projects that were under appraisal in the bank in 1986 were spinning projects (NIDB, 1986). Industry sources claim that a 15 per cent increase in overall installed capacity during the second half of the decade was largely due to the investment in spinning (Jibrin, interview 1990).

The import squeeze provided protection for the spinners even before the ban on imported yarn came into effect in 1984. The World Bank-backed structural adjustment programme of 1986, however, moved in the opposite direction. Instead of enforcing the ban the new military government decided to cut tariffs radically in line with the new policy of trade liberalization. This was indignantly resisted by NTMA, the organization of the textile manufacturers, whose leadership was dominated by firms which had made major investments in spinning over the past few years. They lamented "the inconsistency of government's policy that very adversely affects the confidence of investors in Nigeria" (Ilo, 1986). A compromise was negotiated with government: The spinners did not get their ban on imports but substantive tariffs were restored (Abubakar, interview 1987). Those with installed spinning capacity, acquired at pre-devaluation exchange rates, were also protected by the massive devaluation that was a primary feature of SAP.

The import squeeze made the manufacturers take a new interest in the domestic cotton production which had been allowed to decay under the impact of the oil boom. The nationalist Buhari regime (1983–85) threatened to ban the importation of cotton as part of a general plan to ensure domestic sourcing of industrial raw materials. Again, the sharp drop in the import capacity of the economy, was itself a strong incentive for industry to look inward. NTMA set up a "Consultative Committee for Cotton Rehabilitation" in conjunction with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Cotton Board (NIDB, 1986).

We have in a separate study, *Industry Goes Farming* (Andræ and Beckman, 1987) discussed the response of industry to the new situation, including direct involvement in domestic cotton production and cotton trading. Textile firms spearheaded a new type of plantation agriculture which firms like Unilever and its predecessors had demanded since the early years of the century but which they had been denied because the colonial government feared the political implications of disrupting local land relations. Liberalization under SAP reinforced incentives for domestic production. The marketing board system was dissolved—a central demand of the World Bank—and industrialists were encouraged to establish their own, individual and collective trading firms to ensure a share of the local cotton market (Andræ and Beckman, 1987; Volk, 1991). Cotton production, primarily in the hands of independent farmers, responded favourably to the price incentives offered first as part of official domestic sourcing policy and later as a result of price deregulation and devaluation. By 1990, with output back at pre-1980 levels, most of the cotton consumed by the textile industry, at its reduced capacity, came from local sources. It was even suggested that

Afcott, the cotton-producing subsidiary of Afprint, was exporting cotton in order to get foreign exchange for other purposes (Eburajolo, interview 1990). Yet, the NTMA leadership felt that raw material sourcing held back the full recovery of industry. While some big firms like UNTL had been successful in organizing their own supplies, others had difficulties in financing stocks and advances to traders. Liberalization had priced fertilizers out of the reach of most farmers and disorganized the distribution of seeds (Modibbo, interview 1990). Some industrialists bemoaned the abolition of the Marketing Board which, in their view, had performed useful functions in this respect (Jibrin, interview 1990).

Domestic raw material sourcing had been complicated by the shift of the industry in the direction of greater use of synthetic fibres. While this was partly a result of shifting consumer demand it had also been encouraged by the difficulties at the cotton end. Investments in synthetic spinning were promoted by the state, especially in the pre-liberalization stage when the industry was also asked to plan for a halt to synthetic yarn imports (NIDB, 1986). The raw material requirements became a new source of import dependence and, as import costs rocketed, additional pressures built up which could not be met by expanding domestic cotton production. Although the state was in principle committed to the development of a domestic petro-chemical industry capable of providing the raw material for synthetic yarn, the rolling crisis of public finance and the poor climate for private investors kept causing new postponements (NIDB, 1986; Okeke, interview 1987; Eburajolo, interview 1990).

7. A MODEST RECOVERY: THE RISE IN EXPORTS

The process of restructuring was both arrested and accelerated by the policies of liberalization of the late 1980s. An almost tenfold increase in the cost of foreign exchange raised new barriers to technological upgrading and such backward integration that required investment in new machinery (Modibbo, interview 1990). The new financial difficulties, however, simultaneously speeded up restructuring in terms of concentration of ownership and control. Some firms were able to consolidate their positions in a shrinking market by virtue of rising productivity and financial and technological strength. Others were unable to carry the new costs and were bought up by the stronger ones. Privatization contributed to this process as weak state companies were absorbed by private groups, either directly or through management contracts. Nortex, for instance, which had been closed down in 1980 was reopened in 1986 under Chinese control and Lagos-based Indian industrialists, the Churchgate Group, took over KTL and Bendel Textile, two sick state mills.

The textile industry stabilized in the mid-1980s and the improvement continued throughout the latter part of the decade. Capacity utilization was higher than in industry generally. The continued decline in purchasing power, however, made it impossible to compensate for shrinking markets with higher prices. By 1990 it had even become necessary to reduce prices in order to dispose of excessive stocks. So far there was no noticeable new decline in employment, but the union feared it would come if the prevailing trend was not broken (Oshiomhole, interview 1990). The employers told the same story: "At first we raised prices in line with devaluation in order to maintain our profit margins but this did not work". Both costs and profits had to be cut. If sales prices had followed devaluation after 1988 they would have risen by 400 per cent by 1990, now they had only doubled, according to the executive director of the employers' association. As the domestic market contracted, market shares were recovered from smugglers with assistance from the plummeting Naira. High quality cloth (e.g. "Dutch wax") for upper income groups continued to enter illegally, but smuggled goods for middle and lower income consumers were no longer competitive. The decline in smuggling explained part of the recovery. The continued bureaucratic decay, falling wages, and indiscipline within the customs services added to the protection as the officials kept raising their own illegal charges, thus making smuggled goods even more expensive (Eburajolo, interview 1990).

The contraction of the domestic market, however, was compensated for by the increase in exports. This is what textbook structural adjustment suggests should happen when you "get your prices right". But Nigeria's textile exports expanded in a rather un-textbook-like manner. Prices were still highly "distorted", but this time to the advantage of Nigeria's manufacturers. The increase in exports came primarily from smuggling to the West African region where the CFA Franc, the currency of the West African Franc-Zone, was tied to the French Franc and supported politically by the French Central Bank. As the value of the Nigerian Naira was slashed, the differential to the CFA Franc widened dramatically. In CFA Francs, Nigerian textiles became the cheapest in the region and unofficial exports boomed. As we visited the main markets in Dakar at the other end of the region in September 1991 we found them flooded with Nigerian prints. Textile manufacturers in the CFA zone faced an imminent crisis and raised the alarm as the overvaluation of the CFA Franc was exacerbated by the sharp devaluation of the currency of the largest economy of the region.

In Kano, the northern commercial capital, local trade sources claimed in 1991 that as much as 60 per cent of local production was bought by CFA traders (Auwalu Ilo, interview 1991). Official industry sources estimated that total exports, official and unofficial, accounted for some 12 per cent of output from the textile industry in 1990 (Eburajolo, interview 1990). A year later, an industry release claimed that exports were 25 per cent (NTMA, 1991). In neither case would it be easy to verify the data as most of the trade was unofficial.

Official exports also grew but at a much slower rate and the actual volume was disputed. CBN figures showed that a number of companies had exports on the basis of which they could claim tax-refunds. In 1989 almost half of the official exports came from UNTL, all grey baft, according to Auwalu Ilo, a textile merchant and industrialist, and member of a national committee investigating the exports. He suggested that the owners of UNTL, the Cha Group, had affiliates which used it for further processing. While Nigerian prices may not have been competitive, the transactions, he argued, would still make sense as an in-group arrangement (Auwalu Ilo, interview 1991). But also prints were exported, at least at a volume large enough to officially worry the US government, which claimed that 5 million square metres of Nigerian cotton prints (2 per cent of total imports of this category) entered the US in 1989 and that "the US market had been disrupted". A meeting was demanded in a "Note Verbale from US Department of State to Embassy of Federal Republic of Nigeria", in which the US threatened to impose restrictions unilaterally if a "mutually satisfying solution" was not agreed upon within 60 days (Modibbo, Exec.Dir. NTMA, interview 1990, who attended the meeting and showed us the correspondence). It was believed that the US was primarily interested in raising the issue of textiles in order to put pressure on the Nigerian government to lift the ban on the importation of wheat (Eburajolo, interview 1990). Nigeria had been a major market for US wheat before the crisis (cf. Andræ and Beckman, 1985). The wheat ban was lifted partially in 1992 (African Guardian, 2 November 1992).

8. REAL ACHIEVEMENTS, UNCERTAIN PROSPECTS

At the beginning of the new decade, industry leaders expressed satisfaction that the industry had ridden through the storm and they radiated optimism for the future. Capacity utilization which was said to have been at its lowest in 1986, at some 30 per cent, was up to 50 per cent on average in 1990 and even 60 per cent in 1991. The exporters were said to be producing at 70 per cent of capacity. The most successful exporters were the transnationals, like UNTL and Nichemtex (Eburajolo, interviews 1990, 1991). Employment, as measured by union membership, had also risen from its lowest point in 1986/87 (45,000) to some 60,000 in 1992 (GS Report, 1992). The increase in employment did not match that in capacity utilization. Less labour was used to produce more. While the exports were primarily a result of devaluation, not of increased labour productivity, the employers also recognized the contribution of the latter. In the words of Victor Eburajolo, the Executive Director of NTGTEA, "workers are sitting up when they know that they are in the firing line all the time". "It makes supervision easier" (interview 1990).

While acknowledging that the industry was doing well the General Secretary of the union raised questions about sustainability. Domestic markets were stagnant or declining and performance was too dependent on the continued grossly distorted exchange relation between the CFA Franc and the Naira. He distrusted the official exports which were celebrated by the regime as evidence that "SAP works". A senior manager in Afprint had told him that part of these exports originated from other countries but were registered as Nigerian because they had exhausted their quota. Some of the Nigerian industrialists, like the Cha Group, had factories in such countries (Oshiomhole, interview 1991).

The union had cause to be wary. The success of Nigerian textile exports was a temporary windfall due to the uneven penetration of the international finance institutions in the region. The overvaluation of the CFA Franc had become a major controversy as the IMF was pressurizing the French government to allow the CFA Franc to find its "true market level". By mid-1993, Franc Zone resistance to devaluation was weakening. The continued economic decline in much of the Francophone area of West Africa made the support of the CFA Franc increasingly costly for the French treasury. Free convertibility was stopped and was followed later in the year by a 50 per cent devaluation (West Africa, various issues, August to November 1993). Textile traders in Kano noticed an immediate drop in the CFA Franc business (Auwalu Ilo, interview 1993). The Nigerian producers still had a competitive edge, especially as the over the board devaluation did not reflect the major differences in the strength of the different CFA economies. In the long run, however, it was likely that exchange rate policies in the region would be further adjusted. The privileged access of Nigerian textiles to CFA markets under SAP was a mixed blessing. While temporarily supporting output, profits and employment it reduced the pressures for restructuring that were first prompted by smuggling. The industry may still have a long way to go before becoming genuinely competitive in world market terms.

There were other clouds on the horizon relating to the weak infrastructural base of the Nigerian economy. We noted that electricity had been a major bottleneck which financially strong firms had handled by investing in their own generating capacity. As a consequence, they benefited greatly from the low domestic petrol prices, which continued to decline as they were prevented by popular resistance from being revised upwards along with the devaluation of the Naira. Low energy costs were a major competitive advantage. The World Bank insisted on the removal of such "subsidies". It proved to be the most controversial and contested aspect of SAP. But electricity production was also under SAP causing a sharp increase in tariffs by between 500 and 1000 per cent in 1989 (Modibbo, interview 1990). Weak companies without generators were in a fix, feeling the full impact of the raised tariffs, while unable to buy generators which by this time had been priced out of reach (Jibrin, interview 1990). NTMA confronted the government over the tariffs but the government was tied by a "conditionality" linked to a World Bank sector loan (Modibbo, interview 1990). Those with generators were all right for the time being but adjustment threatened to catch up with the petrol price too. World market pricing of energy would radically weaken the competitive position of Nigerian manufacturers.

There were even more fundamental worries arising from the continued decline of the Nigerian economy, especially as the credibility of the military regime eroded. The structural adjustment programme itself was undermined by the inability of the regime to maintain some minimum of fiscal control. Especially after a coup attempt in 1990 the regime engaged in indiscriminate spending to buy support, setting inflation rocketing, and undermining the external value of the Naira. Efforts to stabilize exchange rates through Central Bank directives were futile in the context of the lack of fiscal discipline. The manipulative, and repeatedly postponed programme for transition to civilian rule, created fundamental uncertainties about the whole institutional arrangements, even threatening national unity. The political crisis peaked when the results of the June 1993 presidential elections were suppressed, causing the virtual paralysis of the state. With the collapse of the transition programme in 1993, Nigeria entered a new chaotic phase. The structural adjustment programme was first scrapped by the new military regime under General Sani Abacha in 1994, then reintroduced in 1995. The deteriorating political and economic situation set the scene for the crisis which broke out within the textile workers' union in 1993, to which we return in Chapter 12. An update based on interviews with industrialists and unionists in late 1997 is added as a post-script in Chapter 14. In concluding this survey of development in the 1980s and early 1990s, and despite these added uncertainties, we wish to emphasize the achievements of the Nigerian textile industry in riding through the sequence of crises, recession, and policy changes that characterized that decade. The industry underwent a significant process of restructuring and consolidation, including the upgrading of technology, backward integration, increased domestic value added, raised labour productivity, and managerial and financial reorganization. It suggests to us, among other things, that African industrialisation should not be written off too easily.

Chapter 3

Bargaining and Coping

1. CUTTING THE LOSSES

The restructuring of the Nigerian textile industry entailed an enormous cost in terms of lost employment and income for the workers. What could the workers do? How could they survive and accommodate in the face of these extreme strains? The balance of forces had shifted decisively to the detriment of labour. This chapter looks primarily at the experience of collective bargaining during this hostile conjuncture, including union attempts to fend off hostile state intervention or to attract state support. It ends by discussing the coping strategies of the workers, including their search for alternative livelihoods, in a situation where they were increasingly unable to reproduce themselves and their families on the basis of wage work.

As we began our investigation in the mid-1980s, the unemployed were lining up at the gates and the union was negotiating under extreme duress, trying to cut its losses. It felt blackmailed and intimidated by the employers who threatened massive retrenchments in response to whatever demands it raised (Ag.GS to NEC, 1982). In 1986, as the industry was moving towards a modest recovery, the General Secretary reviewed the situation during the first half of the decade (GS Report, 1986). The austerity policies imposed by government in 1982, he said, had a "devastating impact" on collective bargaining and the employers resisted substantive negotiations. Only a partial review of the Collective Agreement was undertaken, awaiting an improvement in the economic situation. When the time had come for fresh negotiations in 1984, the situation had further deteriorated. The union demanded a meeting of the National Joint Industrial Negotiating Council but the employers said that they were not prepared to entertain any union demands because of the bad times. The union was told to freeze its demands on an indefinite basis, until "if and when both sides view the situation as improving". The union kept insisting that there was a need to reconcile the difficulties of the industry with "the ever worsening unmitigated social and economic hardship" faced by the workers (as quoted in GS Report, 1986).

The union was fighting essentially rearguard struggles on a wide range of frontiers. We argue in this chapter that, despite the adverse conditions, the union was able to record significant achievements which need to be recognized when attempting to understand the formation of a union-based labour regime and the balance of forces on which it was premised, including the development of workers' bargaining power. The period began with the struggle to protect employment at a time when the industry was undercut by smuggled goods from Asia and where its competitive capacity was affected by dislocations caused by the oil boom and the related, centralized wage pressures. The union tried to prevent closures and reduce mass retrenchments, including raising the costs to the firms of laying off workers. Temporary closures became the major problem during the stop–go conditions of the early 1980s when the supply of raw materials and other production inputs was irregular and unpredictable.

The austerity policies of the government imposed wage restrictions and later a total wage freeze that lasted into the structural adjustment phase. Real wages were set on a steady decline. What could the union do to find ways around the official wage freeze? The chapter shows how it pushed for a wide range of benefits for its members which were not directly affected by the freeze, both at the central level and in the individual plant. The latter part of the decade brought a modest upturn in the fortunes of the textile industry. As wage negotiations were liberalized, the ability of the firms to accommodate union wage claims had also improved, including government proclaimed adjustment relief measures and a new centrally negotiated minimum wage. In 1980/81, the textile union had been bitterly opposed to the minimum wage demands of the Nigeria Labour Congress which exacerbated the problem of high costs and smuggling. Ten years later the union was in the front-line in demanding a new minimum wage and in negotiating its implementation. The union was victorious in both respects. The deepening national crisis, however, underscored the limits of collective bargaining in an economic and political environment of extreme instability. Workers' households were as dependent as ever on alternative sources of livelihood.

2. THE INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

The institutional context of collective bargaining was largely shaped by a series of state imposed labour reforms in the late 1970s (Otobo, 1987, 1988; Hashim 1994). Existing unions were amalgamated into 42 comprehensive industrial unions, all affiliated to one national federation, the Nigeria Labour Congress, and each with the exclusive right to organize workers in their respective sectors. It was a distinctly corporatist arrangement which allowed for the compulsory deductions of union dues ("check-offs") by management on behalf of these "sole" unions, once a majority of the workers in an individual plant had decided to join. It gave the unions a strong financial basis for hiring staff, renting offices, paying for transport etc.. The new National Union of Textile, Garment and Tailoring Workers of Nigeria (NUTGTWN) was a merger of an earlier national textile union and a number of separate company unions affiliated to different national federations.

The reforms prompted a similar reorganization of the employers who had no joint negotiating bodies before 1978 (Olaleke, interview 1987). They now formed two separate but joint organizations, the Nigerian Textile Manufacturers Association (NTMA), mainly dealing with the government, and the Nigerian Textile, Garment and Tailoring Employers Association (NTGTEA), dealing with the unions. The two merged in 1992. Some small Nigerian, Lebanese and Indian-owned firms as well as a few bigger ones refused to be members at the onset, although most decided to join at the height of the import squeeze when NTMA was asked to submit a collective request for import licenses for the industry as a whole, specifying the requirements of the individual companies (Eburajolo, interview 1987). Some firms which remained outside felt obliged to conform to the collective agreements between the NTGTEA and textile union.

The reforms facilitated the negotiation and implementation of industry-wide agreements. Collective bargaining was a common practice in the industry before 1978 but the agreements were at that time negotiated separately with individual firms (Olaleke and Suleiman, interviews 1987). The first real collective agreements for the textile industry as a whole were signed in 1979 (NTGTEA and NUTGTWN, 1979a,b; General Secretary's Report, 1982). The implementation of the centrally agreed conditions of service was negotiated with management in the individual company. The process was regulated in a procedural agreement which the union had insisted on in the face of opposition from the employers who agreed to accept it only "after heated arguments" (Suleiman, interview 1987). It specified the range of issues that had to be subjected to negotiations with the union. While most of the issues were already covered in local negotiations in the large unionized firms in the pre-amalgamation phase, the agreement became a potent instrument for extending the frontiers of collective bargaining in previously non-unionized mills.

3. COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AND THE MINIMUM WAGE

The impact of industry-wide collective bargaining was influenced by the internal power relations within the organizations of the negotiating parties. On the employers' side, leadership was dominated by big firms with experience of dealing with unions and where, in most cases, conditions of service were better than in the smaller ones. Similarly, leading union cadres tended to be drawn from companies with a record of strong union presence in the pre-amalgamation period. The first collective agreement that was signed in 1979 therefore tended to generalize conditions of employment from the better organized and better paying firms to the industry as a whole (NTGTEA and NUTGTWN, 1979a,b; General Secretary's Report, 1982). A number of allowances and fringe benefits were turned into industry standard in the new "National Conditions of Service". While this brought significant advantages to large groups of workers, it simultaneously accelerated retrenchments and closures, especially in the weak companies (Suleiman, interview 1987). The union accused managements of using the collective agreement as an excuse for a massive redundancy programme. The companies gave all sorts of reasons, poor market, smuggling etc.., but was it not "an ugly coincidence", the union asked, that all these problems surfaced just as the collective agreement had been concluded (Oshiomhole, 1981)?

Moreover, industry-wide collective bargaining ensured that the full impact of the 1980 and 1981 minimum wage hikes hit the industry as a whole. The textile union leaders were unhappy, being obliged to negotiate the implementation of something which they did not want in the first place. They had opposed the idea of a general strike to back the minimum wage claims at the National Executive Council of the NLC and even instructed their own members not to participate (Suleiman, interview 1987). The union president feared that the new wage would "consume the entire social product without reserve for further investment that is equally important for future employment" (Mohammed, 1980). The government, it was argued, ought to keep out of wage negotiations as different industries have different capacity to carry wage costs. Wages should therefore be decided by collective bargaining, not through state wage awards (Oshiomhole, 1980a; Suleiman, interview 1987).

The union did not apply the argument about different carrying capacity within the textile industry itself. Here the logic of industry-wide bargaining meant that the new minimum wage was enforced throughout the industry, irrespective of the previous wage levels and strength of individual companies. In Abel Abu Industries in Lagos, for instance, union records claim that before the hike even the highest paid received less than the old minimum wage (ZR in TGW, 1981 No. 2). The problem was not the minimum wage alone. What would happen to those who used to be above it? The new minimum destroyed existing wage differentials. Different categories of workers with varying qualifications and length of service "were crudely lumped together on the same salary scale" (GS Report, 1983). In negotiating the implementation, the union insisted on wage adjustments for all and the issue was "slugged out" with the employers in early 1982. A report on the subsequent company-based negotiations spoke of some "peace loving employers" who were quick to implement while others "tried to create trouble". But even the latter were made to comply, according to the union, including those who claimed exemption from the Minimum Wage Act because they had less than 50 workers or because workers were paid on part-time or commission basis. The Federal Ministry of Labour helped in enforcing the agreement (Shittu, 1982; GS Report, 1982).

Reporting to the 1983 National Delegates Conference, the Acting General Secretary expressed pride in what had been achieved under these extremely trying circumstances. It compared favourably, he said, to what other unions had obtained (GS Report, 1983). The "success" at the negotiating table, however, entailed a bitter harvest in terms of company closures and retrenchments. While the union could force companies to comply with the collective agreement they could not prevent them from declaring redundancies (Egbe, interview 1987). Some firms were "like sick babies that no man will like to fight without risking committing murder" (GS Report, 1982). In many instances, the most the union could do was to make companies pay the retrenched workers their full entitlements. This was not easy either. The management of Atlantic, for instance, "ran away without informing the union" causing angry workers to go on the rampage. In this case, the union enlisted the help of state security (NSO) to track down the owner (ZR, 1982). The Lebanese owner of Millet, a towel producing company, was said to have left the country hurriedly when the company closed. The union took the company to court but could only get one-third of the outstanding benefits for the workers (Egbe, interview 1987). Elite, another Lagos firm, also closed down "immediately the minimum wage negotiations were concluded". The Zonal Officer felt that the closure could have been avoided if the branch leaders had not locked up the MD who had to be rescued by the police (ZR, 1982). Altogether seven Lagos companies were listed as having closed down at this point in time (GS Report, 1982). In Kaduna, Norspin, a major company, neither negotiated nor gave any notice as it folded up. A. D. Suleiman, once a Norspin employee, recalled that the workers were simply told when they came to work one morning that the company had closed. The police were there to protect the abandoned company from their wrath. "There was nothing we could do" (Suleiman, interview 1987).

The state-owned Bendel Textile Mills (BTM) was a notorious case where the union fought many years to make the company pay up what it owed the retrenched workers. The mill closed in December 1982, leaving a 1.2 million Naira debt plus unpaid wages and benefits (ZR, 1983). The company reopened but the problems of non-payment of benefits and "incessant retrenchments" continued. The union insisted that those workers whose entitlements had not been properly settled should continue to be regarded as employees of the firm. A fresh round of retrenchments in January 1985 caused the union to organize "a show-down" which "attracted two lorry loads of police". The confrontation "worked like magic" and the Board hurriedly offered to reinstate the recently retrenched workers with promises of taking back also those who had been laid off earlier without benefits (ZR, 1985). However, the issue continued to drag on. The Board requested to be fold by the union how it was supposed to find the money needed to settle the workers' claims. In the end, the union accepted a commitment by the Board to at least ensure full benefits for those currently employed (ZR, 1986). The struggle to recover the entitlements of those outside, "whether terminated, resigned, redundant or otherwise" would continue, said the union, but it had for all practical purposes been lost.

4. FIGHTING CLOSURES AND RETRENCHMENT

The effort to raise redundancy payments in order to discourage employers from unwarranted lay-offs became a main frontier of industry-wide collective bargaining. The 1980 National Delegates Conference demanded a revision of the collective agreement on this point (TGW, 1981 No. 2). "There is abundant evidence", said a leading unionist, "that redundancy is not a function of natural calamity but the handiwork of anti-local labour cost managers who would rather spend tens of thousands of Naira to import a Swiss-loom with an expatriate "technician" than retain a dedicated Nigerian labourer at 100 Naira a month" (Oshiomhole, 1981). In 1983, the union was able to negotiate an increase in compensation which was added on top of the existing gratuity (NUTGTWN and NTGTEA, 1983). The cost to the employer of retrenching a worker after five years' service, for instance, was raised from six to eight and a half months' pay: one month as "notice", 2,5 months for redundancy and five months as gratuity (GS Report, 1983). This was a significant increase. Many companies were financially weak, and some could therefore be induced to hold on to excess workers, while waiting for better times, rather than paying them off in an expensive redundancy exercise. Such implications were also acknowledged by the employers. In an internal memorandum, they noted that "redundancy has been permanently put on the back burner" because it had become too expensive. Most companies therefore preferred to use "natural wastage" (see below) to reduce the labour force which would allow them to achieve "the same result for no additional cost" (NTGTEA, 1987).

The shift in employers' strategy necessitated additional measures from the union. Having achieved more stringent rules on redundancy, it had to prevent employers from subverting those gains by using forms of lay-offs which did not oblige them to pay redundancy fees or even normal end-of-service benefits. This was what the employers meant when they spoke of "natural wastage", referring, for instance, to dismissals on disciplinary grounds. Union zonal reports are replete with references to local negotiations pressurizing managements, often successfully, to revoke such dismissals or convert them into forms of termination that carried full benefits. The union achieved an amendment to the collective agreement in 1984 which introduced the right to receive gratuities even for those who were dismissed for absenting themselves from work for over three days without "acceptable cause" (NTGTEA and NTGTWN, 1984). "Natural wastage" also referred to involuntary retirements due to old-age and ill health. In such cases, management could claim that the affected workers were not entitled to redundancy pay. The union challenged this, claiming that such retirements were in fact concealed redundancies. In Abatex, for instance, the union went on a work-to-rule action in 1985 in order to enforce full benefits for 22 workers who had been retired on such grounds (ZR, 1985).

As the import squeeze set in, the raised redundancy pay became an additional source of deterrence for companies contemplating the use of retrenchment as a means of solving short-term problems caused by disruptions in raw material supply. Both closures and retrenchments had to be subjected to collective bargaining at the plant level, according to the centrally negotiated Procedural Agreement. It opened up for branch level union action, with support of zonal officers and National Secretariat staff, often with simmering shop-floor militancy as an extra warning to employers to tread carefully. Negotiations ultimately centred on the numbers of people that would have to go. The agreements were compiled in a separate "Redundancy File" at union headquarters. It is difficult to assess the achievement involved when for instance, the union "succeeded" in cutting the numbers. Zonal reports often contain formulations such as "management was seriously faced by the union and forced to reduce lay-offs" (e.g. Alao, Ijora Textile Mills, Nitol, ZR, 1982). Some of the acclaimed victories were probably hollow. In order to allow a margin for concessions, managements were likely to give notice of bigger cuts in the labour force than they actually considered necessary. In some cases, the union did not try to hide the defeat, as in the case of Specomills where an "aggressive management" imposed a series of large cuts in the labour force, "defying all union effort" (ZR, 1984; Redundancy File, 1984).

Yet, zonal reports and interviews give the overall impression that the bargaining process was indeed both genuine and tough ("long and protracted argument") and that the union was able to delay or even block the process or reduce the number of workers affected. Reports on the negotiations in Nichemtex in 1982, for instance, suggest that management was constantly obliged to shift strategy when faced with union resistance, and that it finally abandoned the idea of closing a major department (for the full story, see ZR in TGW, 1982 No.3). In some instances, the union decided to challenge redundancies in court, having not been formally consulted by management as required by law (e.g. Haffar, ZR, 1985). If nothing else, court injunctions added to the harassment that the union could use in order to stall the process.

The negotiations required good knowledge of all aspects of the company, including finance, stocks, market movements, and shifts between different product lines. In one company, which claimed that it was running at a loss and threatened to close down, the union still felt that it should not allow itself to be intimidated into concessions because, in its judgement, the company could be expected to "wriggle out of its grave situation" as a result of innovations in quality and brands (Nichemtex, ZR, 1988). The union used a variety of arguments to resist the lay-offs, including delaying tactics when nothing else worked. A proud zonal officer reported that negotiations in Presidential Clothing had been a veritable "battle of words and mastery of industrial management". "All methods that management wanted to apply in sending 221 employees on redundancy were thwarted" (ZR, 1984). Sometimes excessive overheads were used as an argument against retrenchment (KTL: Letter from DGS to PM, 1980; Oduatex, ZR, 1988). In one case, the union claimed that management had stopped demanding cuts in employment only after the union had insisted that such cuts must be applied proportionately to management and senior staff as well (Alu on Enpee, interview 1987). Foreign owners were brandished as unpatriotic if retrenching ordinary workers while retaining expatriate staff. One line of action was to seek openings for redundant labour in other parts of the firm. A particular shortage, of raw materials, for instance, would hit one department but not another and the union struggled to have workers redeployed, even if temporarily (e.g. NWP ZR, 1979; Texlon ZR, 1985; Olanitori on Daltex, interview 1987; Alu on Enpee, interview 1987).

The scope for making companies show restraint in retrenching workers was enhanced by the latent threat of a violent breakdown if the aggrieved workers felt badly treated. The firms would have to consider possible damage and disruption of production when calculating the costs. The pressure in this respect affected both union and management. In Enpee in 1982, for instance, the company stores were burnt down by enraged workers after the local union branch had conceded the retrenchment of 500 workers. Since then, according to the former branch chairman, there had been no more lay-offs (Alu, interview 1987). The union would insist that companies took a long-term view of their employment policies and refrained from short-term measures. Companies, on their side, were anxious to increase short-term flexibility in a situation where it was difficult to plan production, including increasing the number of casual workers who were not covered by collective agreements. At the time when the union was at its weakest, after the implementation of the 1979 collective agreement and the 1980/81 minimum wage awards, union zonal officers report a marked shift towards casualization. They noted, for instance, that in some plants redundancies were directly followed by an increase of casual workers (e.g. ITI, Daltex ZR in TGW, 1982; Kay ZR, 1984; NTM-Lagos ZR, 1985). The union was particularly provoked when "experienced weavers were recruited and treated as temporary poorly rated workers" (Igalu Zone, ZR 1985). Resistance to casualization became a frontier in the union's struggle to protect job security and its own sphere of influence within the work place. Zonal records suggest that the resistance was largely successful. Companies were obliged to "regularize" their casuals and made to realize that the refusal to do so would bring them into serious conflict with the national union.

A related feature, which also aimed at facilitating retrenchments and enhancing company flexibility, was the practice of contracting out certain work tasks to sub-contractors. Fighting the "contract system" was therefore official union policy, but the cases reported in the Zonal Records are few, probably because it was less feasible as a management strategy for the large weavers and spinners who made up the bulk of union membership. The practice may have been more prevalent in small garment firms. Casualization and sub-contracting could be used alternatively to achieve the same purpose. In Stretch Fabrics in Port Harcourt, for instance, management turned to sub-contracting when the union had successfully blocked the hiring of casuals (ZR, 1985). The zonal officer, appealing for backing from the national union, claimed that the employment conditions of the contract workers were "more or less like slave labour".

5. COMPULSORY LEAVE AND REDUCED HOURS

The KTL strike of 1984 which provided our opening scenario in Chapter 1 was prompted by a conflict where management tried to make workers accept an extended period of "compulsory leave" at reduced pay. The irregular raw material supply from 1982 onwards and the financial difficulties caused by the foreign exchange squeeze, both before and after official devaluation, caused frequent disruptions of production throughout the industry. To union and workers, temporary closures were the lesser evil and were often accepted as an alternative to threatening redundancies. The terms of such periods of compulsory leave, however, were heavily contested. Would workers have to forego part of their wages, and if so how much? If the firms insisted that they were unable to pay full wages at the time should they be made to pay back what they owed the workers when production picked up? Or, would workers be expected to "share the losses" with the firms when machines were idle? In Alao Knitting, for instance, workers accepted being paid 50 per cent in exchange for promises of no retrenchments and a refund when the situation improved (ZR, 1985). In this case, the difficulties continued, with the company verging on "total collapse" and unable to honour its obligations (ZR, 1985, 1987).

It was a gamble. What could the union bargain for? In some instances, the union applied the opposite tactics: if a company was not prepared to honour its current obligations to the workers, it should close down and allow the workers to get their full entitlements, especially after protracted periods of compulsory leave (e.g. Mahdu, Redundancy File, 1983). The pattern from KTL was repeated in many firms where management kept extending periods of part-work and part-pay. After the increase in redundancy pay in particular, it was thought that the prospects of having to pay off the workers would finally be sufficiently unattractive as to make companies dip deeper in their coffers to be able to pay current wages. In some cases the gamble paid off, in others it didn't. In Novelty, for instance, "the battle was won" when the union refused to accept an extension of the closure. The company was made to oblige, with the Ministry of Labour supporting union claims: reopen or settle the workers' full entitlements (ZR, 1988). In West Coast Weaving, in contrast, management chose to close down and pay off the workers when faced with union refusal to accept a prolonged cut in work-time and wages (Redundancy File, 1983; TGW, 1983).

The bargaining power of the union was, of course, extremely weak in cases when companies were unable to produce due to lack of raw material. The shortages had, according to one zonal officer, "made negotiations impossible" (ITI, ZR, 1985). A report from the Isolo Zone in Lagos captures the defensive mood: "Rather than to ask for improvements, the union now gives concessions to management by going on leave when not due, by working for three days in a week, by accepting pay only for four and a half days instead of six ..." (ZR, 1984). The union's choice of strategy depended on its assessment of the state of the company, including the competence of the management to handle the crisis. In Novelty, the union considered both the company and the management to be extremely weak, the machines were "old and rickety" and management lacked professional competence. The personnel manager, for instance, was said to be "an old clearing and forwarding agent with no relevant formal education" (ZR, 1988). On the other hand, when the union had more confidence in the viability of the firm and its policies it would also be more willing to accept short-term cuts in wages and work-time, as in the case of NTM in Lagos where, in 1984, it judged management to be "purposeful, understanding and objectively enterprising". On this occasion, the union was proven right in its confidence. The rotational compulsory leave with 50 per cent pay which it had conceded only lasted for two weeks before normal production resumed (ZR, 1984).

Compulsory leave and cuts in working time were used intermittently by union and managements in riding through periods of irregular production. Apart from reducing the number of shifts, firms experimented with shorter working days and shorter working weeks. Again, the level of pay had to be contested with the union. It provided a favourable context also for renegotiating the working hours clause in the collective agreement. A general reduction from 44 to 40 hours per week was included in the 1984 revision when a five day week was also introduced, reflecting the underemployment of the work force and the effort to constrain retrenchments (NTGTEA and NUTGTWN, 1984).

6. DODGING THE WAGE FREEZE

The reduced working hours achieved in the 1984 collective agreement—without a reduction in the monthly wage—meant an increase in wages when calculated on an hourly basis. It was one of numerous ways of seeking compensation for rapidly declining real wages, especially at a time when the government had imposed a general ban on wage increases as part of austerity policies, a ban which was maintained until early 1988. The official index of consumer prices rose by an annual average of over 20 per cent during the first half of the decade (Forrest, 1993:135). The actual rate was higher. In preparing for the 1986 industry-wide negotiations, the union noted that a 40 per cent increase would be required in order to restore wages to the 1983—pre-wage freeze level (NUTGTWN, 1986).

While the Nigeria Labour Congress fought the wagefreeze at the national level, industrial unions sought various ways of dodging it, trying to negotiate allowances, bonuses, incentives and other "non-wage" or fringe benefits. There was limited scope for influencing the basic wage through revisions of salary scales, increments and promotions. There was no centrally negotiated salary structure but practices at the company level were influenced by the public service system with wage levels, each containing a set of "incremental steps" up which workers were expected to climb with the prospect of promotion at the top. Eburajolo, the Executive Director of the textile employers' association, suggested that "no company pays less than 5 per cent annual increment for an average worker" and in addition, "merit increments" for the "deserving" ones (interview 1990). While this may have been so by 1990 in most of the firms organized by the association, union records from the previous decade suggest an ongoing struggle to make "backward" companies agree to formalize salary structures. The union president reported in 1986 that zonal councils had successfully negotiated a review of incremental rates in 80 per cent of the companies with increments ranging from 5.00 to 30.00 Naira per month which he claimed to be higher than what obtained in the public sector. It had been achieved "in spite of PPIB guidelines which forbid adjustment in incremental rates" (Suleiman, 1986). PPIB refers to the Productivity, Prices, and Incomes Board which was assigned to supervise the wage freeze and which kept issuing new directives, trying to plug the loop-holes. An important issue to the union was the removal of the upper "bar" to increments at the top of a particular wage level. The union also measured its achievements in terms of the number of workers promoted from one wage level to another. A related frontier was "job classification" where ways could be found around the constraints of the incremental system by redefining jobs and placing them at higher levels.

Fringe benefits, however, provided the main avenue for circumventing the wage controls. When responding to an inquiry from the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) in 1987 about its "priority demands" the union underscored that it was "prevented by PPIB to demand wage increases" and therefore had to fight for "non-taxable benefits" such as extended leave and leave allowances, medical facilities, death benefits, maternity leave, transport allowances, out-station and night allowance, retrenchment benefits, and improvements of hours of work and overtime rates. At the plant level, priority demands were said to include dust, heat, and canteen allowances, annual bonus, and incentives (NUTGTWN, 1987a). The spectrum of compensatory demands kept expanding. Pension schemes, industrial safety, health, periodical medical examinations were those highlighted by the General Secretary's report to the 1986 Delegates Conference (GS Report, 1986).

The focus on fringe benefits was reinforced by the traumatic experience of the unwanted 1980–81 minimum wage hike which suggested that increases in basic wages were more likely to be "swallowed by the monster called inflation" (Egbe, 1981). Fringe benefits were thought to be less inflationary because they were not so visible to the traders who were expected to raise prices automatically in response to a general wage increase. Zonal reports suggest intense bargaining at the local level over a wide range of fringe benefits. Some concerned the implementation of industry-wide collective agreements but much effort was spent by union staff to extend achievements from more "advanced" to more "backward" firms, without drawing on such agreements. The National Secretariat would instruct its zonal officers about targets after consulting with zonal councils, that is, the representatives of the branches. Some demands related to specific local working conditions, such as access to company clinic and ambulance, cold treated water in the work place, fans in the canteen, and canteen subsidy. Loan schemes, especially for buying bicycles or motorbikes, provided another frontier. Many benefits had a direct bearing on the take-home pay of the workers, including a wide variety of allowances for housing, transport, for exposure to dust, heat, chemicals and noise, and for non-absenteeism. As wage controls were applied more effectively to basic pay than to fringe benefits, the proportion of the latter in total take-home pay kept increasing during the period, from less than one-third to almost half (Eburajolo, interview 1990).

The most important and hotly contested fringe benefit was the annual end-of-the-year bonus. At the time when the wage freeze was introduced it varied between as little as a week's extra pay in some companies to as much as three months in others. Variations from one year to another in a single company could be of the order of one to two months which made a big difference to the annual take-home pay. Although the employers kept insisting that it was an "ex-gratia" payment and therefore non-negotiable, the bonus was in most cases subjected to negotiations which were normally carried out under intense pressure from the "spontaneous militancy" of the workers, often unofficially encouraged by the union but in other cases equally directed at putting pressure on union negotiators. Strikes and go-slows were commonplace during the last months of the year, the time of the "annual bonus fever". Concessions by one company could be used by other union branches in claiming equal treatment. The union position was that one month's extra pay should be regarded as a "non-negotiable" minimum.

It was certainly not always granted but in most of the companies the struggle concerned payments above that level.

In 1983, the government through PPIB directed that, as part of the wage constraint, no employer should pay more than one month as bonus. The union did not comply. It advised its members not to accept less than what had been received the previous year, which in many instances could be two to three months. The employers declared a trade dispute, counting on state support. The Federal Ministry of Labour invited both sides to discussions but the union refused to attend. It argued in a letter to the Ministry, according to Oshiomhole, that if bonus was non-negotiable, which employers always claimed, there was no statutory basis for Ministry mediation. Employers were said to "have declared war on workers" and were accused of "devious and dishonest practices", and of having "enormous profits stacked away", outside the country (TGW, 1983 No. 4: Editorial). Workers in some of the leading mills were directed (unofficially) to go on strike. While some firms made attempts to enforce the law, the workers' demonstrated commitment made employers settle for whatever the local balance of forces seemed to suggest as a reasonable outcome, ignoring the directions of the state. In these cases, management and union had a joint interest in keeping the Ministry out (Oshiomhole, interview 1987).

Disturbed by this non-compliance, the state kept increasing the pressure on employers. Firms that were anxious not to seek confrontation either with the state or with the workers sought to negotiate alternative forms of payments. In one company, for instance, while sticking to the one month bonus rule, management offered money for the union co-operative to purchase essential commodities for the workers. The union refused but agreed in the end to accept a gift of two gallons of vegetable oil plus "one giant Omo" (washing powder) to be given to the workers on an individual basis (Alu on Enpee, interview 1987). This way of dodging the PPIB directives was put into general operation under the name of "incentives", not only compensating for a shortfall in the bonus but also adding significantly to the total take-home pay, depending on the state of the company and union bargaining power in individual plants. The union even succeeded in having incentives acknowledged in the collective agreement (GS Report, 1986). They were negotiated branch-wise in very much the same way as the bonus and involved an increasingly complex set of payments in cash, staple food, and other commodities, including "gifts" of cloth produced in the factory and given in connection with festive occasions such as Sallah and Christmas, or for May Day uniforms. Just as in the case of the bonus, the value was expressed in percentages of a month's pay. The General Secretary claimed that the textile union was the only one which had managed to introduce incentives as a regular feature of collective bargaining—"not even the bankers with their huge profits" had granted this (Oshiomhole, interview 1987).

7. THE RESUMPTION OF WAGE BARGAINING AND THE NEW MINIMUM WAGE

The continued high rate of price inflation made the wage freeze increasingly untenable. Especially with the introduction of "structural adjustment" in 1986, a supposedly "liberal" new economic policy regime, the freeze stood out as both anomalous and hypocritical. Why should other prices be governed by the "market" and not the price of labour? While it took until the 1988 federal budget before the freeze was lifted, the modest consolidation of the textile industry, at a reduced level of output, provided openings for a union wage offensive even before then. The memorandum submitted by the union to the employers demanded a total review of the collective agreement, including an "interim increase" in wages across the board of at least 40 per cent with a corresponding upward review of all fringe benefits with a view to restoring real wages to the 1983 level (GS Report, 1986). A draft proposal even suggested a 100 per cent increase, not only "in view of the escalating cost of living" but because profits had increased in spite of declining turnover and contracting employment. "Equity demands that the employer concede part of his huge profits to cushion employees hardship" (NUTGTWN, 1986).

The employers were not willing to concede. They rejected the union's demand for a general wage increase, taking cover behind the state and the wage freeze: "A general wage review had always been carried out by the Federal Government". An upward revision of the minimum wage in the industry was rejected on the same grounds, being said to be a matter for the state and not for collective bargaining (NTGTEA, 1987). The Executive Secretary of the textile employers' association, however, advised its members to down-play "as much as possible" references to the state which "tend to infuriate the Union" and give the wrong impression that the industry is able to pay but refuses because it fears state sanctions. Instead, they should tell the union that a general wage increase will only "further fuel inflation and wipe out the benefits". The argument on profits should similarly be rejected with reference to the way in which their value in real terms had been "wiped out because of the very low value of the Naira". Higher sales prices had in no way compensated for the increase in the cost of inputs and the decline in sales (NTGTEA, 1987). Furthermore, the workers had no right, he argued, to claim a share of the profits which could all be "attributed to rationalization and market forces outside the influence of labour": "Or how else will one explain a 50 per cent reduction in labour force and at the same time doubling of profit?" In his view, extra profit had nothing to do with "extra input of labour". If there was to be an upward revision of wages, it would have to be "on social grounds" but this, again, was primarily a matter for the state, not for the employers (NTGTEA, 1987). The union was not slow in pointing out the faulty logic. It was precisely because of the reduction in the number of workers, that those remaining were made to carry an "overload" (Egbe, interview 1987). Zonal reports speak of the employers taking advantage of workers' fear of being retrenched, using the "sweating system" to maximize productivity and profits (Ikeja/Ogun ZR, 1983).

Despite this defensive barrage, employers were willing to make concessions in terms of fringe benefits. The General Secretary, when addressing the National Delegates' Conference in 1986 was confident that the negotiations at both the central and branch level would achieve an effective increase in overall benefits, including bonuses, incentives, increments and a wide range of allowances that would be equal to a wage increase of some 30 per cent or more—despite the wage freeze. The collective agreement of 1987 lived largely up to those expectations and judging from the zonal reports, local negotiations were equally successful within those limits. In reviewing the outcome, however, the General Secretary noted in his 1989 report that the modest gains that were achieved in 1987 were "completely undermined by the spiralling inflation that followed". As the wage freeze was lifted in 1988, the union demanded fresh negotiations ahead of the stipulated time. On this occasion, it achieved, among other things, a major advance in terms of incremental rates which previously had been the exclusive domain of company-level bargaining and varied strongly from plant to plant. The 1988 agreement laid down industry-wide standards and the employers agreed, collectively, to raise the rates for each "incremental step". A two-step increase was granted "ex-gratia" as compensation for "hardship" after an appeal from the union the following year. The combined effect was a 150 per cent increase in increments (GS Report, 1989; Eburajolo, interview 1990).

The value of the 1988 collective agreement and the "hardship" increments, however, was again swiftly undermined by price inflation which after three years of modest increases (a seven per cent annual average, 1985–87) rose steeply in 1988 and 1989 (38 and 51 per cent respectively), all according to "conservative" official figures (Forrest, 1993:135; CBN, 1990:96 for the revised 1989 figure). While the official rate of inflation came down to around 10 per cent in 1990–91, primarily due to good harvests according to the Central Bank, it jumped again to 45 per cent in 1992 (CBN, 1992:112), launching an upward surge that would reach a three digit level by 1993 when the "transition programme" finally collapsed in economic and political chaos. The disappointment with the limited results of industry-wide collective bargaining caused the union to look for political solutions which could help overcome the resistance of industry to general wage increases. At the national level, Nigeria's labour movement and the military government were on a collision course. The Nigeria Labour Congress was fiercely contesting the structural adjustment policies of the Babangida regime, including the effort to raise domestic petrol prices in step with the continuing devaluation of the Naira (Beckman, 1995). The closing of the widening gap between domestic prices as calculated in dollars and world market prices ("subsidy removal") became a key conditionality attached to the support offered by the World Bank for Nigeria's "home grown" adjustment programme (Olukoshi, 1993). Unions played a central role in thwarting government efforts to comply with World Bank directives. In 1988, use was made of a split within the NLC, which the government itself had been fanning, to clamp down on the labour leadership and prepare the way for a less "confrontational" one (Beckman, 1995). The new NLC president sought political recognition and state financial support for NLC programmes but pressures from within the organization placed limits on such accommodation with the state.

The revision of the minimum wage became the rallying point for a new challenge to the government. The campaign was led by the General Secretary of the textile union, Adams Oshiomhole, who had become a Deputy President of the reconstituted NLC and chairman of the committee set to pursue the revision. At the beginning of the decade, the extreme weakness of the textile industry made the union opposed to the minimum wage demands of the Nigeria Labour Congress. The partial recovery of the textile industry in the late 1980s, however, allowed the union to spearhead the demand for a major revision of the minimum wage which had been left at its 1981 level. This was opposed by the liberalizing reformers of the World Bank for whom state intervention in wage regulation was objectionable on principle. After protracted negotiations and much subterfuge the state finally accepted a 100 per cent increase, although retreating from its commitment by claiming that the increase referred to the total take-home pay, not the basic wage as demanded by the unions. The interpretation, however, became a matter for those negotiating the implementation at the level of the industrial unions. Here the textile union led the way. The textile employers, unlike in 1981, were confident that they would be able to accommodate the 100 per cent increase. Their official spokesman emphasized that wages—before the increase—had been reduced to only some 5–6 per cent of total costs, despite textiles being a labour intensive industry (Eburajolo, interview 1991). The low figure was the result of the suppression of wages throughout the decade while other costs, especially of imported inputs but also of domestically produced electric power and fuel had rocketed with the decline of the value of the Naira.

In negotiating the implementation of the new minimum wage, the main bone of contention was the extent to which wages above the new minimum should be revised upwards. Employers insisted that there should be no "across the board" increases. The textile union, jointly with other private sector unions, issued an ultimatum at short notice, in open defiance of government directives that no agreements arrived at "under duress" would be approved by the state. The textile workers got their across the board increase (an increase in the total wage bill of some 80 per cent, according to the employers), the night before the ultimatum expired. The union refused to submit the agreement to the government for approval as stipulated by the state. The employers quietly acquiesced. The union was particularly proud that it had achieved an additional increase in fringe benefits, which, as we have seen, were a substantial part of the take-home pay, commensurate to the general wage increase (Oshiomhole and Eburajolo, interviews 1991).

8. WORKERS' COPING STRATEGIES

The January 1991 collective agreement, following on the national minimum wage deal, was a major achievement for the textile workers. It meant that on the average they may have recovered roughly half of what they had lost in purchasing power over a decade of crisis and adjustment. A take-home pay that had been cut in real terms by two-thirds was doubled for the lowest paid and increased by at least 50 per cent for most others. It was a victory for which the union could be rightly proud. It compared favourably to wage developments in other industries and in the dominant public service sector in particular. While the union bargained successfully, the outcome also reflected the recovery of the textile industry, which permitted, unlike ten years earlier, a major wage hike. In the context of deepening national political crisis and the incapacity of the state to maintain an elementary level of fiscal and monetary control even this moderate recovery, however, was threatened by inflation and stagnation. While our study was officially concluded in 1991, the workers' rebellion in May 1993 obliged us to revisit the issues: What was really achieved? What did it mean to the workers? That discussion will be saved for Chapter 12. But also within the context of the developments of the 1980s, which are the centre of our study, we need to ask how were workers able to cope with such drastic cuts in real wages. What were their survival strategies?

The structure and formation of the work force had decisive implications for the scope and orientation of both the collective and the individual response. A survey of some 500 workers in 12 factories in Kano and Kaduna was undertaken in 1987. It probed the structure of the work force and workers' perceptions of the options available to them. The survey which was carried out with the assistance of the union has been reported separately (Andræ, 1992). The results are summarized in table form in the Appendix which also contains a note on survey methods. In this chapter we shall refer to Appendix, Tables 3:1 to 3:3, of which Table 3:1 gives some general background data. The workers were nearly all male and mostly in age groups with family responsibilities. There were few women in the industry as a whole, except in the small garments firms which were largely outside our study and not covered by the survey (for a separate discussion of women in the Lagos garments sector, see Andræ, 1997). Nearly all workers surveyed were married and had other dependents who were with them in the city, including younger relatives who went to school. These rarely contributed any income but took part in household labour. Wives were said to have some income in only a quarter of the households. Children were usually going to school, and said to hardly contribute at all, income-wise. The income of wives was primarily from trade or some marginal farming. On the whole, other family income was not thought to be a major source of livelihood by these male factory workers, although for the usual reasons, it is likely that it was downplayed in their responses. They probably did not have the full information and were keen to guard their ability to carry out their "manly responsibilities".

Asked about what they did to make ends meet when real wages had gone down, most workers responded that they simply consumed less. But they also commonly depended on supplementary income from other sources. About 40 per cent of the workers said they had found some extra income within the city, including farming. In Kano one-third had other urban type income (crafts, trade etc..), in Kaduna only one quarter. Our survey confirms (Appendix, Table 3:2) that the overwhelming majority of the workers were first generation non-farmers. Their parents were in most cases farmers and they themselves frequently had experiences of agricultural work, often as their only previous job experience. Most workers said they knew how to farm and were prepared to do it if they had access to land. Farming was a major option as a source of income supplementation, especially in Kaduna, where almost one-third of the workers claimed that they farmed. In Kano trading and crafts were more important. In both places, farming was more common among workers who came from the same state who could be expected to have better access to land and knowledge of farming methods relevant to the area. As could also be expected, those with higher educational achievements were less likely to farm. Most workers (close to 90 per cent) claimed, irrespective of state of origin, that they would have access to farmland in their home areas, and even in most cases "enough to live on". Very few, however, some three per cent, participated directly through their own work. Others contributed financially by hiring labour: eight per cent in Kano and 17 in Kaduna. Proceeds from such home area farming were likely to be used to meet family obligations there.

Supplementary sources of income may help to explain how some workers were able to sustain themselves and their families despite the drastic decrease in the real wage. However, more than half of the surveyed workers claimed that they did not have any such supplements. Some suggested that the work-load in the factory was all they could cope with, irrespective of their needs. Especially before the stabilization and upturn in industry during the late 1980s, many workers left employment voluntarily because they could not cope. Temporary closures with or without full pay, repeated compulsory leave and prolonged periods of employment without any work induced many to look for alternatives. Accumulated gratuities and other end-of-service benefits provided starting-up capital. The improved redundancy benefits negotiated by the union during the height of the crisis of the early 1980s added to the inducement. Many workers saw factory work as a stepping stone to other careers. Interviews with branch union officers, suggested that workers' aspirations in this direction were either to accumulate enough capital to set themselves up on their own, or to move on to clerical work or further education.

Many workers decided to accept the redundancy offers in the early phase of the crisis. However, as the crisis deepened, lay-offs throughout the wage economy caused overcrowding in the informal sector and workers became less willing to leave voluntarily. This was despite the intensification of the work load that the union characterized as "overloading" and which pressed a reduced labour force to keep up the same production. Company employment records show a marked decline in labour turnover. Overloading and intensified work discipline undermined the scope for certain income supplementation strategies. The lack of alternatives, with the whole economy in crisis, had confined the workers to the factories in ways that they themselves may not have anticipated when they first entered the industry.

The options were narrowing. With receding markets, the employment capacity of Nigeria's import dependent industry as a whole was crumbling and the turnover on remaining jobs was low. The public service sector had been forced to reduce its staff and the informal sector was invaded by those made redundant. The demand for the goods and services provided by a swelling number of entrepreneurs in this sector dropped. Farming in the city could for most be little more than a marginal source of income. Main (1989) suggests that most of the redundant workers in Kano at that time returned home to the rural areas. The textile workers we interviewed were pessimistic about their chances of getting alternative city jobs, especially in Kaduna, where only one in six thought that they might be able to make a living in the city if they lost their textile factory employment. In Kano, one-third thought they could. Very few expected to find other wage work. Trading and education were perceived as more substantial alternatives, particularly in Kano. Leaving the city to farm was the main alternative for two-thirds of those interviewed in Kaduna and for some one-third in Kano.

But workers did not want to return to agriculture. Their reluctance made sense considering the investment that most of them had already made in urban life. This is indicated, for instance, by their level of education and their non-agricultural work experience. Acquiring formal ("Western") education was in itself a sign of aspiring to leave farming. Nearly all the workers in our survey had primary school background and many had some post-primary education as well (in Kano more than half), sometimes in the form of commercial or technical training. A predominant aspiration was to go for further training.

While agriculture and returning to the village continued to be seen as a safety valve and an escape route, workers were increasingly anxious to hold on to their jobs, despite having suffered a dramatic deterioration in pay and working conditions. As summarized in Appendix, Table 3:3, our survey suggests a labour force that contained a growing core of workers who saw themselves as committed to urban-based wage work; well educated and with rather long experience in wage employment. Their aspirations were not in industrial employment alone, but they were determined to move out of farming and to remain in the urban economy. The crisis, by narrowing the options, had reinforced their working class identity, despite the growing inability of workers to reproduce themselves solely as wage workers.

Chapter 4

Companies, Cities, and Workers

1. VARIATIONS IN IMPACT AND RESPONSE

The impact of crises and changes in policy varied from one company to another and so did company responses. These depended on the type and quality of their products and how consumer demand and access to markets were affected. Some had products which were particularly vulnerable to competition from smuggling while others produced goods like fine lace for which local demand collapsed with recession. Companies with high quality African prints were well placed to capture the new West African markets, while those with an output of grey baft for further processing could take advantage of openings in supplying dyers and printers in the USA. Companies that had spinning facilities suffered less from the import squeeze than those who had not. Some spinners that in the past had produced yarn merely for their own company consumption could make extra profits from selling to yarn-starved local firms who used to get their supplies from abroad. All, spinners too, had to struggle for access to imported raw material, through licensing and later through banks and foreign exchange auctions. Access to local cotton supplies were at first through administrative allocations from the Cotton Board, later through competition in a not-so-free market where groups of companies ganged up to secure control and where also state governments were busy buyers.

Companies were unequally placed in these games. How they fared depended, among other things, on the conditions of the plant, the type and state of the machinery used, its age, level of maintenance, and how competitive they were in terms of the general technological development within the industry. We find first generation plants with outdated equipment while others had sophisticated shuttle-less sulzer looms, rotor spindles and other up-front technology. Companies differed in terms of access to maintenance services, drawing on different networks, locally and transnationally. The question of financial strength was of course particularly important, including access to working capital to handle increased costs of inputs or investment capital for necessary restructuring. It was a matter not only of how successfully a company performed. It also depended on ownership, bank connections, and institutional sponsorship. A subsidiary of a foreign transnational, for instance, was in a better position to handle the foreign exchange squeeze. Some companies that faced bottlenecks in terms of technology, maintenance or inputs could be helped out by their owners or sponsors while others had nothing to fall back upon. Some owners, as we saw in the previous chapter, even abandoned their factories and ran away when the chips were down.

Less tangible, but equally important, was of course the quality and orientation of management and its ability to respond effectively to new market and production conditions. Management agreements in state firms may have aggravated problems due to lack of incentives for restructuring. Some local merchant-industrialists, Nigerians and Lebanese, operated more like family firms with less outside, professional management while the transnationals had their own internal managerial career paths. The advantages were not necessarily all on the transnational side. Local managements were sometimes in a better position to draw on local competence and local political and institutional connections.

Patterns of ownership and management had implications for the modes of relating to the workers, in terms of recruitment, work place organization, and industrial relations. Managements carried with them particular approaches to labour relations from the corporate cultures into which they had been socialized through training and work experiences. There were "national" aspects of such cultures, relating to countries of origin and ethnic-based social interaction, e.g. within the Lebanese community in Kano and the Indian community in Lagos. But the scope for cultural variations was constrained by structural features such as size and technology as well as the place of labour in overall production costs. An advanced, large-scale integrated spinning and weaving mill, for instance, with thousands of workers could not manage its labour relations in the direct, personalized manner of a small family firm. Or if it did, it was likely to stumble into problems, especially, of course, in the context of developments on the workers' side, in terms of organization and unionization over which the owners may have limited control.

The labour regime therefore varied significantly from one company to another, although there were also strong homogenizing forces at work, including centralized collective bargaining and forms of organization on the side of both employers and workers. Companies took different stands vis-à-vis the union, some trying to keep it out altogether, some holding it at arm´s length, while others allowed it to be fully integrated in their industrial relations practices. Some firms played a leading role in the textile employers' association and as such in national collective bargaining while others refused to join the association and implement agreements reached at that level.

This chapter is the first in a sequence of three that address structural features of the Nigerian textile industry and its labour force and their implications for the labour regime. It begins by summarizing data on the textile industry as a whole as far as it can be documented from industry and union sources, looking at the distribution of firms in terms of product or process orientation (weaving versus spinning etc.), type of technology (spindles, rotors, shuttle-less looms etc.), size of operations (in terms of installed machinery), ownership (state-private, foreign-indigenous, foreign by nationality), size (of employment) and location. This sets the scene for the presentation of individual company experiences in Chapter 5, where we take a closer look at six companies, three in Kaduna and three in Kano. In Chapter 6, we conclude this first part of the study with a discussion of how the structural features of the industry and their differentiation between companies and locations may help elucidate the central process addressed in this study, the formation of a union-based labour regime.

We argue that each company needs to be understood in terms of its location in the context of local and regional political economies, with industrial environments, markets and reproduction conditions for labour, as well as political institutions which have emerged historically in line with the uneven development of production, class, and state formations. Our analytical perspectives, in these respects are influenced by theoretical work in economic geography relating to the role of place in industrial restructuring (Massey, 1984 and 1995; Warde, 1988; Johnston, 1991). We are therefore concerned with the historical formation of the localities, in this case the three main textile cities, Lagos, Kaduna and Kano, and the way in which it has conditioned the development of the industry in each. We pay particular attention to Kaduna and Kano, two large cities with sharply contrasting histories, one a colonial new-town and military-bureaucratic metropolis, the other a merchant city with a long unbroken history of commercial activity in a settled peasant environment. We discuss the importance of politics and state power in shaping industry and local entrepreneurial classes. The chapter ends by looking at the composition and orientation of the labour force. The contrast between Kaduna and Kano in this respect is less striking, at least when compared to the dramatic difference in entrepreneurial outlook. The textile industries in both cities relied primarily on similar sources of mostly long distance migrant labour with a rural, non-wage background. However, some features, including a stronger urban and informal orientation of the Kano labour force and a more pronounced rural–farming link in Kaduna, add to our understanding of the way in which labour regimes are moulded by the specificities of local political economies.

2. THE DIFFERENTIATION OF THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY

At the time we commenced our studies, in the mid-1980s, the Nigerian textile industry, as recorded by industry sources, was organized in some 100 establishments with an estimated capacity to produce 400–600 million metres of cloth annually (NTMA, 1985; NIDB, 1986). The products ranged from grey baft to shirting, dyed cloth, prints of various quality and pattern as well as embroidered lace. They also included a smaller share of towels, bed sheets, blankets and carpets as well as some knitted goods. 67 textile firms were members of the NTMA (together with a few garment factories, that are not included in this study). For these registered firms data were available referring to mid-1985, which we will use here to bring out some characteristic features of the industry (NTMA, 1985; cf., Andræ and Beckman, 1987:20, on which this section draws). Information on location and the nationality of owners was given by Young-Itiye of NTMA (interviews 1985) and cross-checked with Eburajolo of NTGTEA (interview 1985). Nationality refers to dominant owners or, in a few cases, possibly rather to management control. Our sources will have characterized as Chinese or Indian some firms which were British registered (e.g. Hong Kong-based Chinese). The features that emerge from this material are summarized in tables 4:1 and 4:2.

26 firms accounted for all the spinning, most of them large, operating from 25,000 to some 55,000 spindles. Only a few had less than 10,000 spindles, (one, KTL, had stated over 80,000, which were however not all operable as we find out in Chapter 5). Most of these spinners were also weavers and together they accounted for some 80 per cent of available weaving capacity. Two-thirds of the spinners were located outside Lagos, four in Kaduna, including three of the largest ones, six in Kano, and one each in Gusau, Funtua, and Ilorin in the northern states and in Aba, Ado-Ekiti, Onitsha and Asaba in the South (see Map 4:1). The Chinese were notable among the owners of these large integrated establishments. Five were affiliated with the Cha (UNTL) group with its base in Kaduna. This formally British-registered firm dominated a group of eight factories. A similar number of spinners were designated as Nigerian, spread out over the country, reflecting the predominance of public ownership and politically motivated regional diffusion. Five spinners were Lebanese (mostly with Nigerian citizenship—but with the Lebanese one retained). Three spinners had Indian participation, all Lagos based.

In addition to the 26 spinners, another 17 were combined weavers, knitters or embroiderers. These were centred in Lagos, with a few also located in Kano. Some 18 of the non-spinners were single process firms. They were weavers in most cases, usually smaller ones, some in Kano, most of them in Lagos. Printing was done as part of the finishing process by an indeterminate number of weavers, and occasionally as a single activity. Of the altogether 40 non-spinning firms, 27 had Indian participation, all but three of which were located in Lagos. Six Nigerian-controlled factories were also centred in Lagos. Apart from the NTMA member firms, another 15 smaller ones were known to the Association. It was suggested that they were mostly in knitting and embroidery. The information on nationality in this group was only sketchy, often joint Nigerian–Asian enterprises. As we go down in size, below 50 workers, it is likely that many more firms were unknown to the Association, mostly in the garments sector, regionally dis-

Map 4:1. *Nigeria with major textile industry locations and reference areas for labour recruitment*

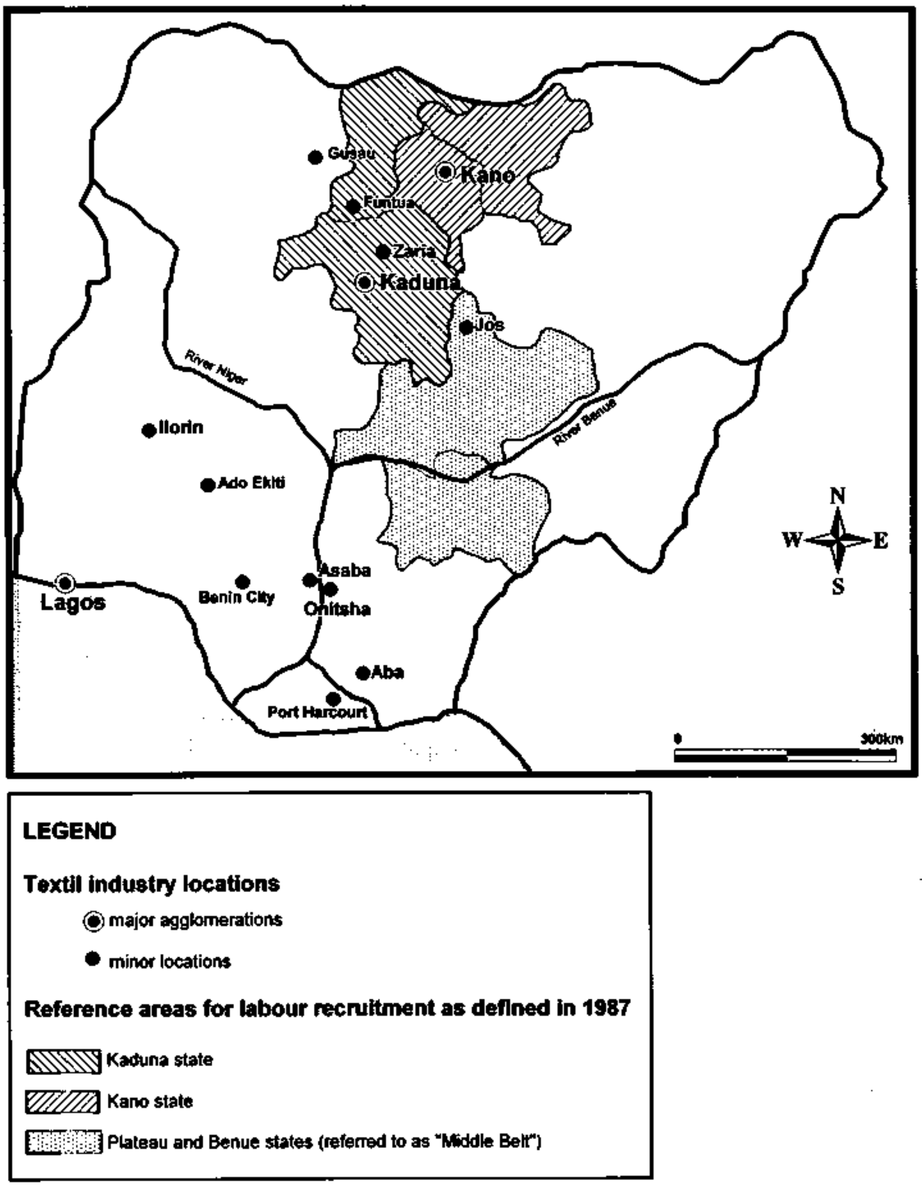


Table 4:1. *Textile factories: Location and nationality (NTMA members)*

Spinners(a)	Indian	Chinese	Lebanese	Nigerian	Other	Total
Lagos	3	2	1	1	1	8
Kano			4	1	1	6
Kaduna		2		1	1	4
Other south		1		3		4
Other north		3		1		4
Subtotal	3	8	5	7	3	26
Non-spinners						
Lagos	24	1	1	3	1	30
Kano	1		1	1		3
Kaduna	2	1				3
Other south				2		2
Other north						0
Subtotal	27	2	2	6	1	38
Total	30	10	7	13	4	64

Note: (a) Those with any spinning (all but five also weave and/or knit).
Source: NTMA, 1985.

persed and Nigerian owned. Union organizers occasionally stumbled accross these smaller firms, but, as we shall see, tended to forget about them because they were too difficult to organize, especially as they would not yield much in terms of membership dues.

The strong foreign dominance in the industry can be summarized by aggregating the NTMA figures on capacity given in the first half of Table 4:2. Nigerian "indigenization" laws (1972, 1977) allowed up to 60 per cent foreign control in spinning and weaving, the basic processes of the trade, while stipulating a Nigerian majority ownership in printing and dyeing (NIDB, 1986). As basic processes and finishing were mostly integrated even the latter would tend to be part of foreign controlled enterprises. Garment production was exclusively reserved for Nigerians. The NTMA data show that about one-third of the capacity in conventional spindles and looms was found in factories that were designated as all-Nigerian, most of it in a small number of large state-owned plants. In the more modern rotor spinning and shuttle-less weaving as well as in knitting the all-Nigerian share was smaller still. Gaskiya, the new large indigenously owned Kano mill, stands out as an exception. This was otherwise where Indians featured strongly, to an important extent in shuttle-less weaving, to a lesser degree and together with the Lebanese-origin owners, in rotor spinning, and overwhelmingly in knitting and embroidery. In terms of volume, the conventional spinning and weaving processes, however, constituted by far the dominant part of the sector, and here the Chinese represented the main foreign element. A technological bias according to nationality is thus another feature in the industry. The predominance of Kaduna as a centre for conventional spinning and weaving stands out from the same data, as arranged in the latter part of Table 4:2. Kano appears as more modern-machinery oriented in spinning and weaving and had some embroidery as well. Lagos is shown to have the most complex all-round structure.

Table 4:2. *Textile industry: Type of process by nationality and location (NTMA members)* (Per cent of installed machinery)

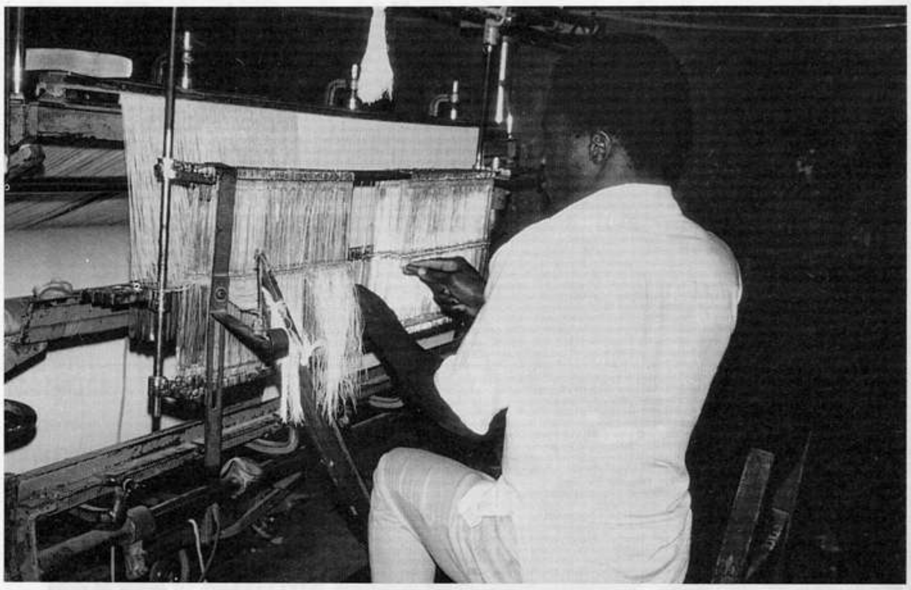
	Spindles	Rotors	Shuttle looms	Shuttle-less looms	Knitting	Embroidery
Nationality						
Indian	13	31	17	63	86	88
Chinese	36	7	46	0	3	12
Lebanese	6	36	0	13	0	0
Nigerian	34	19	28	11	11	0
Other	11	6	10	13	0	0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Location						
Lagos	33	40	39	69	97	60
Kano	9	42	3	22	0	7
Kaduna	33	18	33	8	0	0
Other south	15	0	16	1	3	0
Other north	9	0	8	0	0	0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Numbers	662,268	4,893	18,409	2,060	811	215

Source: NTMA, 1985

3. DISTRIBUTION BY SIZE OF EMPLOYMENT

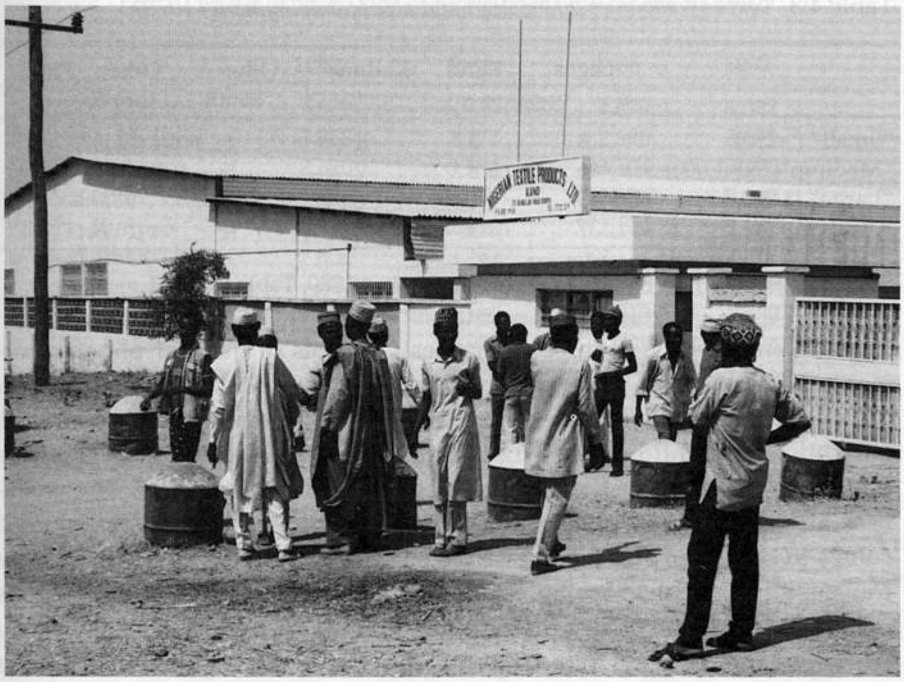
Employment data allow us to map the regional distribution of the firms with respect to size. A survey from 1979 covered 67 companies for which employment figures were reported. It is summarized in Table 4:3. A rough distinction is made (by us) between small (less than 250 workers), medium (250 to less than 1,000) and large (1,000 plus) companies. The small firms, especially those with less than 50 workers, are likely to be grossly under-represented, so the comparisons refer in the first place to the two upper categories.

Spinning



Preparation for weaving

Weaving



A small textile factory, NTP, in Kano

Fagge cloth market in Kano

Table 4:3. *Textile companies by location and size of employment (1979)*

	Lagos	Kano	Kaduna	Other south	Other north	Total
"Small" (–250)	8	3	1	1	-	13
"Medium"(250–1,000)	16	8	2	5	-	31
"Large" (1,000–)	13	1	6	2	1	23
All sizes	37	12	9	8	1	67

Source: Adapted from Rognsvag and Ukponmwan 1980, Table 12, p.36.

Lagos dominated in all three categories. In terms of number of establishments Kaduna had less than a quarter of those found in Lagos but this difference becomes less marked when we look at the size of the firms. While only about one-third of the Lagos firms were large-scale (1,000 workers plus), two-thirds of the Kaduna firms belonged in this category. The weakness at the lower end is as significant as the strength at the top when it comes to characterizing the enterprise pattern in Kaduna, as dominated by transnational and state capital. Kano, with more firms than Kaduna, had its own distinct pattern of size distribution, dominated by middle-sized firms, with only one company in the top category. It also corresponds to a distinct pattern of ownership with a strong input of indigenous or semi-indigenous (naturalized Lebanese) private capital.

Union membership data allow us to pursue the size of firms in terms of employment in more detail. The compulsory check-off system for the payment of union dues meant that branch membership and number of employees were virtually identical. Looking first at the top end of the scale we find some 20 plants with more than one thousand workers. Using 1992 data, Table 4:4 lists these top 20 in order of size, adding data for 1980, 1984, and 1988 where available.

The 20 largest firms, constituting less than one-fifth of the total number of firms organized by the union in 1992 (108 branches), had almost 40,000 workers employed or almost two-thirds of the total registered members of the union (62,035: GS Report, 1992). Out of the top 20 firms, 10 were in Lagos, four in Kaduna and only one in Kano, with the remaining six located away from the three big cities. The Lagos dominance becomes less apparent when we note that tree of the top five companies were in Kaduna with UNTL standing out with over 6,000 workers in 1992. The leading role of UNTL in the industry as a whole is reinforced when its control over three other companies on the list (Supertex, Funtua, and Zamfara) is also taken into consideration. Kano is marginal to the top league, except for the one big new plant, Gaskiya, opened in 1985. Kano's claim to be a textile city lies, as we saw in Table 3, in a number of middle-sized plants which dis tinguishes it from other towns that have one large textile factory, like Gusau,

Table 4:4. *Top 20 textile firms by size of employment (as ranked in 1992)*

	1980	1984	1988	1992
1. UNTL, Kaduna	7,522	6,979 (1983)	4,679	6,037
2. Arewa, Kaduna	3,863	3,177	2,598	3,193
3. Afprint, Lagos	3,620	3,554	3,104	3,170
4. Nichemtex, Lagos	n.a.	3,099	2,626	3,080
5. KTL, Kaduna	4,000 est.	2,920	2,144	2,488
6. Specomills, Lagos	n.a.	2,282	2,131	2,373
7. Five Stars, Lagos	n.a.	1,800	1,696	1,679
8. Bagco , Lagos	n.a.	1,189	940	1,639
9. NTM, Lagos	2,735	2,900	1,829	1,624
10. Zamfara Tex, Gusau	2,220	1,181	1,463	1,616
11. Enpee, Lagos	1,780	1,603	1,284	1,517
12. GCM, Onitsha	3,400	2,000	1,317	1,378
13. Asaba Tex, Asaba	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1,331
14. Aba Tex, Aba	1,894	1,760	1,215	1,193
15. Gaskiya, Kano	not op.	not op.	851	1,140
16. President, Lagos	1239	843	966	1,113
17. Supertex, Kaduna	n.a.	n.a.	532	1,065
18. Bhojson, Lagos	n.a.	n.a.	1,046	1,057
19. Funtua Tex, Funtua	80	922	693	1,005
20. Spintex, Lagos	n.a.	300	572	1,004

Note: n.a. = not available; not op. = not opened/not operational.

Sources: 1980: NTGTEA, 1983 and company interviews (UNTL, KTL); 1984: NIDB, 1986; Zonal Reports (Bagco, GCM, Specomills, Spintex), company interviews (Arewa, Supertex); 1988 and 1992: GS Reports.

Onitsha, Asaba, Aba, and Funtua. Aba may have a similar claim, having a number of small indigenous firms, unfortunately poorly covered by both the employers' association and the union. The locations mentioned appear on Map 4:1 on p. 74. The overall regional distribution of the work force is reflected in union membership records, which in 1994 show that 51 per cent of the members were in Lagos and surroundings, 37 per cent in the Kaduna–Kano zones, and 10 per cent in the Mid-western and South-eastern zone (NEC, 15 July 1994).

4. THE INDUSTRY PROFILE OF THREE TEXTILE CITIES

The textile industry in the three major textile cities has its distinct profile in each. Kaduna is dominated by a small number of large firms, including three of the largest in the country, UNTL, Arewa and KTL. Among themselves they account for 80 per cent of employment in the Kaduna textile industry according to 1992 union figures. They are highly integrated plants in terms of product and process orientation. They combine spinning and weaving as well as dyeing, printing and other finishing, either in the same plant or in affiliated ones. The process of integration was intensified during the period studied, largely through take-overs. At the onset of the period, technology in these large integrated plants was conventional and labour intensive, with each worker handling few machines. Although, a certain upgrading took place, there was no wholesale introduction of automated technology in this heavy, mainstream sector during the period studied by us. In terms of ownership, Kaduna was dominated by transnational capital, Chinese in the UNTL Group, Japanese in Arewa, with state capital in KTL, later (in the early 1990s) replaced by Indian control. There was a notable absence of middle-level indigenous or semi-indigenous firms, very little specialized production (except two small firms producing carpets and blankets respectively), and no formal garments production.

The contrast between Kaduna and Kano is sharp. Kano had more than twice the number of enterprises (19 as compared to 9 for Kaduna in 1985) but all small and medium sized, except for Gaskiya, the newcomer, a large integrated mill with spinning, weaving and finishing. Some of the other mills like Bagauda and NTM, also discussed below, had been much bigger in the past. At its peak in the late 1970s, Kano had over 10,000 workers. By the late 1980s, however, the combined work force of the 19 Kano factories did not exceed that of UNTL alone, or some 6,000 workers. Most of the Kano mills were single function/product units, spinners and weavers or more specialized firms, producing e.g. blankets, and embroidered lace. As many as nine factories had a substantial "Levantine" (Lebanese/Syrian) interest and management, some second generation Nigerian citizens. The second major owner group was local Kano merchant capital. A number of the leading Kano merchant families, Badamasi, Dandawaki, Dantatta, Gashash, and Rabiu, participated in a controlling position in the industry, also in Gaskiya, the large modern plant, where Alhaji Nababa Badamasi was the majority shareholder with state banks as minor owners.

Lagos combines some of the features that distinguish Kaduna from Kano. It has both a concentration of large firms, topped by Afprint, and a broad range of smaller and more specialized ones. While the spinning component was strong in both Kaduna and Kano we find proportionately fewer spinners in Lagos. Nichemtex was by far the largest producer of synthetic yarn. At the onset of the period studied, only a few of the large Lagos firms were integrated spinners and weavers. Most of them were specialized single-function firms, including embroidery, cord, thread, and garments. One of the most notable structural changes in the 1980s was the expansion in spinning capacity in Lagos with some of the leading firms, including Afprint, Globe, Atlantic, and NTM in Lagos (as distinct from our Kano case), acquiring their own spinners. While state institutions were important investors, their holdings were integrated with foreign capital. Foreign capital dominates, in marked contrast to Kano, with its strong input of indigenous and semi-indigenous entrepreneurship, although the indigenous component is likely to be more marked in Lagos too when looking at small companies that have succeeded in escaping registration by either NTMA or the union. Unlike Kaduna which is dominated by one foreign ownership group, Cha, the foreign presence in Lagos is spread on many owners, with Indian capital taking a lead in all three size categories.

The distinct profiles of the three cities reflect historical differences in development of the local political economies in the context of the overall dynamics of the Nigerian political economy. The leading role of Lagos, the former capital city (the new one being established in Abuja), may be less surprising than that its share in the number of establishments, output, and employment (around half the national total) is not higher still. Manufacturing industry in post-colonial societies tends to be concentrated in capital cities, especially in port locations, which also provide the hub of the national transport system, with railroad terminals and international airports. This is true, for instance, of Accra-Tema, Abidjan, and Dakar. The capital cities are the natural points of location for investors as they provide access to markets, communications and other infrastructure, to state regulatory agencies and to financial institutions and services, public and private. The cumulative impact of locational advantages tends to be reinforced by agglomerative effects in terms of a favourable business environment with a local labour market for skilled workers, literate in "international" languages, and with housing and social provisions for senior staff and their families.

The role of capital cities as the site of manufacturing industry was grounded historically in the uneven development of the territories during the colonial epoch. Capital cities served as bridgeheads for foreign penetration and external link-ups, allowing them to develop advanced social and economic features that set them off from "backward hinterlands". Lagos was already a lively commercial centre, with indigenous business and professional classes, lawyers, doctors, accountants, clerks, and store keepers by the mid-19th century when Nigeria's northern regions were only marginally penetrated by colonial commerce. It would be another half a century before they were conquered. Uneven development was reinforced under colonialism by the absence of national state institutions and popular political representation committed to some form of national integration and regional distributive justice. Uneven development was often reproduced by post-colonial regimes which tended to have their power base in those regions which had been relatively privileged under the colonial order.

The existence of major industrial agglomerations like Kano and Kaduna in Nigeria's "hinterland" is therefore what first needs to be explained. In the particular case of the textile industry, the centrality of cotton in the agrarian economies of the northern savannah was an important contributing factor. Having predominantly been produced for export in colonial times, cotton provided a natural resource base for industrial processing in the post-colonial era. The ginning industry was already well established throughout the cotton zone (Andræ and Beckman, 1987). While more than 60 per cent of

Nigeria's recorded output from manufacturing was produced in Lagos (Taylor, 1993), it had only half of the textile output, most likely reflecting this locational bias in favour of the cotton areas of the north.

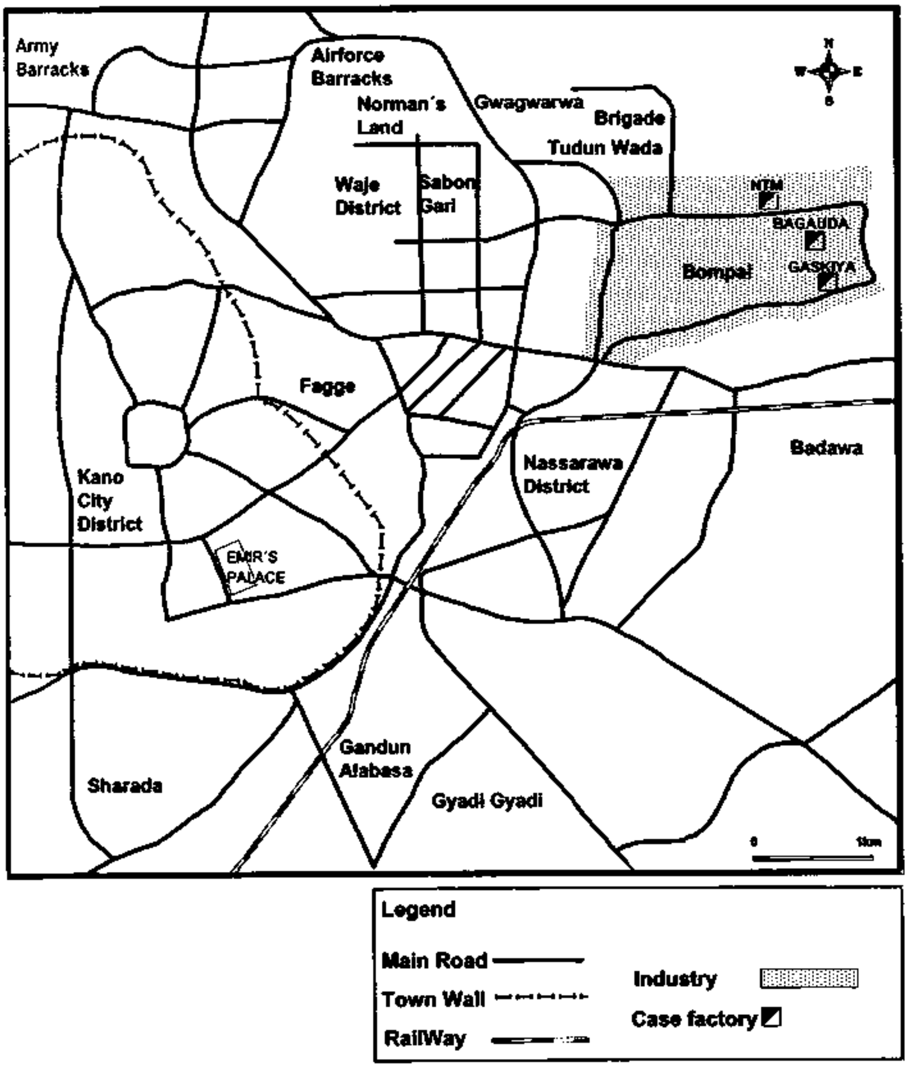
The social and political forces behind such a regional industrialization drive, however, need to be understood in terms of the centrality in the Nigerian political economy of regionally specific commercial and political classes with deep roots in pre-colonial social formations, as reinforced by colonial strategies of domination, and by the regionalization of economic opportunities and class formation.

5. KANO: AN ANCIENT MERCHANT CITY

The walled city of Kano (see Map 4:2) was the capital of an ancient Hausa kingdom and a major centre of commerce and crafts production in the West African savannah region. It was a southern terminus in the trans-Saharan trade and linked to other parts of West Africa through the long-distance regional trade in salt, kola nuts, leather goods, cloth, including the woven indigo dyed cloth which was widely traded in the Sudan region. It was also a centre of local trade (Mabogunje, 1968). It was conquered during the Fulani-led Jihad of the late 18th and early 19th centuries and incorporated into the Sokoto Caliphate, which covered much of what is now northern Nigeria and parts of the surrounding territories. By virtue of its advanced urban and commercial culture with a base in a densely settled and permanently cultivated rural hinterland, Kano retained a high level of autonomy within the Caliphate. Kano was the wealthiest emirate of the Caliphate and contributed to an important extent to its upkeep, militarily and financially (Mahdi, 1989). The Emir, the Fulani ruler, while subordinated to the Sultan in Sokoto, became increasingly integrated into the local Hausa ruling class.

Colonial commercial and political impositions destroyed much of regional and long-distance trade, including its base in the Kano crafts industry. The status of Kano as the commercial capital of the north, however, was reinforced. The colonial conquest at the turn of the century brought the expansion of groundnut and cotton production for exports, facilitated by the construction of a railway which reached Kano in 1911 (Hogendorn 1979). Production was mostly by small independent farmers and with a rising class of indigenous traders buying crops on behalf of colonial trading companies. Many of the produce buyers had a background in pre-colonial merchant families, others were former junior clerks of the colonial firms. The long-distance trade in cattle and kola nuts was another source of accumulation and capitalist class formation (Tahir, 1975). Early machine-based manufacturing was linked to the processing of agricultural produce for export, ginning, vegetable oil extraction, and tanning (Bashir, 1989). Lebanese and other West Asian businessmen entered the arena both as agents and competitors of

Map 4:2. *Kano with Bompal Industrial area and case factories*



the colonial firms. They integrated easily into the local ruling families in Kano which had a history of interacting, commercially and culturally, with communities on the other side of the Sahara. Their partnership with local business and political classes contributed to the expansion of a modern, indigenous merchant class. The local aristocracy, the Emir and other key members of the ruling families of the Emirate system, were well placed to join the business, openly or more discretely through intermediaries (J. Ibrahim, 1991; O.F. Ibrahim, 1988; Dan-Asabe, 1987; Olukoshi, 1985, 1986).
These colonial, indigenous, and Lebanese merchant entrepreneurs with their local political allies provided the basis for the emergence of the Kano textile industry. The trade in machine produced textile products was a favoured line of this merchant class, just as their predecessors, the pre-colonial merchants had accumulated on the basis of a large body of local spinners, weavers, dyers, embroiderers, and tailors, both in Kano city and in the surrounding villages (Shea, 1975; Pokrant, 1982). The process was facilitated by the development of modern state institutions in the post-World War II situation and the move towards national independence. Of particular importance was the appropriation of surplus from the peasant export economies through the state marketing board system. It strengthened private accumulation by the indigenous businessmen in their role as "licensed buying agents" of the boards. It provided finance for state development agencies for which manufacturing industry became one of the areas for promotion and direct investment. The first textile industry in Kano which began production in 1957 had such funding with one-third of the share capital provided directly by the Northern Region Marketing Board and one-third by the Northern Region Development Corporation which had its own funds from the same source (Helleiner, 1970). The state agencies operated within a context dominated by local merchants and their political allies. The oil boom of the 1970s brought in multinational companies of the import substitution kind, flour mills, breweries, pharmaceutical and chemical industries plus some metal working industries, and assembly plants. Primary processors like sawmills, tanneries, and a number of vegetable oil mills, now mostly dormant, had their roots in the colonial economy. Textiles, however, remained the most important sector, both in terms of number of firms and employment (Olukoshi, 1986).

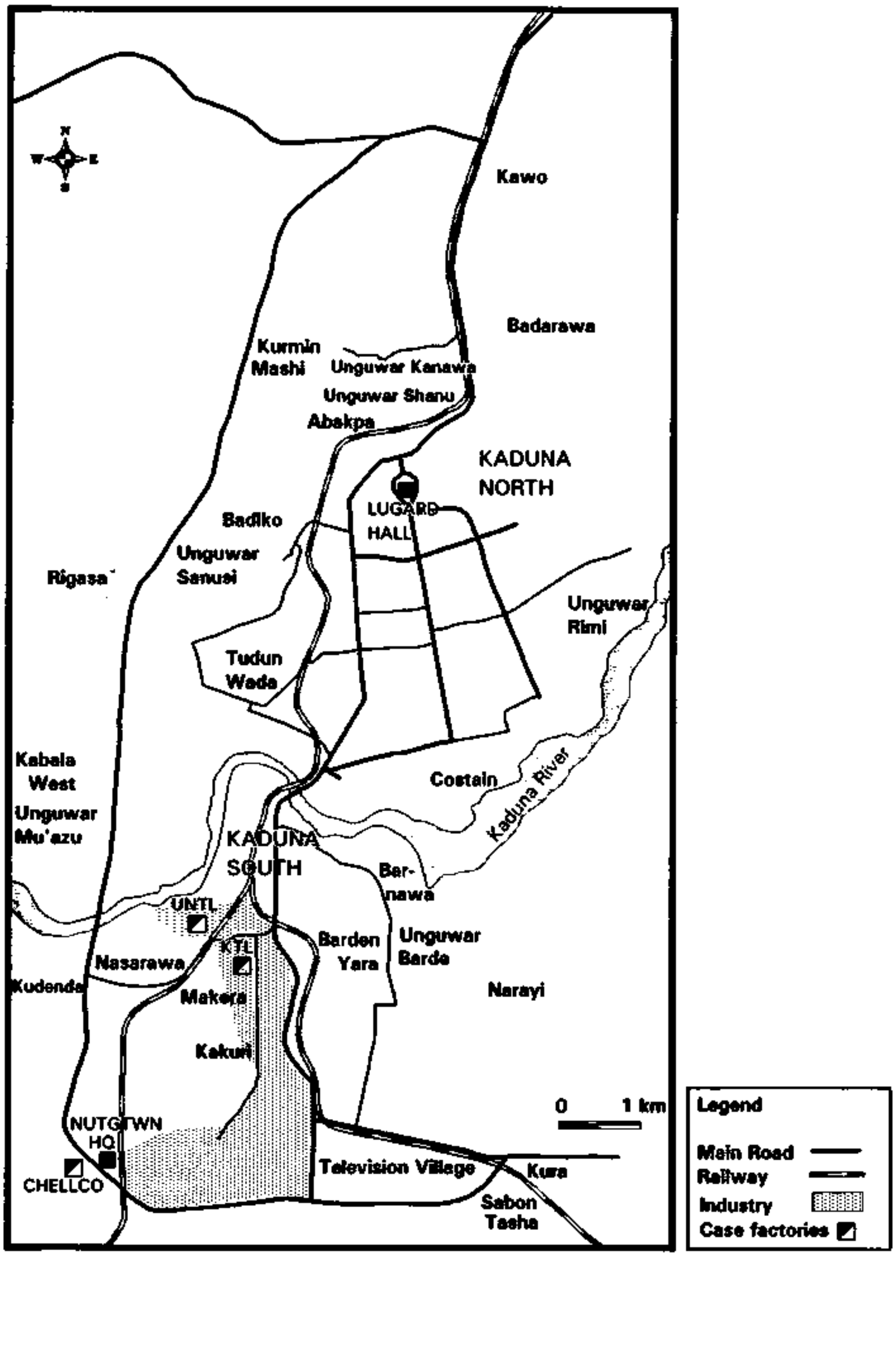
6. KADUNA: A CENTRE OF BUREAUCRATIC POWER

The origins of the Kaduna textile industry were different. Unlike Kano, Kaduna was a product of colonial conquest. There was no pre-colonial urban setting. Kaduna was picked by Lugard, the colonial adventurer who conquered the north, as the site of the colonial capital, which in the first place meant a military garrison (Oyedele, 1987; Medugbon, 1978; Urquhart, 1977). A railway link to the south was central to the plan, again primarily for military, not any immediate economic, reasons. It was seen as a suitable location for military and political control. It was in open country where it would be possible to appropriate large blocks of land without much conflict with local communities. It was far from centres of population and political power, in a society with a strong potential for providing costly resistance to colonial rule, with its traditional Islamic ruling institutions, culture, and popular allegiances which, unlike in much of the south, had not been eroded by long periods of colonial and commercial penetration. Kano was deliberately avoided as it was thought that its people "would exert undue influence on the government" (Medugbon 1978, quoting colonial records). The colonizers judged that survival in this environment depended on their ability to accommodate pre-existing lines of authority wielded through the Emirate system. Christian propagation and therefore also Western education was restricted. The sons of the aristocracy were given special education, supposedly to turn them into loyal and enlightened members of the colonial bureaucracy.

Kaduna (Map 4:3) retained a key role in the system of colonial rule even after Lugard's plans to retain it as the capital was abandoned in favour of Lagos. It remained the centre of colonial military power and the administrative capital of the north. As a colonial new-town it experienced a slow and orderly development, with spacious colonial town planning, government reserved areas, and townships segregated on racial, ethnic and class lines (Oyedele, 1987:154). The highly controlled development aimed originally at preventing the growth of a large native population "for reasons of economy, sanitary efficiency and avoidance of local political complications" (Medugbon 1978, quoting colonial sources). After World War II, however, the city expanded in an increasingly uncontrolled fashion, with an inflow of a wide variety of immigrant communities (Tita, 1979).

The contemporary economic and political importance and rapid growth of the city, however, can be dated to the decolonization phase when Kaduna was made the regional capital of the North as part of a federal system with strong regional autonomy. In the interest of stability and continuity, the federal system was designed by the withdrawing colonial power to give the politically conservative North a leading role in the control of federal power at the centre as well. The northern bureaucratic elites with their strong roots in the emirate system used their new regional and federal standing to build up Kaduna into their own principal power base. Notions of the "Northern oligarchy" and, more conspiratorially, the "Kaduna Maffia" have been used to describe this power elite, or segments of it, usually for polemical purposes (J. Ibrahim, 1991:173 ff; Takaya and Tyoden, 1987; Yahaya, 1985). Being far behind in terms of capitalist entrepreneurship and class formation, they used state investments and alliances with transnational capital as a road to economic power and as a means to balance the more advanced bourgeoisies of the south. The northern modernizers were resentful of the way in which

Map 4:3. *Kaduna with industrial area, case factories, and headquarters of NUTGTWN*



"the North" had been "virtually asleep" for much of the colonial period while "the South" had been advancing commercially and educationally (Northern Nigeria, 1961:11). The marketing board system became a principal source of finance and the Northern Nigeria Development Corporation (NNDC), an investment and holding company, became the principal means (Helleiner, 1970). Its role in manufacturing was stepped up after a reorganization in the late 1960s (Northern Nigeria, 1966; NNDC, n.d.). It was jointly owned by the new northern states after the dissolution of the old Northern Region. The NNDC operated a joint investment company, the NNIL, with the Commonwealth Development Corporation from 1959 until 1978 when NNDC became the sole owner (NNIDL, n.d.). Federal investment companies, like NIDB, were directed to contribute to the regional redistribution of economic opportunities of which Kaduna became a principal beneficiary (Oyedele, 1987:428). The World Bank and its affiliate, the International Finance Corporation, were partners in this essentially state-capitalist development effort. Although committed to the promotion of private enterprise, these institutions had no qualms about joining with state capital in institutions which they saw as "trustees" for the emergence of private entrepreneurial classes. Foreign firms were attracted through generous joint venture financing and favourable management contracts with the state. They were provided with infrastructural facilities and a business environment which was not as developed and diverse as that of Lagos but which had the advantage of being politically more regulated and stable, in contrast to the more volatile southern cities with their uncontrolled expansion, bottlenecks and social disorder. Vast areas of land in Kaduna South (Kakuri) were reserved for manufacturing (Tita, 1979). Not least a dependable water supply was important to the textile industry. Kaduna was to be made the "Manchester of Nigeria", according to Ahmadu Bello, the Northern Premier (Oyedele, 1987:480).

The Civil War (1967–70) brought an end to Kaduna's formal status as the capital of the north. The war prepared the way for the militarization and centralization of state power, weakening the regions, which were gradually broken up into smaller states, almost exclusively dependent on federal funding as the regional agrarian export economies declined into relative insignificance both in absolute terms and even more so relative to the surging, centrally controlled petroleum economy. Kaduna thus found itself reduced first to the capital of a North-Central State, one of 12 states created in 1967, later to that of Kaduna State, one of 19 states from 1976, a state which finally lost its populous northern provinces to a new Katsina State in 1987 (for the state creation process, see Forrest, 1993:50). Yet Kaduna retained its position as the centre of federal economic, political and military power in the north, power which continued to be largely in the hands of a military-bureaucratic elite into which the traditional ruling classes had been partly merged. The latter played an important ideological role in providing "northern", Islamic cultural identities in support of the power aspirations of the elites (J. Ibrahim, 1991). Kaduna remained the informal northern regional capital.

Kaduna continued to be a main locus for large-scale federal investment with foreign participation during the oil boom of the 1970s, including the Peugeot automobile factory and a giant oil refinery. The status of Kaduna as Nigeria's second industrial city was reinforced, not in terms of the number of factories where Kano continued to be well ahead, but in the size of state and transnational investments. Unlike the textile industries of Kano and Lagos which primarily had their basis in their own private business communities with their own alliances and autonomous lines of finance, the Kaduna industry was a political creation depending on state investment and state inducement of large-scale foreign capital.

7. LAGOS: A COSMOPOLITAN METROPOLIS

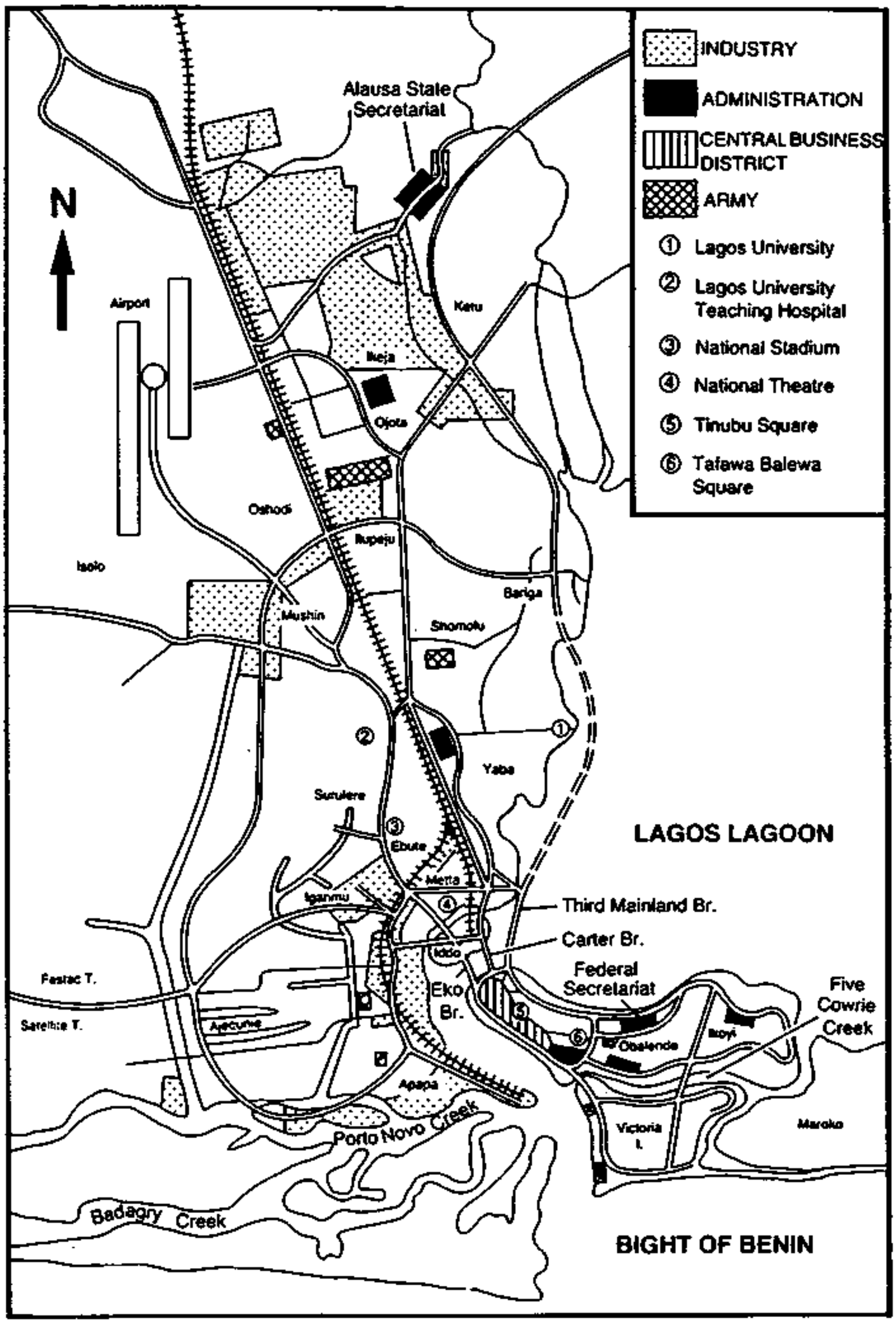
The more varied structure of the Lagos textile industry, with its wide range of establishments, of all sizes, technologies and product orientations, tapering off into small garments firms, reflects a more complex and well established business environment. It is of course the largest and most sophisticated urban agglomeration in the country, with its history as a principal West African port and trading post in the pre-colonial period, as a slave port and a trading point for returned slaves from Brazil and Sierra Leone, along with its influx of European traders and missionaries from the mid-19th century (Mabogunje, 1968). Lagos was declared a British colony in 1861 (ibid. p 243) and became the capital when Britain's territorial acquisitions were amalgamated in 1914. The construction of a railroad linking Lagos to the interior sources of agricultural exports commenced in the 1890s and the port facilities were modernized and expanded in the early decades of the 20th century. Oil palm produce were at first the main export, later joined by cocoa, cotton and groundnuts. The export trade was monopolized by the colonial trading houses at the expense of indigenous merchants. Imports were also controlled by colonial firms, but generated more scope for the expansion of the local business community in the breaking up of bulk imports for the local market. Openings were also generated for the growth of a wage earning class of watchmen, messengers, clerks, storekeepers, and accountants.

Manufacturing commenced on a modest scale, primarily after the Second World War, especially as the prospects of independence threatened the monopolistic trading positions of the colonial firms. These became the first generation of industrial entrepreneurs, spearheaded by the United Africa Company (UAC), a subsidiary of Unilever, which dominated colonial commerce in British West Africa. An "industrial estate" was prepared in 1950 in conjunction with the expansion of the Apapa port on an adjacent island in the lagoon (Map 4:4). While annual population growth is estimated at a modest 3.4 per cent during the first half of the century, it jumped to 18.6 per cent per annum between 1951 and 1963, according to not altogether reliable census figures. From its original island and lagoon locations the city rapidly spread out on the mainland. A new, more extensive industrial estate was established at Ikeja on the mainland in 1959, some 25 km from the city centre, but by now integrated with it in a continuous urban settlement. Mabogunje (1968:270) speaks of a dramatic metropolitan explosion.

As the first capital of independent Nigeria, Lagos benefited from political investment in the new nationhood. It was well endowed to respond to economic opportunities that followed with the growth of federal state power and national development plans and institutions. While the oil boom may have pushed Kano and Kaduna into the range of one million inhabitants each, Lagos is claimed to have had about four million by 1980 and as many as six million by 1990, despite a decade of economic decline (Taylor, 1993). It had the headquarters of most commercial banks, construction and transport companies, and trading houses with a country-wide reach, and the bulk of government business, which thanks to oil, became the main engine of economic activity after the Civil War. The employees of federal institutions and their dependents represented the highest concentration of consumer purchasing power in the country, offering a ready market both for basic wage goods and for specialized and high-income items.

The concern with breaking the combined economic and political domination of Lagos had caused the provincial elites to push for the building of a new federal capital in Abuja, closer to the centre of the country. The shift of federal establishments to the new site began in earnest in the late 1980s. Being a major sea-port and the principal point of entry for goods and people, Lagos had a long history of doing business with the outside world. The higher proportion of single product firms and the lower spinning component in the textile industry may be seen as typical of an open economy, relying on ready access to inputs from outside, also reflecting a sophisticated "metropolitan" market where consumers demand a variety of high quality products, laces, special prints etc. The integrated mills of the north were conversely conscious attempts to tap the regional resource base of those areas where cotton was being produced.

Map 4:4. *Lagos with industrial areas*



8. CAPITAL FORMATION AND STATE POWER: THE IMPORTANCE OF PLACE

Differences in the historical formation of local entrepreneurial classes and in their relations to the state, local and national, stand out as decisive factors in accounting for the variation in industrial structure between the three main textile cities. This is particularly striking in comparing the two northern cities, Kaduna and Kano. The domination of the Kaduna textile industry by a small number of large, integrated firms controlled by state and transnational capital reflects the project of a state-bureaucratic entrepreneurial elite, using its control over state institutions, in collaboration with foreign private and public (World Bank, International Finance Corporation) capital, to compensate for its own weak material base in the economic organization of society. In Kano, on the other hand, the larger number of middle-sized or small firms with a wide variety of product lines reflects the aspirations of essentially locally-based private commercial classes with historical roots in pre-colonial and colonial commerce. Gaskiya, the only Kano mill comparable to the Kaduna ones in terms of size, technology and product orientation is not an exception in this respect but confirms the indigenous business profile of the Kano industry, demonstrating its expanding frontiers and capacities.

Lagos, finally, has the most varied and sophisticated industrial structure, reflecting its status as a major third world city, in close interaction with world markets, cosmopolitan in class formation and social outlook. The profile of the textile industry is the outcome neither of a state-promoted class project of a bureaucratic entrepreneurial elite, with its transnational partners, as in Kaduna, nor of an indigenously rooted private commercial class of the Kano type, although there are elements of both. Here state participation (e.g. NIDB) and domestic private capital are integrated into an essentially cosmopolitan business structure dominated by Indian capital, representing a business community that is highly mobile internationally and which has its domestic roots in a society experienced in textile production at a level of social and economic organization not very different from Nigeria. In Kano, Lebanese merchants integrated and became naturalized into an essentially local business community. In Lagos, the Indian textile firms, also often with colonial merchant links, did not have to naturalize, partly because of the size and orientation of their operations which made them less vulnerable to the indigenization laws. The Lagos business community was essentially cosmopolitan. It also provided scope for small-scale local capital (indigenous and Asian) in the garments sector oriented to the growing demand for ready-made clothing.

Differences in the relationship of the three cities to state power were important in influencing processes of class formation and industrial structure. State involvement was most direct in Kaduna, both in terms of state investments and in creating the conditions for large-scale transnational capital. Enterprises in Kano and Lagos had greater autonomy vis-à-vis the state sector. In Kano, however, we note closer ties between the business community and the local political elite, with its semi-traditional elements, the Emir and the aristocracy. There was less scope for such local political link-ups in the Lagos context. In all three cases, we note that different locations in relation to historical processes of state-formation were critical in determining the constitution and outlook of entrepreneurial classes. Kano had a residue of independent economic and political power, with both an agrarian and urban commercial base, which ensured a level of autonomy vis-à-vis the political projects of both the Sokoto Caliphate and the British Empire. Kano was therefore side-stepped in the wider territorial aspirations of both. Kaduna was chosen as a centre of power both by the colonizers and by the political elite, with its strong links to the Caliphate, which they picked to succeed them (cf. Ahmadu Bello, as quoted by Oyedele, 1987:476). The industrialization of Kaduna was therefore part of the political project of a power elite which was uncomfortable not only with the economic and political domination of Lagos, nationally, but also with the combined economic strength and political autonomy of Kano, regionally.

9. THE LOCAL FORMATION OF LABOUR

Local differences in the link-up between state power and capital formation may go a long way to explain the composition of the textile industry in Nigeria's principal industrial cities. How far can they also explain variations in the labour regimes? These issues will be further explored in the next two chapters when we discuss our six case companies. First, however, we need to look at variations in the composition, orientation and recruitment of the labour force. The formation of capital interacted with processes of working class formation that had their own local specificities, some following naturally from the structure of the enterprise, others from differences in the local political economies. The mode of labour recruitment, for instance, could be expected to be more formal and impersonal in the large Kaduna plants with thousands of employees, while the smaller locally-owned firms of Kano could be expected to use more informal, personalized and localized means. Similarly, the depth of the informal urban economy in Kano, and its closer integration with an intensely cultivated rural hinterland could be expected to generate a work force oriented towards a more informal labour market. In contrast, the predominance of formal wage employment in big industry and the public sector in Kaduna would have its own impact on the orientation in the labour force. In both instances, we would expect that such structural and local features would influence labour relations in the factories, including workers' options and bargaining power.

How significant were these local characteristics? The general composition of the labour force was presented in Chapter 3:8 when discussing workers' responses to crisis and adjustment. The information from our survey undertaken in 1987 in 12 Kano and Kaduna companies and summarized in Tables 3:1–3:3 in the Appendix can also be used for comparing the workers of the two cities. The survey suggests that the labour forces there shared certain basic characteristics, including a pronounced agrarian background and limited previous experience of wage work. In comparison, however, as summarized in Table 4:5, the Kaduna workers were distinctly older, more often straight from a farming background, less educated, and with less experience of other wage work. Most of them had stayed for a long time in the same factory and thus had little experience of the urban labour market. Conversely, the Kano workers were younger and had more schooling. Despite their younger age they had more often had other wage work. They were mobile and had not been long in the factory where we found them. Their non-agricultural and urban experience was noticeably greater.

Table 4:5. *Summary of the labour force in Kano and Kaduna* (per cent)

	Kano	Kaduna
Age below 25 years	36	11
Employed before 1981	22	73
Education: post primary	55	32
Work before present job:		
other wage work	31	13
farming	28	46

Source: Own survey, 1987. See Appendix, Tables 3:1–3:3

The common base of most workers in the rural economy was reflected in their shared assumptions of continued access to rural land. Their declared propensity to return to this rural origin, however, as indicated in Table 4:6, differed markedly between the two cities, tallying with the differences in urban experience.

Table 4:6. *Workers' declared propensity to return to rural origin* (per cent)

	Kano	Kaduna
Would go home to farm if retrenched	41	64
Would never go home to farm	22	4
Own land at home	71	70

Source: Own survey,1987. See Appendix, Tables 3:2–3:3

The perceived options reflect differences in the labour markets of the two cities but also differences in the workers' qualifications, their training and work experience. A larger number of Kano workers, with their higher education and greater urban experience, although still a minority, thought that they would be able to find another urban job if they were to lose the one they had. The commercial environment of Kano with its complex informal economy and close rural links was likely to offer more varied job opportunities than Kaduna with its recent colonial origins and its character as an administrative centre with predominantly large scale industry and less integration with its rural hinterland.

This difference was also reflected in the different involvement in supplementary work. Access to trading positions as well as the propensity to take up trade were higher in Kano. Occupation of land for supplementary agriculture was more often recorded in Kaduna, reflecting a greater preparedness to farm of a less urban-oriented work force. It will also have depended on better access to land in a more sparsely populated urban fringe.

Table 4:7. *Workers' options and supplementary income* (per cent)

	Kano	Kaduna
Perceived alternative work options:		
in the city	36	11
in rural areas	45	75
Supplementary urban income:		
farm income only	7	14
non-farm income only	28	11
both farm and non-farm income	5	16

Source: Own survey, 1987. See Appendix, Tables 3:2–3:3.

In Kano, a centre of Islamic culture and state formation, there was a roughly equal representation of Muslims and Christians in the work force, while Christians dominated very strongly among those we interviewed in Kaduna, the colonial new-town(see Appendix, Table 3:1). Most Kano workers in our survey identified themselves as Hausa/Fulani, although a substantial segment belonged to ethnic groups associated with the "Middle Belt", the weakly urbanized and commercialized middle sections of Nigeria. The latter dominate the Kaduna work force, especially if we include the people of the southern parts of Kaduna State, Southern Zaria, who have much in common, historically and economically, with their Middle Belt neighbours, including an intense interpenetration of Muslim and Christian communities. The combination of access to formal education and a weak local labour market made the Middle Belt and Southern Zaria natural sources of labour migration, a veritable labour reserve, as the opportunities for wage labour expanded in the cities to the north and to the south (cf. Hinchliffe 1973).

The different processes of industrialisation in the two cities are reflected in the differences in rural and urban orientation of the respective work forces. Lubeck (1986) has shown for Kano that the pre-capitalist structures of this city as a whole, both at the economic-geographical level and the level of production forms, still leave their imprint on the labour force. Writing with reference to the work force in the 1970s he gives us a clue to these differences by referring to workers' origin in three distinctly different situations of location and formation as wage labour in industry. The composite history of the constitution of the present labour force includes the stories of how local slaves, traders and craftsmen in the local pre-capitalist society were transformed into wage workers in industry, how rural fringe farmers were ousted from their land and forced to find a living in industry in the cities, and how young school leavers from rural areas further away tried to escape the drudgery of rural life. The allegiances and interests of these groups were found to differ. Lubeck distinguished between the "urbans" (the "sons of Kano"), the "commuters" from the rural fringes of the "close settled" zone, and the migrants from further away, showing how these groups were socially as well as geographically defined. Their own degree of separation from pre-capitalist society was found to vary as well as their patterns of asso-ciation with groups outside the industrial work force which had varying class origins and varying degrees of incorporation in the formal wage economy. We may add, as suggested by our own survey, that the scope for alternative and supplementary opportunities to make a living also differs significantly between these groups of workers.

Looking at Kaduna from the same perspective we find that the workers with a local origin were few, due to the recent establishment of the city itself, in deliberate avoidance of historical concentrations of either urban or rural populations. The "close-settled" zone that surrounds Kano, and within which the rapid post-colonial expansion of this city has taken place, had no equivalent in Kaduna, which is located in sparsely settled agricultural land. We therefore also find few "commuters", that is, groups whose means of existence have been directly affected by expansionary urban development in an immediate rural hinterland. While we find that the "migrants", in Lubeck's terms, dominate numerically in our survey material in both cities, these migrants are inserted, in the Kano case, within in a local political economy, marked by a variety of forms of labour relations, both in the city and in the surrounding zone of urban-rural interpenetration. In Kaduna, on the other hand, the same migrants are fitted into a context where the influences of formal wage relations, in the public sector and large scale industry, have had a dominant influence on local work place culture.

The contrast between formal and informal relations, is demonstrated most graphically in our survey when we look at the different ways by which workers were recruited into the textile industries in the two cities. The question put to the workers was: How were you recruited to this job?

Table 4:8. *Comparing modes of labour recruitment* (per cent)

	Kano	Kaduna
Through another worker in the factory	52	16
Through the owner or manager	11	3
Through the company's Personnel Office	29	18
Through the Labour Office in town	2	54
Other and uncertain	6	9

Source: Own survey, 1987.

While in Kaduna, most remarkably, over half of the workers in our survey claimed that they had been recruited through the local Labour Office, that is, the labour exchange operated by the Ministry of Labour, in the case of Kano, that portion was negligible. An overwhelming number of all the Kano workers claimed that they had been recruited through the assistance of somebody in the factory, either another worker, the owner, manager or personnel officer, people who they in most instances claimed they knew from before or had been introduced to by a friend or relative.

The contrast between the formal mode of labour recruitment in Kaduna and informal mode in Kano illustrates, in a condensed fashion, the importance of place, that is, locally constituted political economies, in explaining the differences in the way that the textile workers have related to their industrial employers, their fellow workers, and to the union in the two cities. It has affected the orientation of both employers and the workers to the formalization of labour relations, including the capacity of the workers to sustain a union-based labour regime. The argument will be developed further in Chapter 6, but first we need to look more closely at the developments of production and labour relations in our six case factories.

Chapter 5

Six Company Cases

1. SIX CASES, TWO CITIES

We have so far given an overview of crises and adjustments in the Nigerian textile industry and the responses by workers and unions. The process can of course best be studied within the experience of individual companies. In order to explore the determinants of adjustment and response, and in particular, the factors which underlie the different modes of regulating labour relations (the labour regime), we examine developments in six companies, representing different types and locations. This helps us, for instance, to understand why some managements were still not accepting the rights of the workers to unionize and negotiate, while others were anxious to uphold good relations and even saw advantages in cooperating closely with the union in the adjustment process. It also allows us to discuss why there were differences in these and other respects not only between individual companies but also between the two cities.

The cases were selected on the basis of a semi-structured survey of twelve companies in Kaduna and Kano that was undertaken by us (GA) in 1985 and 1987, including interviews with management. The survey was supplemented by data from the Nigerian Industrial Development Bank (NIDB) and Federal Office of Statistics (FOS), and, in particular, from union records and interviews with officials at different levels of the union. We were also able to draw from previous local studies, especially Bagobiri 1986 and Lubeck 1986.

For each of the six cases we begin by looking at basic company structure and the experience of crises and adjustment. We proceed to examine the structure of the labour force and the concrete responses of workers and unions. The 1987 survey covered information on the workers and their strategies. Union records, together with interviews and more unstructured discussions with union officials over the years from the mid-1980s onwards give us a picture of collective strategies and responses. Under each case we summarize the history of collective bargaining and we attempt to characterize the type of labour relations that evolved in each company. The chapter ends with a brief discussion of the factors underlying the variation in labour relations and how they relate to the structural attributes of companies. The main discussion of these determinants of structure and place, however, is left for the following chapter, which also summarizes the first part of our study.

We have chosen three cases from each of the two cities. The relevance of comparing the cities was clear to us in our early discussions with union officials. Their lively account of recent and ongoing struggles for unionization were all centred on Kano while their reports from Kaduna dealt more with the efforts to protect workers and union interests in an environment where, in most cases, the union was well entrenched. The differences in the history and structure of the two local political economies, including the differences in the make up of the textile industry itself, as was sketched in Chapter 4, suggested a basis for explaining the apparent differences in labour regime. This provided a fruitful point of entry into the current geographical theoretical literature on the relevance of "place" as an explanatory factor which we shall pursue in Chapter 6.

The six companies selected include two cases in each city which we consider typical in terms of ownership, size and product orientation, i.e. for Kaduna, two large integrated companies, one state controlled, KTL, and one multinational, UNTL. For Kano, two medium sized weaving firms, one with multinational and previously "Levantine" participation (NTM), and one controlled by local merchant-industrial capital (Bagauda) were chosen. In addition and for contrast, we include one company less typical of each city, a large integrated mill in Kano which is locally owned (Gaskiya), and a small Indian controlled weaving factory in Kaduna (Chellco). Naturally, the choice was also influenced by access to information both on capital and labour. Some basic features of the selected companies are summarized in the Appendix, Table 5:1.

2. KTL: WEAK ADJUSTMENT AND STRONG UNION IN AN OLD, LARGE, INTEGRATED, STATE-CONTROLLED MILL

Here we return to the company, Kaduna Textiles Limited (KTL), where the dramatic labour conflict which opened this book took place. It was a large integrated mill which, at the time we commenced our study, had a majority of shares held by the state in conjunction with British capital from the late colonial period. A consultancy report, commissioned to find the causes of the breakdown in production preceding the 1984 labour conflict, provided us with background information (AWC, 1983). We rely on it for the account of pre-1983 developments. The report was produced from a view of severe criticism of the way in which the company had been managed. It supplements our own interviews with the (post-1984) Managing Director, Mahmoud Abubakar, and with union officials, especially, Muhammed Umaru, who for a time was the zonal officer of the Kakuri Zone where the company was situated.

KTL started producing in 1957 as one of the first textile companies established in Nigeria. Its ownership base up to the early 1990s was in regionally based state capital, originally in the form of majority shares held by the Northern Region Marketing Board and Northern Region Development Corporation, later reconstituted into the New Nigeria Development Company, NNDC. These shares were held in conjunction with a minority British shareholder with experience also from Zimbabwe, David Whitehead and Son, who initially (up to 1979) also held management and technical advisory functions. Originally the state and the British partner held equal shares but by the early 1980s the state had taken over the majority (62.5 per cent). A national Islamic body, Jama'atu Nasril Islam (JNI), the "society for the victory of Islam", also had a minor share (6 per cent) (AWC, 1983).

KTL's main products were grey baft, shirting and eventually printed cloth. It had one of the largest installed capacities in spinning and weaving in the country. At its peak in 1973/74 it had 83,000 spindles and 2,700 looms operable and produced 9.7 million kg of yarn and 64.4 million metres of cloth. By 1983/84 much of this machinery had been scrapped and production had been reduced to 1.4 million kg of yarn and 10.5 million metres of cloth (Abubakar, interview 1985). But it was still possible to climb back to 4.8 million kg of yarn and 16 million metres of cloth in 1986/87 (NIDB/World Bank, 1986).

Employment ranged between 4,000 and 5,000 at its peak in the early 1970s and 2,600 in the mid-1980s (Abubakar, interviews 1985 and 1987). It fell as low as around 1,000 before the change of ownership that took place in 1991 when it again turned up towards 2,000 (Dabo, interview 1993).

Overextension, redundant capacity, and rising labour costs

The marketing crisis in the late 1970s found KTL with a grossly overextended capacity. According to AWC (1983), this was due to overexpansion and a lack of adjustment in product mix in response to the changing market in the oil boom years. The main products, grey baft and bleached shirting, were aimed at a low income rural market, especially for the riga, the flowing gowns of the north. Although the oil boom years meant expansion in markets for finer cloths, KTL kept to its original products into the mid-1980s. Minor additions in the 1970s were a polypropylene plant to produce sacks and cloth and the takeover and reactivation of the printing section from an adjacent factory, Northern Nigeria Textile Manufacturers, NNTM. But its main products were largely the same in 1983 and in 1956, with small modifications to the finish.

The major extension which was undertaken in the early 1970s replicated the previous two mills by a third, with the same type of spindles and looms for the same type of product. This was done without consideration for the intensified competition from other national producers in a rapidly growing textile industry. By the mid-1970s this encompassed some 25 firms, including at least eight in the same product line as KTL. The expansion at KTL also included a small line for printer baft to supply other printing factories. This however immediately faced competition from the emerging process of backward integration into weaving in these other factories. Flourishing sales in the first fifteen years thus changed to a continuous decline from 1972 and onwards. The newly added plant never produced to capacity. When competition from smuggling aggravated the picture toward the end of the 1970s, products just piled up. Not even production costs could be recovered.

Losses started to develop from 1977. It was convincingly argued by the consultants (AWC) that a major factor behind the over-investment was the way the contract with the foreign partner and managing consultant, DWS, was designed. The deal implied a commission of 2.5 per cent on the purchases of new equipment and provided management with every reason for expansion. A change came in 1979 when the management contract was discontinued. Nigerian control was introduced in consonance with the national drive towards indigenization. An additional problem in this period was a highly erratic supply of public electricity. KTL documented losses relating to power failures of up to 30 per cent of production time in 1977/78 and close to 15 per cent in some of the following years. It obliged the company to spend scarce capital on installing its own generators.

Decreasing production did not result in cuts in the labour force until the rise in the minimum wages in 1980. Employment had ranged between 4,000 and 5,000 in the 1970s, a level which remained stable throughout the decade in spite of declining utilization of machinery and falling sales and in spite of the rising relative share of labour in total costs (see Appendix, Table 5:2). The level was maintained even when losses were incurred from 1977 and onwards. AWC interprets this as management's fear of losing valuable skills. It was only when the Naira costs of wages nearly doubled in 1980, that about 900 workers were laid off in one go. In 1983 the labour force figure given by the managing director was about 3,700. Union data suggest that employment was below 3,000 a year later (see Chapter 4.3, Table 4:4).

Raw material shortage and the crisis of liquidity

As the import squeeze set in, the annual amount of raw materials acquired in the first half of the 1980s was reduced by more than half (Appendix, Table 5:3). Like in many other companies, we find a series of temporary closures in response to the shortages. KTL was however not among the hardest hit. Its production was almost entirely dependent on cotton fibre and as a large state owned company with close links to the Cotton Board and good relations to NTMA, the body that negotiated with the Cotton Board, it had favoured access to whatever local cotton was available (cf Andræ and

Beckman, 1987). The Managing Director had earlier acted as Secretary to the Raw Materials Committee of the Association. The huge stock of installed machinery could also be used as an argument in the bargaining for cotton allocation. With 83,000 spindles (NTMA records, 1983) KTL was hard to beat, although only half of these (42,000), at best, were said to be operable in 1985 (Abubakar, interview 1985).

The company had similar advantages, as a large, well-connected state firm, in accessing the precious import licenses. With local cotton costing twice the imported one, the incentive was strong to use the latter, at least until devaluations and the deregulation of the foreign exchange market put the import prices beyond the reach of this insolvent company (Abubakar, interview 1985). During the first half of the 1980s, the shift towards imports went hand in hand with the decline in local cotton production (Andræ and Beckman, 1987). In the case of KTL the shift is recorded in Table 5:3 in the Appendix. Like some other big companies KTL also went into farming, acquiring a 112 ha land from a World Bank funded project in Bida (Abubakar, interview 1987). It could be seen as a symbolic gesture, an act of goodwill towards NTMA, which was actively pushing such a strategy to counter the raw material crisis (Andræ and Beckman, 1987). It may have helped to reinforce claims to preferential treatment in the allocation of import licenses.

The raw material shortage had some short-term advantages for firms like KTL which were greatly overstocked. The increased demand for domestic yarns also favoured this large spinner, especially before this market space had been filled by the backward integration strategies of other firms.

By 1985 the raw material problem had subsided in the face of other difficulties. Although in this year, the company was able to get sufficient cotton, it lacked the funds needed to overhaul its run-down spindles in order to take advantage of the increased outlet for yarns. KTL had entered the 1980s with a very weak capital structure, huge loans and a waning bank credibility. The greatest challenge was to cope with these liquidity problems. Cuts in production by sending workers on compulsory leave continued even after raw materials had been secured. Unlike more successful adjusters, KTL also had repeated closures in the later years of the decade.

The company was coping at the expense of the workers in more than one way. The issue in the 1984 conflict was the attempt by management to solve the liquidity crisis by borrowing funds from the workers through forced savings of up to 50 per cent of their take home pay. The lack of funds had become acute and it was announced that production could not be resumed after one such temporary closure. It was the management's attempt to persuade the workers to continue this system of forced savings indefinitely that precipitated the labour crisis.

From passive to active adjustment

After 1984 the post as Managing Director was held by a Nigerian diplomat with a past record as Personnel Manager of the nearby UNTL and a position in the leadership of the NTMA. A new phase in the approach to adjustment began. The acute financial crisis was resolved by a contribution from the state owner, NNDC, credits from the main distributors, and rather heavy and costly bank loans. Long overdue adjustments in the production structure were made in accordance with the plan worked out with the support of the consultants, the AWC. Parts of the plant were closed down entirely and ageing machinery was "cannibalized" to consolidate equipment. By 1985 42,000 of the previous 83,000 spindles and about 800 out of the installed 2,100 looms were operable, according to the MD. This also served to address the shortage of spare parts which had been another plague. Activation of some of the printing machinery taken over from the NNTM was also seen as a favourable option. New markets were sought. Induced by structural adjustments policies at the national level, KTL moved into exports, where grey baft was in demand. By 1986 it was again able to make some profit (Abubakar, interview 1987).

Although the workers who were sacked during the 1984 crisis were all reinstated, the cuts in the work force continued. The AWC recommended a reduction by another 1,500, a suggestion which was heeded by more subtle means than outright termination. The labour force was allowed to decrease by "natural wastage", from nearly 3,700 in 1983 to about 2,200 in 1986. At the end of the 1980s, the company had undergone a major restructuring of production with a labour force reduced to below 2,000 (Dabo, interview 1993). Structural adjustment policies led to the companies within NNDC's orbit being put up for privatization. In the early 1990s Churchgate, an Indian group of companies, related to the large Sunflag group with several factories in Lagos, won the management contract in the face of an acrimonious struggle for control between the giant Kaduna-based conglomerate, UNTL, and Dantata of Kano, the leading indigenous business group of the North. The sale opened up for further restructuring and cuts in the labour force, as workers were asked to reapply for appointment. About 1,000 workers were re-employed, according to the union (Dabo, interview 1993).

Over the decade of the 1980s, KTL had thus moved away from a position of paralysis in the face of the successive crises to a policy of active adjustment. It had begun the decade in a state of extreme structural weakness caused by an overextended plant, redundant machinery, a one-sided production line, and excess labour. The plant was restructured by scrapping some equipment and upgrading other. The financial crisis was managed by mobilizing funds from owners, customers and workers, and finally through privatization. The work force was reduced by more than half during the decade, initially through retrenchment but in the face of union resistance, through natural wastage.

Defence of collective agreements

How did the workers respond to all these changes? The poor state of the company made it difficult for the union to challenge the terminations of the early 1980s, following on the rise in the minimum wage. This was also a time when the new, amalgamated union had only recently been established. In the conflict which erupted in January 1984, the workers were more successful in defending their cause, preventing management from withholding wages and securing the re-employment of the whole work force after the strike. The cuts in employment that followed during the latter part of the decade were by means of natural wastage, not retrenchment, which suggests that the union had strengthened its position. It was in agreement with the policies adopted by the textile employers' association in response to union efforts to make retrenchment more expensive by fighting for higher gratuities and severance pay. The AWC adjustment plan had budgeted an amount of 126 per cent of the entire annual wage costs for such benefits for the 30 per cent of the work force that it recommended should be retrenched (AWC 1983). In the 1984 conflict, the obligation to pay the benefits effectively prevented an outright closure, as the funds were simply not available.

The shift from retrenchment to natural wastage opened new frontiers in the union's effort to prevent management from using wrongful dismissals and terminations (contrary to collectively agreed conditions) as a way of circumventing the new restrictive retrenchment rules. We were told by the branch executive committee, "exco", (interview 1987) how, for instance, a go slow was organized when some workers were terminated without proper redundancy payment. The number of cases handled by the union involving grievances over termination greatly increased. They were as many as 250 in 1985. Union branch officials were proud to assert that they had been able to prevent an increase in the use of dismissals as a means of speeding up natural wastage. The branch invoked the rules of termination laid down in the collective agreement. Union records suggest that management felt obliged to respect the union's insistence that these rules should be observed.

Something the union could not prevent was the added work load that was caused by workers being obliged to handle more looms, as was documented by the union branch for the 1982–87 period: one over-looker had gone from working on 16 looms with one assistant to covering 30 to 40 looms without an assistant. Weavers who used to operate 12 looms with the help of one spare weaver now had to operate the same number of looms on their own (interview, KTL union branch executive committee, 1987).

Workers' basic conditions of remuneration including allowances for housing, transport, night work, over-time etc. were supposed to be protected by central collective agreements. Implementation, however, as well as the range of additional local benefits that could be achieved, depended not only on the strength and determination of the local branch but also on the general situation of the company. It is therefore not surprising that the workers in this insolvent and crisis ridden company were decisively worse off than in the more solid UNTL group. As in the whole industry the annual bonus negotiation was the arena where union strength would be tested. At the beginning of the period, KTL workers had a markedly low bonus compared to those of other large Kaduna factories. After an allocation equivalent to four weeks' pay in 1980 and 1981, the offer was decreased to two weeks in 1982, although raised to three, after a successful "go slow". In 1983, the zonal union records state that "the lack of raw material does not even make it possible for the union to contemplate asking for any bonus at all". In the two years that followed the conflict in 1984, the ability to claim bonus and other benefits continued to be constrained. The union branch was lying low throughout the rest of the decade having to make do with the two-weeks level. After the change of owners in the early 1990s, patience ran out and a serious conflict broke out over bonuses (see below).

The system of annual increments in wages was also targeted as all the more important after the ceiling on the minimum wage was imposed. After having been scrapped by management in 1983, the union succeeded in having the increments revived and revised upwards from 1985 onwards. Some compensation for the decreasing buying power was also sought in the form of other "incentives" as the industry picked up. In 1985, for instance, concessional sales of cloth that had been withdrawn in 1983 were reintroduced twice a year; two six-yard pieces to over-lookers, one piece to others. In 1986, an equivalent cash incentive was added to the bonus in place of concessional sales, as KTL was then actually short of cloth. As with remuneration levels in general, such local benefits were decisively lower than in the other large Kaduna companies. The frontiers were numerous. Negotiations in the second half of the decade concerned such issues as the allowance for bread at tea time, the restoration of vehicle loans and soap allowance, food subsidies, and having the period that entitled workers to long service awards decreased from 20 years to 15 years.

A mature labour force with strong agrarian links

Who were the KTL workers? As in most textile factories in the North all but a few were male. Our 1987 survey, which was confirmed by employment statistics obtained from the management, showed that the labour force had stayed for a long time in the factory, as compared to the high turnover observed elsewhere. As many as 80 per cent were employed before 1980. A contributing factor may have been the success of the union in enforcing the costly termination rules, including long service awards which induced workers to stay rather than collect their gratuities and leave. (See Tables 5:4–6 in the Appendix, which give the results of the labour survey for all the case factories.)

The low turnover allowed workers to grow older on the job. The survey shows that over 40 per cent were over 30 years of age while only one in ten were under 25. Age may have added to bargaining power through its association with skills, work place experience, and working class identity, including the experience of participating in workers' collective organization and action. The older workers, who had been in the plant for a long time, would also have developed expectations of what collective bargaining could do for them from the time when the economy was expanding.

The workers in KTL were both first generation industrial workers and urbanites to a higher degree than those in the other companies studied, something that may also be related to age. Many were recruited directly from agriculture (about 40 per cent) and few had experience of any other job. Not even one in six had done wage work before. Only one in five had post-primary education. Previous links to the urban economy outside the textile industry were thus limited although, at the time of the survey, one-third had some extra urban-type job to supplement wages.

The overwhelming majority of the workers, some 80 per cent, came from the Middle Belt states or Kaduna State, especially from the Southern Zaria part of Kaduna which is seen as part of the Middle Belt. Over 80 per cent of the labour force described themselves as Christians, the religion that dominates in these areas. It may have reinforced an identification as outsiders in Muslim dominated Hausa society, although Kaduna itself tended to have a more mixed, "cosmopolitan" character. The rural and agricultural orientation of the workers continued to be strong. Land ownership at home in this largely first generation wage work-force was almost 90 per cent. Over 70 per cent thought they could live off their land and as many as 80 per cent said they would consider going back to farming if they lost their work in the factory. The remainder would also do it but only if they had no other option. Many brought their agricultural talents with them to city life. Some 40 per cent said they did farming in the city at the time of our survey.

The sheer size of the work force in this large company added weight to workers' demands. It was enhanced by the proximity of KTL to the other large companies in Kaduna. It was natural for workers to compare conditions in various plants, particularly as many also shared the same residential area with other textile workers in nearby Nasarawa and Kakuri in Kaduna South. Workers' experiences would be disseminated from one company to another, including through a certain circulation in employment between the firms, at least in the early years, before the labour market contracted. The closure of one big company, Nortex, in 1980, is likely to have sensitized the workers to the need to have termination rules and benefits properly regulated and enforced. The physical agglomeration of factories in one small area allowed the union to threaten to mobilize the workers in the rest of Kaduna in support of struggles in one company, as demonstrated during the 1984 crisis (Yusuf, 1985; Bagobiri, 1986).

A union-based labour regime in a crises-ridden company

The difficulties of this company, as related to obsolete technology and product orientation, poor management, and weak financing, all placed severe constraints on what the union could do to prevent the decline in employment and to compensate for the fall in real wages. Within these constraints, however, we note that the union played a central role in the organization of labour relations. We may speak of a well-established, union-based labour regime.

According to Bagobiri (1986:ch 5), KTL had experienced two major labour conflicts before the 1984 crisis, a violent one in 1960, when property was destroyed and the police retaliated, and a two-week strike over bonuses in 1972. For most of the history of the company, however, labour relations were formal and orderly, including an early acceptance of union mediation by management. The union branch was said to have been in existence at least since 1961, with experienced and well trained negotiators and large enough to have had full time officials on call at all times since the 1970s. Management accepted, most of the time, the right of the union to negotiate on behalf of the workers and agreements entered were respected. The application of collective agreements was closely supervised by the union, for instance, in ensuring that rules relating to terminations were not violated. Negotiations were intense over local benefits and especially bonuses, even if the poor finances of this old and mismanaged company meant rather modest results in material terms.

The confrontation in 1984 showed the basic strength of the union, both in defending the workers' interests and in channelling wild cat actions into support for union demands. It successfully challenged management's strategy of making workers carry the burden of the financial crisis of the company through compulsory savings. The threat of terminations with selective reemployment on new, humiliating conditions was averted by successful picketing. The police and courts were made to drop charges against militant workers who had been arrested.

The union achievement in 1984 was made possible with the backing of the nearby national union headquarters. The physical proximity of the headquarters also facilitated the enforcement of national collective agreements at the factory level. The way in which management's room for manoeuvre in the 1984 crisis was constrained by agreements on gratuity and redundancy payments was a case in point. We return to the role of the union as mediator of workers' militancy in the second part of the study (Chapter 10).

Formal union-management relations were pursued in a context of informal shop-floor militancy as illustrated, for instance, by a crisis over bonus in November 1992, as reported in an interview with Patrick Dabo, the zonal officer responsible for KTL at the Kaduna headquarters at this point in time. The action started by workers stopping the machines to enforce union claims in the bonus negotiations. The bonus level in KTL had still not caught up with that of the neighbouring large factories. It was far below that of UNTL. The action occurred while negotiations between management and union had come to a standstill. Management retaliated by closing the mill and inviting the police to guard it. 65 workers were to be sacked without entitlements, as gang leaders. This was challenged by the union which succeeded, in drawn out negotiations, to reduce the number to 32 who were terminated (not dismissed), with full entitlements. After this outbreak of workers' militancy, the bonus talks were successfully concluded, bringing a major increase over the past year's level (Dabo, interview 1993). The achievement was enforced by the willingness of workers to lay down tools and take militant action on their own initiative.

3. UNTL: SUCCESSFUL ADJUSTMENT AND STRONG UNION IN A LARGE, INTEGRATED, MULTINATIONAL CONGLOMERATE

While KTL entered the 1980s crippled by debts and losses and with technical and financial problems as well as a product orientation that warranted severe restructuring, by contrast, United Nigerian Textiles Limited, UNTL, entered the period of crises at full strength. Where KTL was slow to respond, changing only gradually from passive to more active adjustment, UNTL was ready to tackle the problems of adjustment from the beginning. Our data on UNTL include a complete series of annual reports for the 1980s. The management interviews were also particularly useful, especially those with the Assistant General Manager for Personnel and Industrial Relations, Walid Jibrin, who we were able to meet on several occasions in 1985 and 1987. A well organized union branch secretariat was willing to give us access to their records. The union was divided into two sections covering different parts of the huge plant. Our main contacts were with the A section.

UNTL and KTL had basic structural features in common. The major differences were in their ownership and management characteristics. Just as KTL, UNTL was an integrated spinning, weaving and printing mill. It had been established in Kaduna in 1965 by its Chinese owners as part of a group of companies with affiliates in other countries in West Africa, in Hongkong and "overseas". The majority owners were the British registered Cha family of Hong Kong Chinese origin. UNTL was one of the largest companies in Nigeria, not just in textiles, with employment peaking in 1979 at 8,000 workers. Installed capacity by 1980 was about 33,000 spindles including 360 modern rotor spindles and 2,300 looms, all shuttle-less.

No retrenchment but more discipline and work load

UNTL was an active and successful adjuster which was able to make profits throughout the period. The raw materials crisis was met with a strategy of backward integration into spinning to replace the previously imported yarn, investing in associated spinning factories, establishing new ones and expanding old. Like KTL, UNTL played a leading role in the Manufacturers' Association, NTMA. The company's Assistant General Manager (Personnel) was the chairman of the association in the early 1980's. The company had favoured access to the cotton allocated through the Cotton Marketing Board and it initiated a collective strategy of local sourcing through contract farming. As this strategy failed, it promoted a cotton trading company established under joint industry auspices (Andræ and Beckman, 1987). However, as local cotton supplies were grossly insufficient, the company could draw on its multinational network for international sourcing. Thus UNTL was less severely affected by raw material shortages than most other companies. Temporary closures of the plant caused by such shortages were rare.

The problem of receding markets in the mid-1980s was met by a conscious strategy to shift production towards higher quality goods. UNTL seems to have found a more sustainable demand at this end of the market, also assisted by the decline in smuggling that left more of this market to local suppliers. In the early 1990s UNTL was also one of the companies which had come the furthest in the drive for export orientation, supported by government liberalization and export promotion policies. In 1987 it had started selling some of its produce to the US and by 1990 was judged by the Textile Employers Association to be exporting up to 25 per cent of its products (Eburajolo, interview 1991).

As in KTL, rising costs of labour during the first years of the decade, as related to the two step increase in the minimum wage, were met by large cuts in employment, from some 7,928 workers in 1979 to 5,675 in 1983 . The case for cutting costs all over became more urgent as the austerity measures of 1983 reinforced the downward spiral of the economy. By 1987, the number of workers had fallen to some 4,600, according to the figures provided by the UNTL Personnel Office that year. Union figures show the same basic trends, although they differ for individual years (see Chapter 4.3, Table 4:4). Unlike KTL, the UNTL did not cut the labour force through direct retrenchment throughout this crisis period. Instead, a virtual stop in new employment was combined with high rates of resignation and dismissals resulting from stricter discipline. This method of "natural wastage" sufficed to reduce the labour force by nearly half. The balance of methods can be studied in Table 5:7 of the Appendix. As in other companies resignations in the early years were encouraged by raised gratuities in the collective agreements. Workers were induced to collect their benefits and leave. This was later counteracted by a long-service award, making it possible to collect some of the accumulated benefits while still staying in employment. It was intended to prevent the loss of the most experienced workers. The sharp increase in dismissals was part and parcel of the strategy of reducing the labour force without recourse to open retrenchment. Resignations and dismissals, however, were also linked to a strategy of raising productivity both through heightened work place discipline and by increasing the work load per worker. A concentration of the work force in relation to machinery, similar to what was observed for KTL, can also be shown to have taken place in UNTL. The union branch documented the process as a basis for negotiation with the management in 1986. In the spinning department, for instance, where there had been two machines per operator in 1980, this had increased to four in 1986, giving rise to “too much complaint” amongst the workers, according to the union. The same was true for weaving, where the number of machines per operator had more than doubled, from 16 in 1981 to 36 in 1986. The concentration took place on the old machines. While UNTL had the most modern machines in 1970, no replacement had taken place since then, although “sizing” had been introduced to reduce breaking in weaving. There were also better methods for sorting and testing the cotton before spinning.

The combined effect of the adjustment measures was reflected in the annual reports. Amid closures and cuts in the rest of the industry, the UNTL continued to expand through take-overs and new investments. Even if profits fell sharply as a percentage of turnover, at least they continued to be there, and the company kept consolidating its role as the dominant player in the industry. Two new associated factories, Unitex, Supertex in Kaduna and one in Funtua (some 120 km to the north) were added in the mid-1980s. A strong financial position at the beginning of the decade made this expansionist approach to adjustment possible. It was backed by the professional management capacities of a large multinational corporation, that by the early 1980’s had a leading position in the national economy. The success of the company’s active adjustment measures was reflected in the increase in employment during the late 1980s and early 1990s from 4,680 in 1988 to over 6,000 in 1992, according to union figures, a remarkable achievement in an economy which otherwise was characterized by stagnation and decline.

The impact of adjustment on the workers and the union response

Although not confronted with outright retrenchments, the workers experienced a gradual reduction of the work force through “natural wastage”, that is, resignations, retirement with benefits due to old age, as well as disciplinary terminations and dismissals linked to the stepped up enforcement of work place rules. In combination with technical rationalization, what workers refer to as “overloading”, such tightened work place discipline contributed to the “natural” trimming of the work force. Close to one thousand workers were terminated or dismissed from 1981 to 1983 (Appendix, Table 5:7). Monitoring these lay-offs and challenging the grounds on which they were undertaken became a major preoccupation of the union branch as evidenced by branch records. For instance, during two months in 1984, the union negotiated 150 such cases with management, succeeding in having 35 terminations withdrawn, 25 dismissals changed to terminations, 50 cases of suspension withdrawn, and 40 written warnings withdrawn and changed to verbal ones. The latter was an important distinction, as written warnings were the disciplinary action that, if repeated, would be a basis for termination.

Unlike in KTL, temporary closures due to raw material shortage were rarely applied (30 days each in 1983 and 1984) and workers were fully compensated according to the rules of the collective agreement. On a few occasions workers were granted an extended leave over Christmas with only 75 per cent compensation. It had apparently been agreed with the union and was not challenged.

When it came to wages and remunerations UNTL is a good case to show how the union kept finding ways of circumventing the restrictions that were imposed both by the government and the industry. Revision of salary structures was on the agenda for local concessions from the management to workers in the period 1980–82, and again in 1987, before it became included in collective agreements in 1988, as an official way of supplementing the minimum wage that had been frozen since 1983. It did not come automatically, but with union prodding, as in 1987 when the union challenged the four-fold increase in the sales prices of the company's products, insisting that it allowed for higher wages.

End-of-the-year bonus, which for KTL at this time was counted in weeks if attained at all, was raised from the equivalent of two months' wages to three months' in 1982 and remained at this level in 1983. When reduced to one month by government decree in 1984, the balance was replaced by concessions of cloth at leave and holiday times. The number of pieces and the quality of the cloth included in these payments in kind were subsequently increased by steps. To achieve this the union exercised pressure on management in drawn out negotiations, including on occasion a few days' go-slow to emphasize the workers' willingness to fight if management was not accommodating.

Collective agreements were continuously implemented by the company, like in KTL. So the basic conditions stipulated in the agreements were obtained without contestation. There was however intense bargaining at the local branch level to supplement these gains by other locally negotiated allowances or "incentives", apart from the annual bonuses already mentioned. In 1986/87, the union had achieved special allowances for a wide range of items, including bread and soap, as well as a variety of loans, e.g. for leave expenses, housing and furniture. The items included and the levels were generally much more generous than in KTL. UNTL workers were also able to spearhead benefits, such as the food subsidy attained by them already in 1987, which were later included in the general collective agreement for the industry as a whole. Although no workers anywhere in the industry were able to compensate themselves for the decline in real wages, the UNTL workers were better placed than most.

The structure of the labour force

According to our 1987 survey (see Appendix, Tables 5:4–6), UNTL had at this time, to an even larger degree than in KTL, a mature (only three per cent were under 25 years of age), predominantly Christian (over 80 per cent) labour force. The majority originated in the Middle Belt states (about 60 per cent) and together with the Kaduna state citizens they made up nearly 80 per cent. The workers resembled those in KTL in their high rural and agricultural orientation, except that few said they farmed in the city to supplement wages. Fewer than in KTL said they would consider going back to farming if they were to lose their job in textiles. The survey also suggests that the UNTL workers less commonly had an extra urban income (only 18 per cent did), and only 15 per cent of all workers stated that they had a significant income derived from other family members (against about 30 per cent in KTL). It suggests that income from factory work may have played a more important role in family income for the workers of UNTL, with its record of relatively successful adjustment and expansion, than in KTL, with its financial, managerial, and technical difficulties.

Otherwise the profile of the workers in UNTL resembled that of KTL in the lack of urban background and orientation. Primary education only was the rule and previous wage work experience was marginal (one in ten). As many as 86 per cent had stayed in the company since before 1981. The differences in the structure of the work force in the two companies may not be big enough to warrant any conclusions as to the impact on labour-management relations. The differences in the latter respect may have more to do with differences in economic performance as well as in management style and policies of adjustment which in turn relate to ownership and mode of integration in wider economic networks. As part of a multinational conglomerate, the UNTL was better placed to pursue industrial restructuring and accommodate to the new market opportunities created by liberalization.

A union-based labour regime in a successfully adjusting company

Although comparatively favoured, the UNTL workers like those in the industry as a whole kept losing purchasing power throughout the decade. This generated growing tensions which were to erupt in the crisis of May 1993, to which we return in Chapter 12. However, the records of the 1980s suggest that industrial relations in the company were handled with considerable interaction and little confrontation and with notable benefits to the workers. UNTL had a strong union branch. It was one of the leading “house unions", which existed before the amalgamation exercise of 1978. As in KTL, the size of the work force in the factory meant that there was a base for full time union officials. Rights of organization were fully accepted and respected by management and collective agreements were adhered to. The company's annual reports as well as our management interviews reinforce the picture of conscious and explicit efforts on the part of management to keep good relations with the union. Similarly, local and zonal union officials were able to engage in genuine negotiations, boosted in this respect by the national union which frequently intervened in support of the local branch. The position of management is often characterized as "understanding" in union records. The cases of open conflict were few, including an incident when the union obliged the company to remove a Chinese manager who had slapped a worker. Unlike more volatile cases, as in Afprint in Lagos, where workers and union executives were often at loggerheads (see Chapters 10 and 11), UNTL workers seem to have accepted and cooperated with the union.

Closeness to union headquarters helped in socializing workers into a constitutionalist approach to pursuing their grievances. They could see for themselves that centrally negotiated collective agreements and the intervention by headquarters in local disputes brought favourable results. It also obliged management to be in frequent contact with the national union in order to ensure acceptance for measures which otherwise would have been met with suspicions and hostility, as in May 1984 when the company had a problem in paying the workers on time, due to cash shortage. The General Secretary addressed the workers, urging them to be patient and assuring them that a bank loan was being provided for speedy payment.

The UNTL demonstrated an accommodating relationship between management and labour, which was maintained throughout the 1980s in spite of reductions in employment, intensified work load, and the decline in real wages. As compared with industrial relations elsewhere in the industry, we may speak of the UNTL as a case of a fully developed union-based labour regime.

4. CHELLCO: ERRATIC ADJUSTMENT AND WEAK UNION IN A SMALL, INDIAN-OWNED BLANKET FACTORY

The respect for unions and collective agreements that characterized KTL and UNTL during the 1980s can also be observed in the other large companies in Kaduna, including notably Arewa, which we also surveyed in detail although it is not discussed here. It was the smaller industries that continued to give problems to the union, according to the zonal officers, calling for constant intervention in order to mediate in labour conflicts. By the mid-1980s, the union mode of regulating labour was yet to be securely established. We shall look briefly at the case of Chellco, which we may characterize as a weak or erratic adjuster and a reluctant and partial adopter of a union-based labour regime.

According to its Indian management, Chellco was 60 per cent Indian owned (interviews 1987). The share holders were all closely related to Nigeria based Indian merchant capital, including Chellarams in Lagos (15 per cent), Four Season Trading (22.5 per cent), Chellson Bermuda (15 per cent), KCT India (7.5 per cent). The Nigerian participation included 25 per cent held by NNIL, a state investment company and a subsidiary of the NNDC.

Chellco was a weaving industry and its main product originally blankets, with a later diversification to bedspreads and dusters in order to even out the seasonality in demand. Production started in 1980 and the number of employed peaked at 284 in 1982, i.e. at the beginning of the crisis.

Seasonal markets, irregular employment, and poor working conditions

Dismissals and terminations were high in the early years, in 1981 over 50 per cent. The methods used for removing workers were those which cost the least in terms of benefits and other obligations to the workers. This suggests not only an unsettled enterprise but also that the company was slow to accept the working conditions laid down in collective agreements between the union and the textile employers´ association. Only in 1985 were such forms of labour cuts brought below 10 per cent of the labour force in a year. The erratic pattern of employment management can be studied in Appendix, Table 5:8. Under increasing union pressure, the company was obliged to turn to more constitutional forms of cuts, involving agreed compensation. One-third of the labour force was retrenched between 1984 and 1985. By 1986, employment had been reduced to 120 workers, that is, by more than half from the peak level of 1982.

Seasonality in the demand for blankets, which were primarily bought in the cold season, was identified as the major problem from the start. The company made losses up to 1982/83. Blaming the raw materials situation, from 1983 it began operating only part of the year, closing down for two to four months each year. In this way the company managed to make some profits and was doing quite well by 1986, according to union and management sources.

The union branch executives (interviews 1987) claimed that not all workers minded the temporary closures as it allowed them to do other jobs with some predictability, while retaining 50 per cent of pay. In any case, the branch leaders did not see what could be done to make the company change the pattern. The union zonal officers, on the other hand, objected strongly to the frequent dismissals and the systematic use of seasonal production through temporary closures, which in their view was incompatible with proper industrial relations. They saw the reference to raw material shortage as a pretext for problems which rather had to do with the seasonality of demand. They therefore urged management to diversify production in order to even out seasonality, suggesting suitable new products. The union's zonal office managed to make the company pay half wages during closures as a disincentive for continuing irregular production. It was a cost that the company at first sought to escape. The union fought the repeated lay-offs. In 1984 when some 90 workers were dismissed, the zonal officer claimed that he had averted a redundancy of twice that number. In 1986/87, he refused three requests by the management to lay off workers, even demanding that management should apologize for flouting the collective agreement (Umaru, interview 1987).

The workers' conditions in the plant were poor. Local benefits were few and took rather long in coming. The union branch chairman, who we interviewed in 1987, listed all the unsettled issues, most importantly, the methods of terminating workers, which, after several rounds of mass dismissals, were not yet properly regulated. Nor had management agreed on a wage structure in line with the collective agreement. The company was said to apply its own scale of meagre increments. Nor were there any merit or long service awards. Benefits taken for granted in the bigger companies, like loans to workers for a variety of purposes, were yet to be granted. Although an end-of-year bonus equivalent to one month's wages was paid in 1982, it was reduced to two weeks' equivalent in 1983 and 1984. While raised in 1985, it dropped again in 1986. The little that was granted on that occasion was only achieved after a go slow. One of the few positive things that the branch chairman could point to was the prospect of getting a factory clinic, although workers would have to pay for medical attention. The company had also agreed to provide the workers with uniforms, again something that was taken for granted by workers in the big firms.

A young labour force

The recruitment pattern of the work force resembled that in KTL, with Kaduna State and Middle Belt origin and the Christian religion predominating (Appendix, Tables5:4–6). Members of the union branch executive claimed that management had shown an active bias against recruiting workers from Kaduna town itself, which may suggest a desire for a pliable work force, less socialized into the unionized work place culture of the city. The age structure also differed markedly from that in other Kaduna factories studied by us. It was a relatively young labour force, as could be expected in a factory only opened in the 1980s, but possibly reinforced by the wish to avoid recruiting older, more experienced workers who might challenge the irregular working conditions and harsh labour relations of this rather shaky enterprise. Over 60 per cent were under 30 years of age and some 20 per cent under 25 which was by far the youngest work force in our Kaduna cases.

The picture of a young, rural labour force with weak bargaining power was reinforced by a level of post-primary education which was also surprisingly low (one quarter) for a labour force this young. A number of experienced workers, however, were recruited from Norspin and Nortex, factories which had just closed down at the time when Chellco started production. Their presence facilitated external union penetration, despite the reluctance of management to cooperate with the local union branch and the weak bargaining position of the workers.

Seasonal production and long periods of closure reinforced the search for supplementary income. A high proportion of over 60 per cent of the Chellco workers were doing city farming. As for the Kaduna workers generally, the farming connections were also strong outside the city with some 80 per cent claiming ownership of substantial land in the home area. As in KTL and UNTL, the farming option predominated when workers were asked what they would do if made redundant. Less than ten per cent thought they could find alternative work in Kaduna. With reservations for the small sample of only 27 workers in our survey a plausible interpretation of the patterns observed may thus be suggested.

An unconsolidated labour regime, dependent on external union intervention

Management-worker relations in Chellco differed markedly from those in the larger factories of KTL and UNTL. Although a union branch was formed a few months after the opening of the factory, relations were far from settled. In the early years "police used to be called in all the time", according to the then branch secretary (interview 1987). In 1981 a fire broke out in the factory, and the police were called to investigate, detaining the whole union executive committee plus the officer from the union secretariat. Although they were all later acquitted, the branch executives had to be replaced. In 1987 still, when we visited the factory, workers were merely informed of changes rather than consulted in negotiations. The branch depended on the zonal officers in the nearby union headquarters in their dealings with management. This ensured that headquarters was kept closely informed of what was going on at the branch level. It also enhanced the union training and competence of the branch officers. As a result, the conditions achieved for the workers were certainly much better than they otherwise would have been.

Unlike the other Kaduna firms studied by us, the labour regime of this small Indian-controlled company was poorly consolidated. Although the union and collective agreements were reluctantly awarded some minimum degree of respect, this was largely ensured through continuous intervention by the zonal office. This differed sharply from what we found in the large companies in Kaduna and resembled rather the situation in most of the factories in Kano, to which we now turn.

5. NTM, KANO: A MEDIUM-SIZED FRENCH CONTROLLED TRADE-RELATED COMPANY

Peculiar to Kano, as was discussed in Chapter 4, were the strong roots of the local manufacturing industry in the colonial trading economy, and the prominent role of the Lebanese merchant community. As many as nine of the 19 textile factories registered by the union had a substantial Lebanese share in ownership and management. Most of the entrepreneurs of Lebanese origin had a background in the textile trade, were second generation residents, held Nigerian citizenship, and were well integrated in Kano society.

Northern Textile Manufacturers, NTM, in Kano (not to be confused with NTM in Lagos) was established in 1962, with Lebanese capital holding the largest share and management. By 1976 the company had been taken over by a French conglomerate, Compagnie Française d'Afrique de l'Ouest, CFAO. This group represents another section of colonial trading capital, also with a long history in the West African region. As in the case of the United Africa Company, such trading firms shifted towards manufacturing in the late colonial or early post-colonial period in order to safeguard access to markets in an increasingly nationalist and protectionist policy environment. CFAO also held equity in one of Nigeria's major textile mills, the General Cotton Mill in Onitsha, in the Southeast. NTM was located in the Bompai industrial area, the oldest and largest in Kano, along with most other textile mills and all our case factories.

The original technical partners, the Japanese Nishizawa, were retained by CFAO and held a small part of the equity (11 per cent) in 1980. With indigenization, ownership had been opened up both to the state (NNIL) and to indigenous merchant capital (Gashash), with 24 and 16 per cent respectively. The CFAO share was 41 per cent and management had rested with the French since the takeover. The main process in the mid-1980s was weaving, but it had a defunct capacity for spinning as well. As in Chellco, the main product was blankets. Installed machinery consisted of 620 spindles, 120 automatic and 42 shuttle-less looms, which, at full capacity, could weave 5.6 million metres per annum (NIDB, 1986). Employment was as high as 2,500 in the mid-1970s but fell sharpely as early as the latter part of that decade. More drastic cuts were made in the early 1980s, and by 1985 employment had dropped to as little as 374 before a moderate upturn set in.

Mass retrenchments as labour costs and raw material shortages aggravate a slack market situation

NTM was said to have made good profits in most years up to 1979. In 1980, however, it began to incur losses for three consecutive years. A drop in sales, which were channelled largely through the CFAO trading outlets, was identified as the main cause. The NTM management joined in the exhortations to government to step up efforts to curb smuggling. Competition from other blanket factories, including Chellco in Kaduna, which were opened in this period, certainly aggravated the situation for what used to be the only producer of the North. In this slack conjuncture the added costs from the rise in the minimum wage caused a major crisis and labour became an obvious target in the adjustment strategy of the company. Employment was slashed by more than half.

Thus when the raw materials crisis hit all import dependent industry, the NTM was already in a sharp decline. The company depended on imports for about 30 per cent of its raw materials, by value. It was mainly the synthetic component of the weft for the blankets that could not be sourced in the country at that time, as well as some chemicals and dyes. The imported yarn was blended with cotton waste from the growing domestic industry. The yarn for the warp could be bought locally, although at a considerably higher price.

In the general move for backward integration, the NTM spinning plant which had been idle since the late 1970s, was resuscitated for a few years. The cost of the yarn it produced was 35 per cent above that which had previously been imported from Japan. When no import licence was granted to NTM in 1983 the situation became acute and remained so up to 1985. By the time the foreign exchange auctioning system was in operation, imports had again been made available, but at five times the previous price, according to a survey made by the Manufacturers' Association of Nigeria in Kano in 1987.

The strategy of the NTM management was defensive and production was drastically cut. By the mid-1980s, capacity utilization was down to less than 20 per cent of the peak levels of a decade earlier. With liberalization it expanded only moderately, to some 25 per cent. Employment was cut accordingly.

The reduction of the work force was made through a series of retrenchment exercises. A total of almost a thousand workers were retrenched on three occasions during the first two years of the decade (450, 230, 300), according to figures provided by the management in 1985. Another 300 were retrenched during 1982–83, reducing the labour force by half of the 1981 level, before employment stabilized at its extreme bottom level of about 350. At the end of the decade it crept back up to around 500, still only one-fifth of the peak level of the mid-1970s. Temporary closures section by section, sending workers on compulsory advance leave, were used at the times of raw materials shortage. Some new machines, ordered before the crisis, were installed in 1982, indicating that there was some effort to raise the productivity of the sharply reduced work force.

In spite of not being a member of the textile employers´ association, the company was said to respect the rules laid down in the collective agreement regarding the payment of retrenchment benefits and gratuity, although most of the retrenchment took place before the union had succeeded in raising the retrenchment benefits at the national level. Full compensation was also given at times of compulsory leave, according to the union. Unlike in companies where it was better entrenched, as in KTL and UNTL, the union was unable to constrain the overall process of mass retrenchment. Union attention in the early years of the 1980's seems to have been largely geared to the issue of converting the substantial number of daily rated (casual) workers to a monthly wage, as a means of making the rules of the collective agreement, including terms of termination, also apply to this category. For instance, 140 workers were thus converted in 1982 and 1983. Later in the decade, the union was also able to influence the terms of termination, including reducing the rate of dismissals. However, in view of the overall dimensions of the lay-offs, these achievements were rather marginal.

Those who remained: A mature labour force with a large local, urban component

Our survey in 1987 (Appendix, Tables5:4–6) suggests that the work force which survived the massive retrenchments of the early 1980s had a high share of long time employees. The workers interviewed deviated from the general pattern in this city by being older, more often of northern, including Kano state, origin and they more often defined themselves as Muslim. As many as one-third had only koranic education. This might all make sense considering that two-thirds had been employed before 1981 and that this is one of the older textile factories established already in 1962. But there must also be some reservation that we might have met a particular group of workers, in the sample of only 21 workers. Their supplementary income, also more often than was common in Kano, came from urban farming, presumably due to close social links locally. But then, surprisingly, they very rarely had income from non-agricultural supplements, and they showed an average rural orientation for Kano on other indicators. Their hopes for staying in the city were high, however, particularly if compared to Kaduna workers. Yet as many as half could also consider going into farming if retrenched, including on their plots in the city, but possibly also reflecting the options of an older generation of northern workers to return home after an active life in town. The pattern makes enough sense to be presented in spite of the small number of observations.

A weak local union dependent on, but not able to fully utilize higher level support

As for the workers who remained, management accepted the conditions of collective agreements but only after some pressure from the union, including dialogue but also open conflict. According to the union, management kept stalling, pointing to plant closures and redundancies all around, warning the workers to be patient. It also sought exemption from union demands, not being a member of the employers' association. On one occasion, in 1983, the NLC, the national labour body, was brought in for support in a trade dispute. From 1985, the time the company was making a profit again, there seems to have been greater acceptance by the management of the need to comply with the rules of the agreements, at least most of the time. In 1988 when a food subsidy was added to the collective agreement, however, management resisted vehemently, declaring that it had no responsibility for the survival of the workers. The union took the company to the Industrial Arbitration Panel, IAP, which pronounced in favour of the union. But the conflict continued as the workers insisted that the company should pay the arrears from the date of the collective agreement. Management refused and the matter was referred to the National Industrial Court, which also, ultimately, ruled in favour of the union (for documentation, see Chapter 9 below).

The partly accommodating attitude to the union, which the NTM management demonstrated in the implementation of national collective agreements, was absent when it came to locally negotiated benefits and especially the issue of the annual end-of-year bonus. Although the bonus negotiations had come to be accepted by most textile employers, the NTM management insisted that the bonus was not a negotiable benefit. It refused to meet the union for any discussion. This was the cause of a dramatic strike in 1983, with police called in, the district union officer arrested, and the branch officers sacked (see further Chapter 9). The company was prepared to grant a bonus but not willing to discuss it with the union. From an equivalent of two to three weeks' wages in the most difficult years it was raised to a month's equivalent in 1987, where it remained in the following years. This was the average for smaller Kano industries. The union saw the company's stand as a deliberate policy of restricting the influence of the union by denying it any credit for concessions to the workers. The refusal to cooperate extended also to the other forms of local incentives which were of such importance to their overall income. In this case, however, the company also refused to pay. It was not prepared to discuss any compensation for the erosion of real wages over and above centrally agreed allowances like those for housing and transport.

The NTM workers had a history of drawn-out violent and unsuccessful conflicts in the 1960s and 1970s as studied in some detail by Lubeck (1986). The work force of the late 1980s contained a number of long-time employees who still remembered this. A regular union was formed only in the last years of the 1970s. The reduced work force of the 1980s did not allow for any full-time officials at the local branch level, even if the company had been less hostile. Important negotiations were led by the district and zonal organizers of the union. The sharp cuts in employment, of course, had apparently had a strong intimidating effect on the workers, radically undercutting their support for the union and militant industrial action. Not only the union branch but also the national union had a weak standing in Kano in the early 1980s, too weak to challenge the retrenchment. As will be further discussed below (Chapter 9), the general attitude of the Kano industrialists tended to be hostile to the union. It was only in the latter part of the decade, when it was more firmly entrenched at the national level, that it was capable of intervening effectively even in Kano, upholding collective agreements and achieving some element of accommodation with the employers.

The company had a defensive attitude to adjustment. It was too small to have any real influence on national industrial policies, nor was it sufficiently well-placed or well-connected to have special access either to the state or to the supportive transnational networks, as in the case of the big Kaduna companies discussed above. Like most of the textile industries in Kano, the NTM was not a member of the employers' association. Management's acceptance of union rights was reluctant and partial. In the late 1980s, the union accused management of subverting the workers' support and of adopting a strategy of divide and rule. It had obviously been successful in the sense that workers appeared intimidated and reluctant to fight. On the go-slow over bonus in 1986, for instance, the workers were hesitant to support the militancy of the district and zonal officers. Again on the issue of the food subsidy arrears, the branch was divided. Workers feared victimization and could not be effectively mobilized for industrial action. There was a record of union active workers being persistently victimized by management. As late as in 1987, branch officers were even denied the annual wage increments granted to other workers. One branch leader, who we interviewed, was still on the same wage as ten years earlier, a level which was even lower than what was paid to newly employed workers in the plant!

Intimidated by mass retrenchments, workers made little gain in bargaining power in the 1980s. It was only with higher level union support and with the legitimacy of the collective agreements that some element of accommodation was achieved. The workers, however, continued to shy away from militant industrial action, fearing for their jobs. Without the full support of the workers, the impact of national union intervention in this company continued to be constrained.

6. BAGAUDA: INDIGENOUS KANO MERCHANT CAPITAL —MANUFACTURING AS A FRONT FOR OTHER BUSINESS?

Bagauda resembles NTM in many respects but was even further from the union-based model of labour relations which we found in the big Kaduna plants. The local private owners of this small factory were even less willing to accept the involvement of the union. The workers had a weak bargaining position and union branch leaders were intimidated, some even allegedly bribed into submission. There was also little restructuring in response to the succession of crises faced by the company during the period studied by us. After a prolonged period of inertia, the plant was closed down for several years in the late 1980s.

In November 1987, we held meetings with members of the executive committee of the union branch. They were a frustrated lot, desperately thinking of ways to improve their conditions. They knew that the company was grossly mismanaged and their jobs were in danger. They also knew that their pay and conditions of service were poor as compared with other equivalent firms in Kano. What could be done? The branch leaders had difficulties getting through to the management with their demands. They had no direct access to the Managing Director at the Group Head Office where everything of importance seemed to be decided. They had to first go through the personnel manager, who then approached the general manager of the plant, who, in his turn, would relay their grievances to the Head Office. How could they go about improving their conditions when the company was not even prepared to talk to them?

After our meeting with the branch leaders we were contacted by the vice chairman who gave an even more gloomy picture. Workers were leaving the company in despair. Of those who remained, many were opting out of the union, being under pressure from management to do so. He claimed that "Hausa workers", a label for the locals, were particularly afraid of the management. He also suggested that some believed that the union chairman had been bought and would therefore not cooperate with the district and zonal officers in their efforts to intervene on the side of the workers. Some union branch officials had left the company, fearing victimization by management. The vice chairman had himself been threatened that he would be killed if he pursued the issue of deduction of union fees from the workers' salaries (interview 1987).

Bagauda Textiles Ltd commenced operations in 1972, producing woven cloth for uniforms mainly from synthetic materials. A spinning section was used until the early 1980s. At that time it was one of the medium-sized textile companies typical of Kano, but unlike NTM, it had never been much larger. In the 1970s it employed 350–420 workers. By the early 1980s, this had been halved. An interview was granted by the Deputy General Manager, Alhaji Saidu Musa in January 1987. We also draw on union records, particularly the reports from the Kano Organizing Secretary to Headquarters in Kaduna.

With over 95 per cent of the shares owned by the Isyaku Rabiu Group of Companies, Bagauda belonged to a category of Kano companies which were controlled by local merchant capital and operated largely as family firms. The Rabiu Group contained a wide range of activities in import-export trading and light manufacturing. According to Head Office sources (January, 1987), it included packaging, food processing, bottling, building materials, as well as transport, construction, banking and insurance. The history of the founder, as recorded by Umar Dan-Asabe (1987), gives a graphic illustration of capital formation in Kano. Isyaku came from a family of koranic scholars, with an intellectual history said to date back twelve generations. His father was a prominent malam, an islamic scholar, who had written numerous works in this tradition. The son, also learned in the Koran, had "obtained the permission of his father to start trading while he continued his studies", selling Arabic books, sewing machines and other items imported by the European trading firms, as well as local textile products, being one of the early licensed dealers of KTL in Kaduna. By the 1980s, he was considered to be one of the wealthiest merchants in Kano, as manifested also in prominent buildings, such as the extensive school and mosque complex, a Kano landmark near Goron Dutse Hill which he had financed. He was a supporter and funder of the northern ruling party, the NCP, later transformed into the NPN, and a likely major beneficiary of state patronage, for instance, in the production of uniforms for public institutions.

The failure to adjust: Erratic production and continued losses

At the beginning of the decade, Bagauda had just undergone a major face lift, having replaced a large part of its older looms with shuttle-less Sulzer looms. The new looms required less labour and the work force was drastically reduced from 360 to 140 in 1980. This happened before the two increases in the minimum wage and the cuts, unlike those in so many other firms, cannot be explained by the added labour costs of the early 1980s. Labour costs relative to other costs fell from 45 to 15 per cent from 1980 to 1984. Although the labour force was down to 113 in 1984, it rose again and stood at 184 in 1986.

The company seems never to have adjusted to the successive crises of the 1980's. Workers were allowed to drag on under very poor working conditions in a factory which operated erratically. In the words of the union, the management did not mind if the workers just left. We met some of them in other Kano companies, like Gaskiya which started production in 1985. Those who left kept being replaced by new people and the overall size of the labour force remained fairly stable, although with a high turnover. Our survey (Appendix, Tables5:4–6) shows a comparatively young labour force, with a strong southern origin component, little other experience of wage work and a short stay in the company.

The exposure to the foreign exchange squeeze was extreme as Bagauda was 100 per cent dependent on imports of its synthetic (polyviscose) and blended yarns as well as for chemicals and dyes. In 1983, the raw materials were just not available. The Kano office of the Manufacturers' Association (MAN 1983) reported in a survey that the company had no import licence and that no synthetic yarns were available in Nigeria. Although Letters of Credit had been confirmed for some imports, these would only last for two and a half months' operations. The company had no spare parts for machinery and generators. The report claimed that the workers had been sent on compulsory leave from May to September, but there was no complete close-down, rather a closure section by section. Surprisingly, management data on capacity utilization which were shown to us in 1985 by the Costs Accountant suggest that production was kept up at at least 40 per cent until 1984, which is rather puzzling both in view of the absence of profits and all the constraints that were recorded during this early phase of the crisis. The figures may, of course, have been fictitious. The President of the Kano Chamber of Commerce, a prominent textile trader and an aspiring manufacturer in his own right, suggested that some companies merely pretended to keep up production in order to get access to scarce import licences (Auwalu Ilo, interview 1987). Manufacturers were thought to be given preference over traders in the official allocations of foreign exchange. Once the licenses had been obtained they could be diverted into other use, including the general trading that was the hallmark of the Rabiu Group. With the abolition of the licensing system this motive for pretending to be a manufacturer was no longer there.

As the trade policy was liberalized, the prices of imported inputs rose dramatically to levels that were "impossible for Nigerian firms", according to the company's Deputy General Manager (interview 1987). He complained that only multinational corporations had access to imports. The suiting produced by Bagauda required a blended yarn, with 35 per cent cotton, which he said nobody could spin in Nigeria at this time. 100 per cent would have to be imported. An alternative, to cut soaring import costs, was to buy white yarn which was available locally and dye the final cloth. This required a "jet dyer" which also would have to be imported. Another option was to re-activate the spinning plant, which had been closed at an earlier point, and blend the imported synthetics with local cotton. Plans in this direction, however, appeared vague.

Although some production continued the results were poor. No profits were recorded from 1978 to 1985, which is the last year for which we have such records. The Kano District Office of the union reported incessant problems and lack of progress, in production, working conditions and industrial relations after this time too. A report from September 1985 spoke of "great problems since inception". Workers were left without pay as the company had no material to process. Moreover, the government had withdrawn the contract to supply uniforms. The union officer saw no hope for the company and no way to improve the workers' miserable conditions of service. "We have been left with lobbying for workers' survival." A report from January 1986, a time when other factories had begun to pick up, reasserted that no improvement was in sight. The company kept refusing to implement the procedural agreement which was the basis for the union's activity. "The environment looks so critical", the union report said, "that one can not think of the survival of the company." An interview with the zonal officer in November 1987 suggested that the company was "hardly operating" and that many workers were idle (Umaru, interview, 1987). The company closed down in the late 1980's (Umaru, interview 1991). Although apparently back in production again when we visited in 1993 we do not have any details of operations at that time.

A young, transient labour force with weak bargaining power

Irregular production and working conditions were linked to a high turnover of workers. Our labour survey (Appendix, Tables5:4–6) confirms the picture of an unstable labour force. Of the workers interviewed in 1987, just over ten per cent had been in the company since before 1981, although the company had existed nearly a decade by that time. The failure of management to live up to workers' expectations of a minimum degree of income and employment security made many workers leave voluntarily. The use of casual labour and management's lack of respect for collective agreements also made it easy to dispose of unwanted labour. Along with high turnover went a low average age. Three quarters of the workers were under 30 years old. About 40 per cent were less than 25. The young age and relatively strong non-agricultural background again meant a high level of formal education. More than one-third of the work force was recruited from the southern states, a large share when compared to our other cases. Interestingly, as many as half of the southerners were Muslims. Almost a third of the total had previous wage work experience. The combination of young age, high education, and urban exposure may explain the reluctance to go back to farming, which half of the workers interviewed said they would never do. The proportion engaged in city farming was also low. The factory thus seemed to act as a thorough fare for young, well-educated Muslim workers from the South, with distinctly urban aspirations. The sample is only 31 workers, but the internal consistency of the results and the contrast, e.g. with NTM, makes us want to bring them out anyway and at least tentatively suggest how the features revealed might affect work place behaviour and bargaining power. One may speculate that such an external, transient but urban oriented segment may have had little chance to develop a stake in local forms of collective organization. Its work place bargaining power was probably low. Maybe it was by drawing on this transient work force that Bagauda could get away with its unregulated employment practices, poor working conditions, and its policies of containment and cooptation vis-à-vis the local union.

Unsettled labour relations and weak union presence

The labour relations that met us when we visited the factory in 1987 were highly unsettled. Conditions of employment were even more irregular than in NTM. Few workers were on monthly wages and many operators were employed for two weeks at a time. General wage levels, according to the union, were much below the industry norm and no wage increments had been received since 1982. Management had refused to accept a system for regulating increments on a continuous basis as prescribed by the collective agreement. Overcoming the company's resistance on this point was high on the union's agenda. When workers over the previous few years were repeatedly sent on compulsory leave, they had only been paid half their dues, which was another priority area for the union. Although the company had accepted in principle to adhere to the collective agreements as these related to allowances for housing, transport and leave pay, the union branch complained that actual implementation was irregular. Payments were often either less than agreed and/or late in forthcoming. It had always been difficult to make the company pay local benefits. None were granted in 1987, except for some concessional sales of cloth. Similar to the situation in NTM, the management was reluctant to negotiate an annual bonus, but unlike NTM, Bagauda was also unwilling to pay. A small bonus was actually agreed with management in 1986, for the first time in ten years, but it was not sanctioned by the Board of Directors (Umaru, interview 1987).

Although a union branch had been operating since the 1970's, its history had been turbulent (see Oshiomhole's account in Chapter 9). It was only after 1983 that management was said to have begun to show the union a certain degree of respect. Yet, it was felt by the branch "exco" members that management did not really take workers' rights seriously, even in the later years of the decade, as evidenced, for instance, by the obstacles it kept imposing for any meeting, insisting that all matters had to be referred to the group headquarters. Management also kept obstructing the deduction of union dues, as shown by an exchange of letters in March 1987 between the General Manager and the Organizing Secretary of the union in Kano. The GM argued that the company would only make the deductions if authorized by each worker. The union, on the other hand, referring to the Labour Decrees of 1978 ("Copy was given to management who refused to read it."), insisted that the deduction should be made when a majority of the workers had agreed to join the union (which they had) and that it therefore was up to those workers who wanted to opt out to indicate their wish to be exempted from the deductions.

The union claimed that the workers were 95 per cent in support of the union. On occasion, the district staff felt obliged to warn the branch leaders not to take this support for granted and to exercise some caution in confronting management. However, we also encountered a situation where it seems to have been the branch leaders who were dragging their feet when the district office sought to push management into accepting union demands. This was also suggested by the zonal officer who claimed that the branch chairman and branch secretary "are the ones that spoil all efforts of the central union to help", accusing them of selling out to management over bonus. In his view, these branch leaders were bought by management and sought to prevent zonal officers from seeing the managing director, "for fear that he will close down the factory" (Umaru, interview 1987).

In view of the precarious state of the company, this fear was probably shared by sections of the workers, believing that the union demands would hasten final collapse and closure. The workers' fear could be used by management to keep the union at bay. Management clearly preferred to deal with the more pliable local leaders and dodged meetings with higher level union officers. The Kano District Officer complained in his report to headquarters in January 1986 that management refused to reply to union notices requesting meetings. Instead, it sought to convince the local leaders that the choice they had was either to accept that the company could not pay or to face the final closure of the plant. Was it a bluff? Even if this was the case, neither branch leaders nor workers seem to have been willing to challenge it.

The union's penetration of Bagauda was only partial. But the workers and local activists were brought to submission not only through the harassment from a hostile management. They were also intimidated by the fundamental weaknesses of the enterprise itself. Their ambivalence and lack of bargaining power was reinforced by the absence of a credible strategy of industrial restructuring on the side of the owners. This in turn may partly be explained by the company's position within a local trading conglomerate with an ambiguous and half-hearted approach to manufacturing. The limited element of constitutionality which was achieved in labour relations was largely due to intervention by the national textile union.

7. GASKIYA: NEW LARGE INVESTMENT BY LOCAL MERCHANT CAPITAL IN MID-CRISIS

If the seriousness of Bagauda as a manufacturing enterprise could be questioned, Gaskiya Textile Mills Limited demonstrates that the capacity of the Kano indigenous merchant class was by no means confined to trading. This large integrated textile industry commenced production in the midst of crisis, in 1985. The investment had been initiated in the heyday of the late

1970s by a Kano textile trader, Nababa Badamasi, who contributed a major part of the capital in conjunction with NIDB and the Bank of the North. The executive directors were recruited locally from the very start, but an Indian firm was invited to be technical partner. This partner, Arvind Mills, had its home base in Ahmedabad and was said to have altogether eight mills in India and one in Sri Lanka. The technology introduced was the latest, including ring spinning and shuttle-less looms.

At a time when most factories were laying off labour, Gaskiya employed over 900 workers when it started production in 1985. It recruited heavily from the pool of unemployed textile workers but also from plants where workers were either dissatisfied with employment or feared for their future in crisis ridden or mismanaged companies. To them, Gaskiya, a new, large, modern plant seemed to offer better prospects of industrial survival. By early 1986 the labour force stood at 1,300 workers. Production was stable and expanding. There was no talk of any large scale terminations or temporary or partial closures during the period followed by us, that is into the early 1990s. The plant opened before liberalization and had some original shortage of raw materials. It was at this point 90 per cent dependent on imported raw materials, including a substantial share of synthetics, which were difficult to substitute locally. In the correspondence with the union in July 1986, there is reference to the labour force producing less than half of what they could in full production due to such shortages. The factory was said to have only seven days' material left. In January 1987, after the liberalization of imports, the situation was said to have improved with access to at least 50 per cent of the raw material needed. The company aimed at a high quality market, in the same way as UNTL, which may explain at least some of its success in surviving on such a scale at this time. Evidently it also had access to enough capital to make the transition to high cost imported materials when the licensing system ceased.

Metamorphosis: From rejection to acceptance of the union

Like other companies in Kano, Gaskiya began by evading and subverting the union and its demands. The union accused management of engaging in harassment, intimidation and dismissing the workers who were the first elected branch officers. The first part of the story is told in a letter (5 December 1985) from the District Organizer of the union to the Ministry of Labour, which was called upon to act in support of the union's attempt to claim its legal rights. The union had written to management requesting a meeting to discuss the formation of a union. There was at first no reply but in an answer to a follow-up letter the company agreed to meet. Before the meeting, however, management issued a circular to the workers, encouraging them to withdraw if they did not like unions. Managers were also talking to groups of workers to prevail on others not to support the idea of a union, pleading that the company had just started and it did not want a union "for it may start to make some demands for the workers". The union responded that its aim was merely "to create Industrial Relation between the workers and the Management by allowing the workers to have their representatives where they will channel their grievances through to the Management for consideration". That this was needed could be seen, according to the union, from there having been "a lot of dismissal(s) and victimization without any prior notice, due to the fact that there is no Condition of Service as for a worker to know his right and what to do and what he (is) suppose(d) not to do".

After some such exchanges, management agreed to elections being held to establish a union branch but it kept stalling, preventing the elections from being held, according to the union, by ordering work on the Sunday that had been designated for this event. Despite this obstruction, the elections were held but management refused to recognize the results. It even set out to dismiss the elected secretary and chairman. This was the point when the union decided to take the issue to the Ministry of Labour.

The subsequent developments can be followed in a report from the Organizing Secretary of the Kano District to his zonal officer in Kaduna Headquarters (20 January 1986). The Ministry delayed action for over a month. "I had to go personally with some delegated workers to prove to the Ministry that the workers are serious and if they fail to intervene in this matter workers have no alternative than to go on action to back their fundamental human right." After some pressure by the Ministry on management, another election was eventually held. From this point on management seems to have had a complete change of strategy vis-à-vis the union. According to union district files, negotiations within the framework of the collective agreement were now accepted and were allowed to proceed "constructively". Discussion began on basic issues, such as the five-day week, a fixed date for the payment of wages, and full medical facilities. A stop to arbitrary dismissals was a major union concern. The union was pleased that, as a gesture of good will, a small bonus was also agreed although the company had not yet overcome its starting-up problems. By March 1987 the main elements of the collective agreement were implemented, including a salary structure with increments and improved allowances for housing and transport. A full month's bonus plus two pieces of cloth at a concessional price were conceded at the end of the year. Thus within 18 months, and after a period of strong initial resistance, management had come to accept that the union played a leading role in regulating labour conditions in this new Kano factory.

Workers' militancy and the transfer of organizational culture

Workers on the shop-floor played an active role in support of union demands. In July 1986, for instance, before management had accepted to talk to the union, they turned off their machines when there was a delay in payment of wages. It was only with the mediation of union officials that the action could be called off "without damage to the plant". The union claimed that it had not been involved in initiating the action, which was only sanctioned by the district officer, retroactively, as part of a harsh exchange of letters with the management, which threatened to lay off workers. Another outbreak of unofficial, shop-floor militancy took place in February 1987 in response to the imposition of new state levies. Although the deductions had been sanctioned by the union, demonstrations broke out in the factory. The Chief Personnel Manager was obliged to invite the District Officer of the union and allow him to call a general meeting of the workers in order to placate them and defuse the crisis (Letter Dabo to Umaru, 11 February 1987). The need to regulate shop-floor militancy was most likely a major reason why management conceded to the formation of the union.

The presence of a significant body of workers with an experience of militant and/or constitutional struggles in other textile firms, in both Kano and Kaduna, no doubt contributed to their readiness to engage in collective industrial action. This was particularly noticeable in the outlook of the workers who took up leadership positions in the branch at a time when the management's recognition of the union was still a contested issue. The chairman of the union branch, who we interviewed in January 1987, had worked six years in Bagauda and most recently seven years in Zamfara, the UNTL subsidiary in Gusau (see Map 4:1). He regretted having left the UNTL Group where both pay and industrial relations had been much better. However, in spite of the proven risks of victimization, he was not afraid to confront the management. He had every reason to be wary as his predecessor had just been sacked but he remained defiant. If the company sacked him, he said, he could always go to his home village and farm. In fact, his wife and children were already there and he had even hired farm labourers to work for him.

The work force in Gaskiya had the same young, transient features that we met in the case of Bagauda, except in that there was a predominance of workers with a Christian and Middle Belt origin. In the latter respects they resembled the workers in the large Kaduna factories, but their young age, higher education, previous wage work experience, and also the fact that few farmed in the city, just as in the case of Bagauda, set them apart from the Kaduna workers. The newly recruited labour force in Gaskiya was, not surprisingly, the youngest in all our case factories. Some 90 per cent were under 30, 60 per cent under 25 and, as could be expected in this generation, over 80 per cent had some element of post-primary education. Three-quarters were immigrants to Kano, close to 60 per cent being recruited from the Middle

Belt. One-third came from the North, half of them from Kano state itself. Almost two-thirds were Christians. Although as many as one-third had previously had wage work, urban economic links were not well developed, as indicated by the fact that only one-quarter said that they an additional urban income. This may partly be due to their young age which may also have affected the low portion (nine per cent) who said that they were currently farming in the city. Less than half (46 per cent) stated that they would consider going back to farming if made redundant and another 38 per cent would do this only as a last resort.

8. CONCLUSIONS: THE SHIFT TOWARDS A UNION-BASED LABOUR REGIME

The case of Gaskiya, the last of our six cases, compresses within a brief time span the central process studied in this book; the consolidation of a union-based labour regime in the midst of industrial crisis and restructuring, at individual company level as well as in the policy environment. In the next chapter we shall return to the aggregate level, to discuss the overall features of Nigeria's textile industry, its political economy and policy environment, features that may help us to explain the main thrust behind this central process. However, we shall also attempt to theorize our six cases and the differences between them in terms of their structural characteristics and their mode of insertion in distinct local political economies.

How, for instance, can we explain the greater militancy of the Gaskiya workers and their readiness to support the process of unionization, as compared with their fearful, and more submissive Bagauda colleagues? We noted above that the composition of the work force was similar in the two firms. Clearly, the contrasting economic prospects of the companies may explain much of the difference in scope for workers' action. But more needs to be added to the explanation, in terms of the differences in the structure of the two companies, their place in the formation of indigenous industrial capital, the experience of the work force, and, not least, the differential process of union formation itself, at the national as well as the local level, including the deepening of its legal and institutional backing in the local political economy. These are all features which will be discussed in a more systematic comparative manner in the next chapter. In concluding this one, let us merely point to some dimensions of the Gaskiya case which may serve to indicate the line of argument.

The economic strength of Gaskiya was partly a function of the size and timing of the investment. It was a large plant with state of the art technology, a strong indigenous capital base, and technical partners recruited from leading players in the world textile business, in this case, from the heart of the Indian textile industry. The investment was conceived at a time when Nigeria had established itself as a significant industrial producer with a large domestic market, capable of attracting major foreign investments, as in the case of UNTL, but also of generating an increasingly potent domestic capitalist class. Gaskiya's capital base indicated the coming of age of a new generation of indigenous entrepreneurs, with industrial ambitions that had clearly outgrown the confines of an earlier merchant class and its dependence on state capital.

Developments at the level of capital interacted with advances in the formation of an industrial work force. Nigeria's economic and political development had resulted in the growth of a substantial wage earning class, including a significant industrial working class component. The collective experience and assertiveness of this class generated forms of organization and state regulation which culminated in the corporatist labour reforms of the late 1970s. Gaskiya commenced production at a point in time when this process of working class formation and organization had generated its own dynamics, including the maturation of (some, not all) national industrial unions and their penetration into the territory of local political economies, which hitherto, like that in Kano, had been the domain of more or less patriarchal and/or authoritarian forms of labour control.

The size and modernity of Gaskiya made it both vulnerable and receptive to the thrust of more constitutional forms of labour regulation, despite the initial effort of the company to escape or delay the process in this direction. Size and production process created a concentration of workers which was not easily amenable to the type of personalized forms of labour control that were practised in some of the smaller textile firms, like Bagauda. With the union breathing down its neck, management choices were limited. If not accommodated, the union and its friends among the workers could be expected to develop into a disruptive force. What was the balance of forces, locally and nationally, that influenced the company's choice of strategy for handling such potential threat?

Size and modernity, and the local and transnational networks with which these features were associated, tended to carry with them a managerial culture of accepting unions as a more or less necessary evil that had to be accommodated, especially if state power could not be called upon to repress them. At the national level, all major manufacturing employers at a similar advanced level of operation, had opted for membership in the national organizations of the textile industrialists and for accepting collective bargaining as the primary mode for regulating labour. Although this was not the prevailing political culture among the Kano industrialists, Gaskiya had structurally "outgrown" the defiant, anti-union orientation of the latter.

The work force of Gaskiya may have had most of the unsettled, transient features that made unionization of the Bagauda workers difficult. But the context was different. The presence of a small but significant number of workers with union experience from firms, including KTL and UNTL, with more mature forms of labour relations, however, also provided the national textile union with a bridgehead for penetration. But something had also clearly happened to the balance of forces, locally. The union was able to draw on the institutions of the state (the Ministry of Labour) in asserting the rights of the workers, which certainly had not been the case in the past. The balance of forces had shifted in favour of the union, undermining the collaboration between indigenous or indigenized entrepreneurs, entrenched aristocratic political leaders, and weak or captive state institutions, including police, courts and Ministry of Labour officials that in the past had sustained the anti-union regime in Kano.

The union activists in Gaskiya, with their Kaduna background, were thus just one element among many, that reinforced the dissemination and homogenization of a national industrial labour regime, which had reached its highest point of development in Kaduna, with its combination of large scale transnational and state-led capitalist investment, in an environment dominated politically by a modernizing, regulatory, national bureaucracy.

Chapter 6

Industrial Structure, Place, and Labour Regime

1. INDUSTRIAL RESTRUCTURING AND LABOUR REGIMES

The six company cases and their histories of adjustment and response during the crises of the 1980s provide a basis for distinguishing modes of labour regulation in the Nigerian textile industry and for discussing why they differ between companies and cities. The cases suggest an interaction between, on the one hand, structural features that are specific to the individual enterprise, including size, lines of product, technology, management and ownership, and, on the other hand, characteristics of the local context where they operate. The history and composition of the local political economies help to explain why companies with certain structural traits are to be found in one location rather than another. They also explain differences in the spatial orientation of the labour force, for instance, in mode of recruitment and survival strategies.

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the interaction of industrial structure and "place" in the formation of the labour regime at company and city level against the background of the performance of the six cases accounted for in Chapter 5. As that account was rather detailed we include a brief summary below. The cases suggest that the labour regime differed significantly between the two cities, with a union-based labour regime more firmly entrenched in Kaduna than in Kano. To what extent was this due to the structural characteristics of the firms or can it be explained by features of the local political economies? At one level the differences are mere aggregations of company characteristics for each city. But why is it that firms with such aggregate features appear primarily in one place and not the other? Clearly, their location is also a product of local historical processes that have generated identities of place, including specific preconditions for the regulation of labour.

The striking differences between Kano and Kaduna allow us to generalize about city-specific modes of labour regulation that articulate (combine) aggregate structural characteristics at the level of the firm with such historically constructed identities of place. They point to stages in the formalization of capital–labour relations in a society which has just entered a process of transition to "Taylorist" mass production and where work place relations, also in modern industry, continue to bear strong marks of pre-industrial social relations, including personalized forms of subordination that have not yet been subjected to the regulation of a centralized state or the collective organizations of employers and employees. Modernization in this society has only partly taken the form of large scale production based on wage labour, although market forces have already gone far in structuring labour relations in the informal urban and the dominant agrarian economy too.

While our cases provide evidence of authority relations rooted in pre-industrial society, the predominant dynamics was a movement towards more formal and institutionalized modes of regulation, upholding state labour laws and rights of organization. The differences between Kano and Kaduna in this respect may be explained as stages of the same process, where Kano was lagging behind while undergoing changes in the same direction. The transformation proceeded despite the apparent crisis of industrial production, with its element of de-industrialisation as well as the declining ability of industry to offer a "living wage". We saw little evidence of the new informalization which is assumed to be part of the "post-Fordist" mode of labour subordination, such as the "putting out" or sub-contracting of production to types of enterprises which are beyond the reach of unions, state labour officials, and other agencies of formalization (cf. Pedersen, 1995).

The central feature was the consolidation of a union-oriented labour regime. This is supposedly the hallmark of Fordist production systems in the advanced industrialized countries but not necessarily of more recent industrializers, especially not in politically authoritarian, third world regions (Tickell and Peck, 1992). Where such labour regimes have emerged it has usually been the result of protracted struggles. There is much evidence in our material of open resistance on the part of some of the employers as well as hesitation on the side of the workers. The overall picture, however, is one of growing acceptance on both sides, providing a range of intermediary forms of reluctance and non-cooperation.

The logic behind the emergence of a union-based labour regime is addressed in this chapter at the level of companies and cities. We may identify labour regimes that were specific to individual companies or groups of companies, but they were also clearly influenced by conditions which were specific to the place of location. We therefore also speak of labour regimes as generalized to the city level. They were influenced, of course, by features of the wider society, including the forms of regulation promoted by the state and by the collective organizations of employers and workers at the national level. In the second part of the study we turn to determinants of the labour regime at that level, allowing us, in conclusion, to reflect on the national, Nigerian labour regime. In the present chapter, however, the "national" features are kept out of the argument, while focusing on the variations between companies and cities that were suggested by our cases. We begin by summarizing the experience of crises and adjustment of the case companies. We conclude the chapter by asking why it was possible for the union-based labour regime to be extended and consolidated in a conjuncture which presumably was hostile to organized labour. How did industrial crises and adjustment affect the development of the labour regime?

2. CRISES AND INDUSTRIAL RESTRUCTURING: SUMMARIZING THE CASES

Our case companies entered the 1980s with weak results, due to overestablishment in the industry and smuggling from Asia, both related to the oil boom. As oil revenue collapsed all suffered from the foreign exchange squeeze and the raw material crisis. By 1986, however, most had restructured and cut production and were again making profits at a lower production level. Only UNTL, the transnational giant in Kaduna that also was the most active adjuster, made profits continuously, while Bagauda, the indigenous Kano firm, was the least responsive and continued to lose throughout the decade. Adjustment took many forms. Spinning for domestic markets, for instance, was given a boost when imports were restricted and expensive. A shift into production of finer cloth for higher income markets was another form of restructuring that was encouraged by the domestic market crisis and changes in income distribution. Producers of grey baft gained a new market for export (as did plain knitwear) when the Naira was devalued. Thus product structure was of importance for how companies were affected and able to respond.

Cuts in production were made in response to waning markets and temporary closures occurred during acute raw materials shortages. Capacity utilization was low even if complete closures were few. The ability to ride through the crises depended on financial strength and connections, which also varied greatly. Reductions in output hit weaving in particular while spinning was encouraged. Producers of specialized woven goods for low income markets, like blankets, cut production the most.

Product orientation in combination with size affected the adjustment response, a major difference being between the large integrated mills and the smaller weaving factories. Size related to ownership and to access to the financial and managerial resources that were required for restructuring. Product orientation and size also influenced exposure and response to the raw materials crisis. In the struggle for domestic cotton the large integrated mills had an advantage of power and access inherent in their size and importance. At a later stage they drew on wider corporate networks to pay the higher import prices. The integrated mills could take advantage of the demand for yarn, especially before other factories had time to build their own spinning capacity.

Of the integrated mills UNTL had the strongest links to the world market and was the most active adjuster. It responded early to the dangers of overestablishment in the cheaper grey baft and simple print market and shifted into finer goods. KTL, the large state-owned firm in Kaduna, with run down equipment, unsettled ownership and management, and shortage of capital, was slower to respond and remained tied to declining markets. In contrast, Gaskiya, the large new integrated Kano mill, opened up afresh with equipment suitable for the new lines of products.

The large integrated mills contrasted with the smaller weavers of more specialized good, such as blankets and synthetic cloth for uniforms. Their imported inputs were more specialized and difficult to replace locally or through backward integration in the plant itself. The equipment gave little scope for changing to new products and new markets. They cut production drastically in the early 1980s, claiming raw material shortage, although the problem was as much the poor markets. Weak finances kept them from restructuring, surviving the worst crisis years at extremely low levels of capacity utilization. They were subsidiaries of merchant companies which kept them going, even if probably too marginal in the business activities of the latter to warrant any major investment in restructuring, especially as economic liberalization shifted advantages away from manufacturing into commerce.

Cuts in production were in all our cases reflected in cuts in the labour force. At an early point in the decade, at the time of the rise in minimum wages, these cuts may have been directly aimed at reducing labour costs. Subsequently, however, such cuts were quite likely to be concommittants of production cuts for other reasons. With the wage freeze of 1983 and the rise in other costs, from the raw material crisis onwards, the weight of labour in total costs kept falling. Only in one company, Bagauda, was the reduction in labour associated with major improvements in machinery. This is in spite of the wave of technological upgrading that was taking place in the textile industry all over the world in this particular period (Toyne et al., 1984; de Valk, 1996). The declining share of labour in total costs may partly explain this. Cuts in the labour force were consistently less than reduction in capacity utilization, partly reflecting the union's success in raising retrenchment costs as well as the need to preserve skills acquired in the company. However, our cases also point to management concerns to raise labour productivity through enforcing work place discipline on workers who were more anxious to hold on to their jobs in a crisis that undercut the options open to them. Workers in UNTL and KTL were complaining of "overloading" when fewer workers were made to operate more machines. A rise in the skills of the forcefully stabilized labour force was a contributing factor. It allowed managers to hold back on new employment as markets improved after 1986. There was little difference between the case companies when it came to the size of cuts in employment. However there were big differences in turnover, as indicated by the period of employment. Of the older companies, the stability of the labour force was the lowest in Bagauda and the highest in UNTL.

Termination by redundancy was not common in large companies and those bound by collectively agreed termination rules, as in our Kaduna cases. Here gradual reduction by "natural wastage" was the rule, that is, mostly by retirement and disciplinary terminations. It was generalized also to the smaller Kaduna firms by watchful union zonal officers, as the case of Chellco, the Indian owned carpet manufacturer, illustrates. In Kano our two smaller case companies, NTM and Bagauda, both cut their labour force sharply by redundancies in the early 1980s. The union was unable to enforce the agreed rules. A way of evading them was to keep workers on casual employment. This, however, was less evidence of post-Fordist deregulation than a pre-Fordist unregulated residual which was to be successfully combated by the union during the latter half of the decade. In Kano only one textile factory was a member of the employers' association in 1985 although others accepted the collective agreements in part.

Our cases suggest big differences in the take home pay of workers even between companies that adhered to collective agreements, depending primarily on levels of benefits negotiated in the individual firm, such as bonus, incentives, and a wide range of fringe benefits. In KTL, few local benefits were paid for much of the period and bonus was the lowest in Kaduna. Without such extras, the KTL workers were badly equipped to face the official wage freeze and rampant inflation. In contrast, a successful adjuster like UNTL, offered workers the best terms among our cases, including substantial incentives and other benefits at a point when the wage freeze was extended to cover bonus. The smaller companies, Chellco, NTM and Bagauda, kept to the minimum levels stipulated in the collective agreements, although with a lot of stalling and excluding sections of the workers, as in the case of NTM, as casual labour. Locally agreed conditions were poor although Chellco in Kaduna was more responsive to pressure from the union's zonal staff than NTM and Bagauda in Kano. Gaskiya tried at first to avoid the union terms before turning around and accepting them after some union prodding.

3. VARIATIONS IN LABOUR REGIME

The company cases differed in their degree of adopting a union-based labour regime. The differences may be operationalized with the help of the following rough variables: (1) acceptance of rights of unionization; (2) implementation of collective agreements; (3) preparedness to also negotiate local benefits like bonus, and other benefits; and (4) acceptance of collectively agreed conditions of termination. Each case may be situated on a scale from high to low acceptance with a medium position in between. Table 6:1 summarizes the positions, ordering the cases by degree of adoption of a union-based labour regime, from the top downwards. The slotting is rough, drawing on the impressions conveyed by union records and from talking to union officials.

Table 6:1. *Company cases by degree of union-orientation*

	1. Rights of union	2. Implement col. agreem.	3. Negotiate Loc. benefits	4. Conditions of termination
UNTL, Kaduna	High	High	High	High
KTL, Kaduna	High	Medium	Medium	High
Gaskiya, Kano	Low/High	Low/High	?	?
Chellco, Kaduna	Low/Medium	Medium	Low	Medium
NTM, Kano	Low/Medium	Low/Medium	Low	Low/Medium
Bagauda, Kano	Low	Low	Low	Low

Note: The mixed ranking indicates a radical shift in Gaskiya and a modest accommodation, under union pressure, in Chellco and NTM. The question marks stand for lack of information.
Source: Case material in Chapter 5.

At the top of the scale we find UNTL, the large, Kaduna based, Chinese controlled transnational, which scored high on all counts, with a cooperative attitude towards the union, collective agreements and locally negotiated benefits, at least most of the time. The other Kaduna giant (or former giant), the KTL, an old company, primarily owned by the state during the period studied by us, similarly showed an acceptance of union rights and collective bargaining, also most of the time, but was a reluctant implementor, largely due to financial and technical weakness, seeking to escape union demands, especially relating to local benefits.

At the bottom of the list we find two Kano firms, Bagauda and NTM, more modest in size and both shrinking fast during the period studied by us. They were both basically hostile to the union, non-members of the employers' association, and accepted aspects of collective agreements only after pressure from the union. NTM sought to fend off the union by refusing negotiations, while implementing substantive aspects of national agreements. Bagauda was too disorganized as a manufacturing enterprise to be a credible partner in either national or local negotiations. In both cases, an earlier history of violent rejection of the union was followed by attempts to control the local branch by means of personal patronage.

These four companies, the two at the top and the two at the bottom, illustrate the principal divide between Kaduna and Kano. The general pattern was confirmed by union records which provided information on most Kaduna and Kano companies, also those not covered by our own survey material and interviews. Our six case companies, however, include two deviant ones, one from each city, which are both found in the middle of the list, although in rather different trajectories. Chellco, a small Kaduna-based, Indian-owned blanket manufacturer, had more affinities with the predominant Kano pattern, with a low level of accommodation to a union-based labour regime and only when under pressure from the national union. The other deviant was Gaskiya, the large, new plant established in Kano in the mid-1980s, controlled by local Kano capital, which originally adopted an anti-union posture "typical" of the smaller Kano firms, but shifted to full cooperation after a brief spell of contestation, thus falling out of line with its Kano neighbours but in line with the major (Kaduna) firms.

The above typology relates to management and its readiness to adopt a union-based labour regime. It reflects essentially the union's experience in dealing with the firms as documented in union records and interviews. As we shall see in subsequent chapters, levels of acceptance were simultaneously levels of conflict, as the union was attempting to penetrate hostile firms. The unionists spoke of "cordial" relations with management in the companies, like UNTL, that had gone the furthest in adopting a union-based regime, and of "tense" relations with managements at the other end of the spectrum, as in the cases of Chellco, Bagauda and NTM, often suggesting not even being on speaking terms. In between these extremes, relations could be described by unionists as "conflictual" while suggesting that there was some basic acceptance of the union by management, at least enough to be able to pursue "conflicts" within the parameters set by a union mode.

How far was the union mode accepted by the workers? Our material is less informative on this point. In the few cases where workers were reported to be hostile to the union or reluctant to cooperate, the union records speak of intimidation from management as the cause. There is no reason to doubt that the workers were actually intimidated, and our material, as will be discussed in later chapters, contains much evidence of this. Still, experience from elsewhere suggests that not all workers in all situations would see unions as the best means of pursuing their interests, and for a variety of reasons, intimidation being only one. In any case, one would expect variations in the extent to which the workers involved themselves with the union. Union records at the company level suggest significant differences of commitment, from those passively accepting the union while keeping a low profile, avoiding sticking their necks out, to those making demands on the union, pressing for issues to be raised, and participating in union-led industrial action even when threatened by victimization. We may think of this in terms of a scale from high to low workers' acceptance of the union. The pattern in our case companies follows closely the one documented in Table 6:1 above. The workers in UNTL and KTL, the two large Kaduna plants, engaged themselves in union-led struggles and pressurized union leaders for further action. They had clearly taken to organized collective action as a way of influencing working conditions and rewards. Similarly, NTM and Bagauda, the Kano firms, are found at the other end of the scale. Here the union branches could not count on the general involvement of the workers. Branch leaders were occasionally coopted and intimidated by management, having less militant backing, and being less accountable to an active membership. The officers of the national union were more often than not the ones that negotiated with management on behalf of the local branch.

While much of the weakness of the union at the branch level may be credited to the anti-union strategies of management this, we believe, was not the full story. Both management and workers were affected in their choice of strategies vis-à-vis each other (and, thus, towards the union) by factors relating to the nature of the enterprise, the local environment, and their own background. There was a close correlation, for instance, between our ranking of union orientation and the way workers were recruited into the enterprise. As was shown in Chapter 4 (Table 4:8), there was a striking difference between the two cities in the level of formalization of recruitment, with a majority of the Kaduna workers recruited through the official labour exchange, the Labour Office, while the Kano workers got their jobs by approaching individuals in the company. When ranking our case companies by the share of the labour force that was recruited via the Labour Office we arrive at the same ranking as for levels of union-orientation in both management and workers. A more personalized, informal mode of recruitment went with less unionized, less formalized relations between workers and managers on the shop-floor.

The example of recruitment illustrates the complex interaction of structure and place. On the one hand, recruitment was a feature of the firm, of management strategy, related to the size and nature of the enterprise, including type of owners. On the other hand, it reflected the nature of the local labour market, including its institutions and forms of state regulation, that is, features of the local political economy, of place. The decision of a prospective worker to go to the Labour Office or to pursue private routes for securing employment also reflected characteristics of the labour force, with its own determinants at the level of both structure and place. Let us proceed by first looking closer at company structure.

4. EXPLAINING THE VARIATIONS: COMPANY STRUCTURE

The structural features which we used to differentiate between the textile firms in Chapter 4 focused on size, type of production process, and ownership. How do they vary with the degree of union orientation of our case companies? In Table 6:2 below we retain the ranking order from Table 6:1, indicating variations on these structural dimensions, adding the mode of labour recruitment, which at this point is treated as a company feature, and which we have found to be the most graphic indicator of formalization. The following pattern emerges:

Table 6:2. *Structural features of company cases as ranked by union orientation*

	Size	Owner/ management	Process	Labour recruitment
UNTL,Kaduna	Large	MNC/Chinese	Multi	Formal
KTL, Kaduna	Large	State/Local	Multi	Formal
Gaskyia, Kano	Large	Local/Indian	Multi	Mixed
Chellco, Kaduna	Small	Indian/Indian	Single	Informal
NTM, Kano	Small	Col. Trading(f. Leb) /French	Single	Informal
Bagauda, Kano	Small	Local/Local	Single	Informal

Source: Case material in Chapter 5.

The cases fall neatly into two categories when we combine level of union orientation with size (that is, in terms of number of employees), type of production process (basically a distinction between those who combine spinning, weaving and more processes such as printing and those who are primarily "single" process producers), and mode of labour recruitment, which primarily captures the division between those using "formal" labour market institutions—the Labour Office—and those relying more on personal, "informal" contacts. At the one end, we find the large multi-process companies with a formal mode of labour recruitment and high level of union orientation, while, at the other end, small single process firms with informal recruitment and low union orientation. The relationship to ownership and management is less clear-cut and we return to it below. Let us first discuss the other dimensions, beginning with size.

Why were large companies more union oriented than small ones? The giant UNTL was most consistent in this respect but KTL, despite all its financial and production difficulties, kept working with the union, at least most of the time. Gaskyia, the only large company in Kano, was at first hostile and evasive, like most other Kano companies, but realized soon that it was obliged to deal with the union, just as most other big producers in Kaduna and elsewhere had already done. The smaller companies Chellco, NTM and Bagauda were reluctant to submit to union demands and kept stalling.

Big companies may have opted for more formalized modes of regulating labour simply because the workers were too many to be managed by informal means. As companies expanded, they met constraints in reproducing informal modes, including the personalized forms of recruiting new workers. Formalization may have served to enhance control and reduce vulnerability. The need for formalization does not mean, though, that big companies everywhere necessarily opt for union-oriented strategies. "Formalization" may take other, more despotic forms, including the militarization of large work places as evidenced by the experience of authoritarian societies of different ideological orientations. The willingness to consider unions as a potential means of controlling large agglomerations of workers and/or as a source of mediation in conflicts between management and workers would therefore depend on the wider societal context, including the labour policies of the state and the presence of unions capable of asserting themselves, with or without the legal backing of the state. Yet, in the present context, with some of these things given, size certainly seems to explain much of the variation.

Size, however, went with other structural features, possessing a logic of their own, which, in the Nigerian context, seem to have reinforced the link to union orientation. In our company cases, the more complex production process of the integrated mills, which were usually also larger, as in UNTL, KTL and Gaskyia, contrasts with the simpler, smaller, single process companies like Chellco, and in practice, Bagauda and NTM, although the latter two had machinery installed for more processes. The greater complexity of the production in the large firms may have encouraged formalization, including the need to enhance predictability and efficiency in interlocking processes as well as more skills and on-the-job training of the labour force. As workers became less easily exchangeable, the system of "hiring and firing" was likely to become more regulated, less informal. On the workers' side, the size and complexity of production were likely to enhance bargaining power, including their capacity to obstruct the production process. The higher skills required by more complex technology would also be a source of workers' bargaining power and a basis for formalization. The formal employment relations, including modes of recruitment, associated with large companies and complex production processes provided unions with a stronger basis for organizing the workers.

Our company cases suggest that degree of union orientation varied with the patterns of ownership and management, including nationality, history and origin. The strong union orientation of UNTL, the Chinese controlled conglomerate with its integration in transnational corporate networks of markets, finance, and management, contrasts graphically with the weak union orientation of Bagauda, an indigenous family firm, linked to local merchant capital with its patriarchal management style. The strong union orientation of KTL was associated with state ownership and late colonial management (Whitehead) with transnational links. Being owned by the state, and by the NNDC, a quasi-federal development company, KTL was likely to be under particular obligation to conform to government legislation which sanctioned and regulated union activity. It was expected to play by government rules.

At the lower end of our scale of union orientation, we also find NTM, a company owned by the CFAO, a French commercial conglomerate. With roots in colonial produce trading, the CFAO may have been prone to reproduce the authoritarian relations of colonial society. It had historically been associated with the patriarchal and clientelistic networks of the local merchants who often rose to prominence as the agents of the colonial firms. NTM had been bought by the CFAO from a Lebanese merchant, being part and parcel of the semi-naturalized "Levantine" trading community in Kano, with strong links to indigenous merchants and "traditional" rulers. It is not clear to what extent the NTM retained such commercial and political alliances after the take-over. Its management style and its hostility to the union, however, fit the prevailing pattern observed in the Kano textile firms controlled by Lebanese owners. While not represented among our six cases, this predominant group were, as will be seen in Chapter 9, well documented in union records precisely because of their open hostility and the frequent confrontations which therefore ensued.

Chellco, the Kaduna blanket manufacturer, also at the lower end of the scale in terms of union orientation, belonged to another distinct entrepreneurial segment of Nigerian society, the small Indian family-operated merchant houses, often with a pre-Independence history in the region. Their predominant scale and family-mode of operation made them unlikely candidates for adopting a union oriented labour regime. Compared to the Lebanese in Kano, however, they were less indigenized and integrated into local networks of power and influence. Possibly more worried about their position in the country, and the prospects of being penalized by the state, they were likely to be less defiant when subjected to union pressure.

We noted above that Gaskyia, as Chellco, was a deviant case in terms of the link between size, location and union orientation. The deviancy also applies to ownership. The principal owner, a local businessman, had emerged from the same Kano business community which had demonstrated such resistance to formalized labour relations and unions. In our attempt to identify structural features that may explain differences in labour regime, it is tempting to see this as a case of size (including the size of the investment in this large modern plant) overruling "inherited" entrepreneurial culture. In view of the local specifics which made Kaduna accommodating and Kano hostile to unions, the case of Gaskiya may also suggest that factors of "company structure" may overrule factors of "place", just as the opposite could be seen in the case of Chellco, which was made to adjust to the predominant union mode in the surrounding Kaduna, despite structural features that made it a likely candidate for the anti-union camp.

5. EXPLAINING THE VARIATIONS: PLACE, CLASS, AND STATE FORMATION

Why did the textile companies of Kaduna and Kano differ so radically in their way of regulating labour relations? By the mid-1980s, when we began our study, the typical firm in Kaduna had accepted a union-based labour regime, the typical Kano firm had not. Company size, product-orientation, and patterns of ownership/management could be seen to combine into a predominant pattern for each city. The typical Kaduna firm was large, integrated, multi-process, multinational and/or state-owned with hired professional management, while the typical firm in Kano was smaller, single-process, and owned by or rooted in local, indigenous or naturalized, merchant capital, and often managed as a family business.

These differences, however, reflected the distinct political economies of the two cities, their contrasting histories of class and state formation, and their positions within a wider regional and national set up. Kaduna was a colonial new-town, where the modern state, both colonial and post-colonial, had been pivotal in creating the preconditions for large-scale industrial investment, by the state itself and by foreign capital, in line with the aspirations of a rising regional bureaucratic bourgeoisie. Kano, on the other hand, was an ancient indigenous merchant city, the principal commercial centre of a vast pre-colonial state system, the Sokoto Caliphate, and a basis for entrepreneurial classes with roots in pre-colonial and colonial trade. Local and foreign businessmen, especially the Lebanese, had created the basis for local industrial investment, partly as rivals, partly as allies, and often with the support of local state power, traditional or modern.

The distinct political economies of the two cities gave rise to dominant, city-specific cultures of labour regulation, attracting a particular type of enterprise but also generalizing a pattern which was capable of partly overruling the logic of company structure. The historical growth of entrepreneurship in Kano had generated forms of enterprise and patterns of labour relations that incorporated pre-capitalist and patriarchal features of hierarchy, obligations, and domination, although transformed in the service of modern industry. This culture resisted, although with diminishing success, the penetration of the new modes of labour regulation that accompanied the rise of the colonial and post-colonial formal wage economy, especially in the public sector, and the arrival of large foreign companies with their experience from elsewhere in organizing production and regulating labour relations. In Kaduna, the predominance of such a state-led wage economy and of large foreign firms created favourable conditions for the standardization and formalization of labour relations also in industry, in line with official legislation and influenced in important respects by modern, international practices, including the acceptance of collective bargaining and unions.

The way in which labour relations differed was also linked to the different roles played by state authorities and political power in the constitution of enterprise. In Kaduna, federal and regional state institutions played a dominant role in facilitating industrial investment, often in collaboration with international finance institutions. Kaduna was a centre of public administration which also tended to influence work place relations in the state-owned industries and in the foreign companies. The TNCs, although powerful actors in their own right, depended on the state in their day-to-day operations, including for access to water and energy, local funding, foreign exchange, tariff protection, quotas for foreign staff etc. They had the protection of a powerful regional bureaucratic bourgeoisie which simultaneously was a leading force, politically, at the national federal level. But they were also exposed to the state. Federal interventions in the labour market and the "social contracts", which were entered into by state and labour at the national level, had therefore immediate consequences not only for federally or regionally controlled state enterprises but also for the transnationals operating under state auspices. The TNCs became actively engaged in the new labour market institutions which were promoted by state legislation.

In Kano, in contrast, the relationship between private enterprise and the state was more localized, less national or federal. Relations were not necessarily less intense but they were of a different kind, more personalized, less formal. Although subjected in recent pre-colonial times to the Sultan of Sokoto, and later to colonial rule and to independent federal state power, Kano continued to retain some degree of political autonomy, being a site of a well-rooted, local ruling class with commercial clout and a localized basis of accumulation in a surplus-generating peasantry and a wide range of urban and rural crafts and trades. The aristocracy and the institutions of the Emirate, the traditional site of state power, continued to participate in the affairs of the city, and mediate in the relations between different segments of the rising business classes, for instance between the Lebanese merchants and their local partners, as well as in their relations to modern state institutions. The latter, including the police, the courts and the Ministry of Labour, were thus under the influence of commercial and political elites with a localized base and considerable autonomy. Local business leaders were typically not part of the political arrangements at the national level which decided on labour laws and the rights of workers and unions. They felt uncommitted or hostile to the ideas of collective bargaining or of participating in national associations of industrialists and employers, organizations which were likely to be dominated by the TNCs and the big state firms.

6. WORKING CLASS AND LABOUR REGIME: THE LOCAL DIMENSION

The labour regime was influenced by the local political economy as evidenced by the formation of entrepreneurial classes and their relation to the state. The local dimension and its implications for the labour regime were less apparent when we turn to the working class. As was shown in Chapter 4, the bulk of the workers in both Kaduna and Kano had a similar background, with a strong input of migrants from the Middle Belt, largely first generation urbanites with limited experience of wage work and with a background in the farming economy. While there were some differences between the two cities, to which we shall return, they were small when compared to those at the level of enterprise, e.g. between a typical Kano businessman and the state and TNC managers of Kaduna. The process of working class formation was less city-specific. Yet, the nature of the local political economies into which workers were incorporated was important in moulding their outlook, e.g. their perceptions of options in local labour markets, means and chances of surviving in the city, and thus their strategies for relating to conditions at the work place, to management, and to each other. It was likely to affect the perceived risks in participating in union action against management.

We have noted that over half of the workers in Kaduna were recruited through the official labour exchanges while a majority of the Kano workers had found their way into employment by contacting somebody in the factory, either in management or among the workers, perhaps somebody they knew, through whom they could be introduced. The personalized mode of recruitment in Kano reflected a management and enterprise culture where personal relations also continued to matter within the work place. A well-connected worker, with good individual relations to managers and supervisors, could hope for more protection and advantage. Such relations would be put at risk on joining collective action or supporting the union against management. The formal recruitment procedures in the Kaduna factories, on the other hand, provided the individual worker with a greater degree of anonymity which was likely to facilitate his identification with the workers' collective. Here, the conflict between participating in collective action and cultivating special relations to the management was less sharp. The scope for the latter was more restricted.

The personalization of labour relations was also likely to affect workers' strategies with regard to alternative sources of employment. They feared that if they became known to be "troublemakers" (e.g. pro-union) the information would spread through the informal networks of the employers, blocking their chances of getting another job elsewhere when needed. The more informal, personalized, patriarchal work place relations in Kano reflected predominant features in the Kano political economy where modern factories were immersed in an urban environment of extensive and diverse economic activity in commerce, crafts and services, usually referred to as the urban "informal" economy. Many of the textile firms had grown out of local commerce and most of the entrepreneurs were well rooted in local society. Supporting the union against management would not just antagonize the current employer but also restrict access to local job opportunities. There was a need to play safe in a context where power relations in the different spheres of the economy were likely to overlap. In Kaduna, on the other hand, the linkages between the "formal" and the "informal" economy were not as marked. A wide gap existed between the big factories and their professional managers and the local informal economy. The latter was also considerably smaller in scope. Kano was the centre of a populous and commercialized agrarian region with which the city interacted and exchanged products and services. In Kaduna the rural links were weaker and urban informal production for its rural hinterland was less developed. The workers in the large Kaduna factories were more cut off from the local urban economy and its immediate hinterland. This probably reinforced an orientation among the workers towards the factory as such, rather than the local economy and its alternative sources of employment, enhancing a working class outlook, including a readiness to adopt collective forms of action.

There was an apparent paradox in this. The Kano workers were clearly more urban oriented. Our survey, as reported in Chapter 4, suggests that they were less willing to consider returning to farming, they were slightly better educated, had more previous experience from the urban economy, and were hoping for other urban jobs. Simultaneously, they were less working class in their collective behaviour, more hesitant to stick their necks out for the union. The Kaduna workers were more rurally oriented, with even less previous experience from the urban and wage economy and they saw returning to farming as their primary option. Yet, they behaved collectively more on working class lines, were more ready to come out in defence of the union. They were confined to a few large factories in an environment that seemed to offer limited other employment opportunities. They risked less in terms of access to such opportunities by supporting the union and their belief that they could always return home and farm if they lost their work made them more daring in confronting management. It provided them with escape routes which were independent of their behaviour vis-à-vis their superiors in the city. It enhanced their collective bargaining power. The Kano workers had more to gain by cultivating informal relations and would be more careful not to jeopardize these by pressing for a formal, union-oriented regulation of working conditions, against the wishes of the management. Their urban orientation, in the context of the Kano political economy, undermined their collective bargaining power.

The general picture may have been reinforced by some differentiating characteristics of the workers themselves. The Kano workers of our survey, for instance, were a bit better educated than those in Kaduna. It may have made them more prone to see their future work prospects more in urban terms. The Kano workforce also contained a minority who were recruited from Kano itself and its immediate hinterland. Although too few to determine the overall outlook of the work force they may have played a role in transmitting "local values" to the outsiders, including information about rules governing local patronage and access. The locals, through their personal contacts, were also more likely to hold positions of importance in the informal networks that tied workers to management and may therefore have exercised an influence out of proportion to their numbers, providing a base for cooptation.

7. THE WORKERS' EXPERIENCE OF COLLECTIVE ORGANIZATION

In Kano the local community networks influenced workers' strategies and weakened the union's sway. In Kaduna, on the other hand, newly arriving workers would be embraced in the union fold. The city had a long-standing tradition of unionization, including experiences of successful union-led work place struggles that reinforced a collective, union-oriented attitude among the workers. In the second part of the study we shall address these experiences more directly. At this point, however, we need to situate this difference in organizational culture within our discussion of the local political economy, as part of our attempt to understand the difference in labour regime by place.

The national headquarters of the textile workers' union was located in Kaduna. Does this explain why the impact of the union impact was felt more strongly? Headquarters staff provided a pool of experience and expertise that could be easily drawn upon by the local branches. Closeness to the union HQ would also caution employers, make them more accommodating, less vindictive, and thus reduce the risk to the individual workers when joining union action. The district staff assigned by the union to Kano had less ease of access to such a back up. Telephones were unreliable and a local union officer would have to travel the 230 km from Kano to Kaduna to seek advice or authorization for industrial action. Staff at headquarters would normally be less up to date on the situation in the Kano factories and therefore less ready to act. In Kaduna, the union could send in its top shots, including the General Secretary, a skilled professional, at short notice.

There was more to it, however, than closeness to union headquarters. It was not by chance that the latter was located in Kaduna in the first place. As will be discussed further in the next chapter, the national union was an amalgamation of previously separate unions, including powerful company unions in the main Kaduna factories. It therefore incorporated an accumulated local experience of successful unionization at the individual company level. But why was the same thing not true for Kano? We are back to the basic distinguishing features of the two political economies. The large, state and multinational companies of Kaduna lent themselves to early unionization because they were part and parcel of a new, state-dominated wage economy, where the idea of unions was already well entrenched, at least since the late colonial period. The post-colonial state had come to accept unions as natural or inevitable features of industrial relations, seeking to regulate their activities in line with "national development objectives" rather than to suppress them. Kaduna's status as a site of federal and regional bureaucratic power and a show-piece of state-led industrial development made it a natural point of entry for union penetration. Wage-employment and industry in Kano, on the other hand, had developed with greater autonomy from this statist federal project, with more input from local entrepreneurial classes, and with a heritage of labour subordination predating the modern wage economy. It was also reflected in the scale of the enterprises. In Kaduna, large units of production were developed, "from above", as part of national planning and decisions of federal investment institutions. In Kano, smaller companies emerged "from below" as part of a process of accumulation on the basis of local merchant capital. The large firms were more prone to formalizing labour relations. The workforce was big enough to sustain union branches with full-time branch officials. Management in the smaller Kano firms sought to retain more personalized, patriarchal, forms of labour control. Branches were smaller with less access to staff. In Kano, all the institutions that were supposed to promote orderly labour relations in line with established law were weak. This applied to the institutions of the state, the law courts and the Ministry of Labour, as discussed above. It applied equally to the collective institutions of the workers, the unions.

The organizational outlook of the workers was moulded by the specificities of the two cities. But the experiences were also transferable. We interviewed workers in Gaskyia in Kano who had earlier worked in Kaduna and complained over the loss of union rights that the move to Kano had brought them. The Gaskyia branch chairman had worked in UNTL and had expectations accordingly. Experiences were being accumulated from different factories, from whole cities, from all over the country, influencing expectations and behaviour. While the process was unequally advanced in different places, the Kaduna experience of a well-established, union-based mode of handling labour relations had created expectations of an irreversible process that would be extended all over. However, in Kano, as will be discussed more in Chapter 9, experiences of defeats, intimidation and victimization had also a cumulative impact on consciousness. It may also have been affected by the real or imagined corruption of union leaders and by their clientelist relations to managements. Work place culture in the wider local context thus interacted with workers' concrete experiences in making them more or less willing to embrace the union mode.

8. THE IMPACT OF CRISES AND ADJUSTMENT ON THE LABOUR REGIME

A central finding of our study is the remarkable consolidation of a union-based labour regime in the face of an adverse conjuncture of successive crises and drastic changes in the policy environment. This is remarkable because the experience of similar conjunctures elsewhere in the contemporary world suggests a shift in the balance of forces against trade unions. In the case of Nigeria's textile industry we find that the union was increasingly recognized as a legitimate player in work places and in collective bargaining at the sectoral and company level. How could this be? Much depended, of course, on the nature of the union and its relations both to management and workers. This will be looked at more closely in the second part of the study. In concluding the first part, however, some observations will be added on possible connections between union consolidation and the process of industrial crisis and restructuring. So far we have followed that process at the general level of Nigeria's textile industry (Chapter 2), at the level of collective bargaining and workers' responses (Chapter 3), as well as in our six case companies (Chapter 5). In the present chapter, we have summarized the findings from the cases, focusing on the way modes of regulating labour relations (labour regimes) varied between companies and cities. We identified dimensions of industrial structure, at company and city level, as well as the specificities of local political economies that, when combined, helped us to explain the differences in labour regime. But these dimensions and specificities were not static. They themselves were affected by crises and adjustment. They conditioned company and workers' responses to the changing environment. What were the implications for the labour regime?

A quite obvious set of consequences was related to the performance of the companies, their success or failure to manage the crises and take advantage of or protect themselves against the changes in the economic policies of the state. The consolidation of a union-based labour regime in individual companies depended, in an elementary sense, on the ability of the companies to survive and adjust. The companies, as we have seen, were not equally well placed in this respect and their performance was influenced by structural features, including types and age of machinery and product line but also on the nature of ownership, management and financial arrangements.

While the capacity of the firms to adjust may help in explaining why the union functioned better in some work places than others it does not explain the overall movement towards regime consolidation. Was the process propelled by its own motive forces, perhaps delayed and obstructed by crises and adjustment, but capable of overcoming such obstacles? Or did crises and adjustment themselves contribute to consolidation? We see elements of both. The national labour reforms of the late 1970s, although meant to ensure greater national state control over labour during the volatile years of the oil boom, inadvertently placed powerful new means at its disposal. As will be discussed more fully in next chapter, the amalgamated industrial unions were effectively funded through compulsory check off payments of union dues by employers, and managed by regularly paid professional staff. The new industrial union was launched at a time when the textile industry was in crisis due to overexpansion and smuggling. A strengthened union confronted a weakened industry. While the market bargaining power of the workers was declining their collective institutions had been reinforced politically at the national level.

In the first phase of the deepening national economic crisis, in the early 1980s, this new institutional power could be used, with varying success, depending on the strength of the companies, to resist policies of mass retrenchments, wage cuts, and temporary closures. Employers were compelled by the national labour reforms to take the union seriously, despite a conjuncture which would otherwise have allowed them to exploit the weakness of workers' market bargaining power and to undercut the union. But workers were also encouraged by these national institutional developments to count on the union. The enhanced capacity of the new union to meet the employers at the bargaining table and obtain real concessions for their members helped consolidate their local base in the factories. It is easy to imagine an alternative scenario, where the crises would have undermined workers' confidence, creating openings for managerial strategies of undercutting the union.

The reinforcement of workers' allegiance to the union also had other sources, specific to the particular conjunctures of crises and adjustment. The crises brought about a consolidation of the labour force as the mobility of the workers who survived the retrenchments declined radically. The work force stabilized at a lower level. The scope for voting with one's feet against deteriorating working conditions diminished with contracting job opportunities elsewhere. Workers were increasingly compelled to hold on to whatever job they had and the prospects of individual advancement were tied to their bargaining power in the work place rather than in the labour market. This is where the union had something to offer. We see therefore, paradoxically, that despite the declining capacity of the workers to feed themselves and their families on what they earned in the factories and despite their increasing dependence on other sources of income, their working class identity was reinforced through their increasing reliance on collective means for protecting their interests in the work place.

The crises-driven down-sizing and involuntary "consolidation" of the work force thus interacted in a mutually reinforcing way with institutional consolidation of the union at the national political level. Without the latter, the former process might have resulted in the defeat of unionism, particularly in firms severely affected by the crises. As it happened, the acute threats to jobs and working conditions helped to reinforce rather than to undermine a union-based labour regime. We may therefore argue that the crises actively contributed to the consolidation of the labour regime. This conclusion finds further support when we turn to the impact of crises and adjustments on bargaining power on the management side. The firms themselves, not only jobs and working conditions, were threatened.

Rescinding markets, shortages of raw materials and other inputs, a drain on capital required for restructuring, all combined to make the firms vulnerable. The political reinforcement of the institutional capacities of the union therefore came at a point when the hands of managements were seriously constrained by acute financial, supply, and market problems. In order to protect the capital which had already been invested, firms were obliged to recognize their own weakness and the strength of the union, despite their apparent upper-hand vis-à-vis the workers in a depressed labour market. A critical point was the union's insistence that firms must meet all their obligations to the workers before either retrenching or closing down. The union's success in raising retrenchment benefits and therefore the retrenchment costs of the firms at a time when the latter faced severe financial problems was a strategic step in the process of labour regime consolidation. Firms were not in a position to take advantage of the fact that the unemployed were queuing up at the gates in order to force a restructuring of the labour regime in a more "flexible" direction. Instead managers had to seek modes of restructuring of production that were acceptable to the unions, including constraints in the down-scaling of the work force. In return they could secure acceptance for productivity raising measures such as tighter work place discipline and increasing work load.

While the down-sizing and consolidation of the work force brought about by crises and adjustment reinforced union allegiance, it simultaneously upgraded the work place experience and skills of the remaining workers. It enhanced their work place bargaining power but it also provided a resource that could be tapped by management in the restructuring process itself. A weak union and a more "flexible" labour regime would have encouraged strategies of restructuring based on "flexible" production, that is, the hiring and firing of workers in step with the ups and downs of a precarious market situation. The balance of forces, however, was not conducive to such strategies but encouraged those based on the trimming, consolidation, and upgrading of the existing work force. The advantages of the latter approach were reinforced by the acute need to manage other scarce resources more carefully. The strength of an overvalued currency during the oil boom made machinery and other imported equipment and inputs cheap. It encouraged production strategies based on adding new machines rather than raising the productivity of the old ones, contributing to excess capacity, and low capacity utilization. As those times came to an end, firms increasingly faced the problem of how to make better use of existing machinery in a conjuncture where the cost of imports was rocketing, capital was short, and markets contracting. To increase labour productivity in this situation was therefore not primarily a labour saving strategy as the relative cost of labour was falling rapidly anyway. Better working skills and discipline were instead important in order to improve the utilization of ageing machinery which was increasingly costly to replace and repair.

Within the context of the existing balance of forces, the union therefore acquired an importance for the process of restructuring which the firms could only ignore at their own peril. There was a need to enter into and maintain a constructive dialogue with the union.

Of course, some firms were more ready to recognize this than others, depending on structural features, including size and type of ownership and management as well as place-related features, as already indicated above. The line was partly drawn between the more active and successful adjusters who tended to be more willing to accommodate the union and the more passive or defensive ones who were also the least union-oriented. This in turn, as we have seen, was closely related to structural features. The large integrated mills, primarily transnational or state-owned were more likely to be active, while the smaller, single-process firms, normally merchant-owned, were more passive. We saw how the latter were typical of Kano, with its local merchant traditions, and with industry integrated in a wider environment of small producers and family enterprise. Here we found primarily defensive adjustment, largely through cuts in production, but with little positive restructuring. Our deviant Kano case, Gaskiya, a new large integrated mill, broke with this pattern, behaving more like other factories with similar structural features, although owned by a local merchant. It opened production in mid-crisis and was soon to overcome its initial refusal (typical of the Kano merchants) to cooperate with the union.

The active adjusters, however, were primarily found in the state-capitalist and transnational dominated environment of Kaduna where even our deviant case, Chellco, a small, Indian merchant controlled weaver, felt obliged to accommodate the union. It was directly prodded by the union into becoming a more active adjuster! UNTL, the biggest Kaduna firm was also the most successful adjuster, even pioneering the industry's new export drive as local markets were shrinking. It exercised its role as a dominant player in the industry by taking an active part in the association of textile employers and thereby in the administration at the national level of the union-based labour regime. The other large Kaduna firm among our cases, KTL, also engaged itself actively in the employers' association, although not at all in a position to offer working conditions on UNTL's level. Its history of adjustment was as we have seen fraught with difficulties and conflicts. However, it had a long history of union presence and the half-hearted attempts by management to side-step union mediation and deal directly with the workers failed, as we saw in our opening scenario.

The union-based labour regime prevailed. But whose union was it? Who was accommodating whom? We have so far refrained from discussing the nature of the union itself. Without such a discussion the notion of union-based labour regime is inconclusive. At the global level, we know of all sorts of unions, those which are in the pockets of managements, those which are imposed by the state for its own purposes, and those which tend to be appropriated by their own bureaucratized cadres, a “labour aristocracy”, in pursuit of selfish interests at the expense of the workers. What sort of union was the National Union of Textile and Garment and Tailoring Workers of Nigeria? This question will be addressed in the second part of our study before we venture any further conclusions about the process of labour regime formation that stands at the centre of our inquiry.

Chapter 7

The Textile Workers Union

1. "THE UNION MAKES US STRONG"

We first met the National Union of Textile, Garment and Tailoring Workers of Nigeria (NUTGTWN) in full swing when attending its Third Triennial National Delegates Conference held at Durbar Hotel in Kaduna in November 1986. The mood was militant and enthusiastic, despite crisis, adjustment and political repression. When the delegates from all over the country joined in the union song—"The union makes us strong"—it did not feel merely like an attempt to boost flagging morale in an organization under tremendous external pressure. Although the decline in membership had been halted, with even a marginal increase in 1986, the union had lost 20,000 members since 1980, a drop from some 70,000 to 50,000. Real incomes had been cut by half for most members. Yet, the deliberations of the conference was characterized by an unmistakable organizational self-confidence, reinforced by the dynamic leadership of the General Secretary, Adams Oshiomhole.

If the corporatist reforms of the late 1970s (Otobo, 1988) had been intended by the state to foster submissive and pliant unions, the militant anti-government mood of the 1986 Delegates Conference suggested a different outcome. The government was attacked for its repressive labour laws, its violation of human rights and the anti-labour character of its structural adjustment policies (GS Report, 1986). Scorn was poured over the Military Governor of Kaduna (Umar), with his "progressive pretensions", who had failed to turn up for the opening of the conference, reflecting, according to one labour leader, "the suspicion of the ruling class against the workers" (our notes). What was the basis of this proud defiance, this air of self-confidence and strength? How much of it was based on real achievements and real sources of organizational power? How much was empty ritual? The financial strength of the union was real and vital, largely due to the corporatist arrangements which made the deduction of union fees by the employers automatic once more than half of the workers in a factory had declared for the union. Although not always as automatic as it was supposed to be and often involving bitter struggles before conceded by employers, the check-off system was the backbone of the new industrial union. Without the check-off it would have been more difficult, for instance, to hold the National Delegates Conference in a major international hotel, and pay for the transport, accommodation and allowances of well over a hundred delegates from all over the country. In particular, the check-off allowed for the payment of the salaries, offices and transport and other facilities of a permanent staff of organizers. By 1986, the union had a staff strength of 56, including junior staff (GS Report, 1986). This could be contrasted with the pre-amalgamation years. The first full-time organizer was employed in 1966, according to one of the union veterans (Shittu, interview 1993). Before that time organizers had merely been paid allowances.

The check-off had revolutionized union finances. While already sanctioned by labour legislation in 1966 it had to be applied for by the union in each individual company. The union in the large Lagos company NTM, a pioneer in the history of the union and not to be confused with our case company in Kano, managed to secure the check-off the same year as the new law came out, according to Shittu, but most firms did not have it before the 1978 pact. Funding was therefore irregular and unpredictable. It was easy, according to Olaleke, another union veteran (interview 1987), to collect union dues at times of conspicuous industrial action which captured the imagination of the workers, but it was hard to raise money for the routine activities of the union.

The decline in membership in the early 1980s created problems of union finance under the new system too and forced a merging of zones and a reduction in union staff. The most concrete manifestation of the continued financial strength of the new textile union, despite this decline in membership, was its office buildings in Kaduna and Lagos, constructed with the help of special levies on members, deducted by management along with the union fees. The delegates of the 1986 conference were carried in chartered buses from the hotel to inspect the new impressive five-storey National Secretariat which had been officially commissioned earlier in the year on the outskirts of Kaduna South industrial area (GS Report, 1986). The union president pointed out proudly that it was "the only building of its kind here in Kaduna that is owned by workers" (Suleiman, 1986). The National Sub-Secretariat in Ikeja (Lagos), even more impressive, was finally completed in 1991 having been delayed by rocketing construction costs and other difficulties. The General Secretary noted with satisfaction that "the union is fairly wealthy" (GS Report, 1989).

The training of cadres was another area in which the financial and organizational strength of the textile union manifested itself, contributing to cohesion and interaction within the union. A special education department organized regular workshops and courses both at zonal and national level (NUTGTWN, 1987b; cf. GS Report, 1989). In opening a four-day National Workshop in 1990, the General Secretary stressed the importance attached to education in union budget allocations (Oshiomhole, 1990). Employers were also made to contribute directly by sponsoring the participation of workers from each branch.

The ability of the union to make good use of its resources depended on the organizational experience and competence carried over from the pre-amalgamation unions. The new union, while premised on government imposed unity, was built on inherited organizational structures and practices with their own autonomous dynamics, rooted in shop-floor struggles.

2. THE ORIGINS OF THE TEXTILE WORKERS UNION

The origin of trade unions in Nigeria (as well as in other parts of colonial Africa) is often attributed to the introduction of official labour legislation, permitting or regulating unions, in the Nigerian case the Trade Union Ordinance of 1938 (Ananaba, 1969). While it certainly led to the spread of officially recognized unions, such emphasis tends to underestimate the pre-1938 experience of labour struggles, often merely recorded as "labour disturbances", and where the element of organization is played down. Hughes and Cohen (1978) suggest that 1938 should rather been seen as the "coming-of-age of Nigerian trade unionism" and that its early development had been in the face of government hostility and non-recognition. They recall the experience of struggles since the large-scale strike by artisans and labourers in the Public Works Department in Lagos in 1897. Not much formal wage employment existed outside the public sector before the second world war. Colonial trading houses were the main private employers, although much of their activities was based on local agents, in scattered locations, with few employees who were difficult to organize. The centres of early labour militancy and organizational efforts were therefore in the large public work places, railroads, harbours and public works departments. Clerical staff in such places also pioneered white collar activism, which spread to other public services like hospitals. Workers' militancy in the coal and tin mines, both private and public, faced more fiercely repressive labour regimes (Freund, 1981).

During and after the second world war unions were pulled into the upsurge of anti-colonial nationalism. Radical unionists played an important role in giving wider popular support and legitimacy to an essentially middle class political leadership. Once the transition to independence was on track, however, unions tended to be marginalized politically (Cohen, 1974). In Africa in general, the historiography of unions during this phase has tended to emphasize the political role of labour in relation to the nationalist modernization project (Munch, 1988:14). Competing political factions sought to penetrate the union movement for their own purposes, although in the Nigerian case without much success. The labour movement managed to stay largely aloof from the heavily regionalized nature of Nigerian party politics. Foreign ideological and financial penetration was much more successful. Cold war preoccupations entrenched factionalism amongst the unions, with some collecting scholarships and subventions from the anti-communist

ICFTU camp, others from the anti-capitalist WFTU and its affiliates. Rival central organizations were established and maintained along ideological lines with intense competition for the loyalties of individual unions and labour leaders (Otobo, 1986).

Union involvement in the political controversies in the national and international arenas, has tended to draw attention away from the substantive organizational advances of the Nigerian working class at the work place level during these decades as linked to the dramatic expansion of wage employment in both public and private sectors, with well over two million workers organized by the late 1980s (Ogunkoya, 1989; cf. also our Appendix, Table 7:1). The early history of textile unionism contains all three features, attempts at party penetration, internationally supported rivalries, and major advances in work place organization. As we saw in Chapter 2, modern textile production only commenced in the late pre-independence period, spearheaded by colonial trading companies anxious to protect their markets in a new nationalist economic environment. State banks and development corporations joined, in partnership with foreign capital and management. KTL, the first big state plant in Kaduna, served as a breeding ground for union cadres, who carried the union with them when moving to newer firms, which were anxious to recruit experienced labour from the established ones. NTM seems to have played a similar pivotal role in Lagos (Shittu, interview 1987). Most of the senior unionists in command at the time of amalgamation had begun their careers in the early 1960s.

Olaleke, the first General Secretary of the amalgamated union, is our main source of information on the early years, as seen primarily from the Kaduna horizon (Olaleke, interview 1987). A "KTL African Workers Union" was formed in 1961/62 by Alhaji Abubakar Abutu, the union's name reflecting the presence at this point of a significant number of non-African senior staff and mechanics brought in by the foreign management agent. Olaleke was made a shop-steward. As industrial expansion in Kaduna was very much a part of the northern ruling class project of regional balancing, in competition with the economically more advanced south, the new union soon came under political pressure to join the NPC, the dominant northern party, and its trade union arm, the "Northern Progressive Front" organized by Ibrahim Nock, a politician and unionist. Only a few of the workers at this point were "Hausas", according to Olaleke, and only a few identified with the NPC. The non-Hausa immigrants were accused of being "southerners coming to cause trouble", especially after they had joined the 1964 general strike which was condemned by the NPC government. Fearing political victimization, the textile workers decided to affiliate with Nock's union in order to get political protection and be able to continue to operate. But this involuntary political affiliation encouraged efforts to unite on a more autonomous platform, fending off the politicians. A "Northern Workers' Textile Union" was formed in 1964/65 under the leadership of Alhaji Abubakar

Abutu of the KTL Union, with Olaleke as Abutu's deputy. The new union was joined by UNTL and Arewa, the other two large Kaduna plants. Although Abutu was himself an NPC member and at one time a parliamentarian, the union succeeded in disengaging from Nock's and NPC "protection" by seeking the backing at the national level from ULC, the ICFTU allied labour centre (Olaleke, interview 1987).

The search for allies at the national level also led to a link up with textile unions in Lagos. An understanding was reached between Abutu and J.I.B. Esho of the Ikeja Textile Union, which had its main base in NTM, resulting in the formation of the first national textile union, "Nigerian Textile, Garment and Allied Workers Union" (NTGAWU) in either 1965 or -66 with its headquarters in Lagos and with a sub-secretariat in Kaduna. Abutu of Kaduna was elected the first national President and Esho of Lagos the first national General Secretary. Olaleke became the assistant General Secretary and later replaced Esho. He thinks that the union at its peak may have organized more than one-third of the textile workers, but not up to half (Olaleke, interview 1987).

This first attempt to create a national union did not work out well. By the early 1970s it had turned into an essentially northern affair, plus GCM in Onitsha, Abbatex and a few Lagos branches. NTM in Lagos, Esho's main base, opted out at an early point, having changed leadership. Without the support of any major local companies, the Lagos headquarters became increasingly ineffectual. The national union, says Olaleke, "was dying in Lagos while it was waxing stronger in Kaduna". A national conference was called in 1974, in Jos, in order to reorganize the union. The headquarters were moved from Lagos to Kaduna. Esho was dropped as GS and new national officers were elected. Alhaji Abubakar Abutu was re-elected National President, with Olaleke acting as GS. The Lagos branches, mostly in minor companies, did not attend the Jos meeting but accepted the conference decisions (Olaleke, interview 1987).

It was difficult in those days to maintain unity and discipline within unions. Disgruntled people would easily opt out and form their own unions. In any case, says Olaleke, most workers were satisfied with their house unions and so were the unionists who might be in control of more than one house union. The law permitted a unionist to be employed as secretary by three different unions. Raphael Egbe, a leading Lagos organizer, suggests that the system obstructed unity because the professional unionists felt that they could make more money from controlling several separate house unions than as a member of staff of a national union (Egbe, interview 1987).

Abutu's Kaduna based union was thus the only "national" textile union before 1977, an affiliate of the "pro-West" ULC. The "ideological" divide certainly stood in the way of unification. Some major house unions were members of the "pro-East" NTUC, including UNTL and KTL in Kaduna after they had broken ranks with the national union. According to

Oshiomhole they had opted out because they did not like the national leadership. As an organizer at Arewa, he was involved at this time in the reorganization and unification efforts. One of the main allegations against the leadership was that they had borrowed money from managements to pay unions officials thereby compromising the independence of the union (Oshiomhole, interview 1987).

What role did ideology and international affiliation play? Oshiomhole suggests that such divisions were very secondary. He does not think it was the reason for UNTL and KTL leaving the national textile union. Unions, according to him, used to move from one national centre to the other not because of ideological orientation but because of discontent with their own leadership. The centres, however, made use of such dissatisfaction to encourage break-aways. In his own case, he had been only vaguely aware of the significance of the ideological divisions at that point in time. He himself had even straddled the divisions by being simultaneously the state secretary for the ULC ("pro-West") affiliated national union and a GS for UNTL, a NTUC ("pro-East") affiliate (Oshiomhole, interview 1987).

Some textile house unions were members of local federations organizing across industrial divisions. NTM in Lagos, after breaking with Kaduna and the ULC, played a leading role in the Ikeja Division of the United Workers Association (IDUWA), according to Alhaji Shittu, the most senior Lagos textile organizer, who had been as closely involved in the developments on the Lagos side as Olaleke in Kaduna. He joined NTM in 1963, participated in the formation of the house union there in 1964 and became its president in 1969. Before the move, NTM had been a ULC (pro-West) union and Shittu had attended a six months course at the Trade Union Institute in Lagos, "run for the ULC by the Americans". As his union changed sides, Shittu was rewarded with one year's studies in the Soviet Union. Scholarships were an important element of the patronage which marked the competitive union politics of the time (Shittu, interview 1987).

3. THE 1978 LABOUR PACT

The Nigeria Labour Congress was established through decree by the Federal Military Government in 1978 as the sole national labour centre and all unions were consolidated into 42 national industrial unions (FRN, 1977a,b, 1978; Otobo, 1986, 1987). Past attempts at unification from within the labour movement had been short-lived and partial. This time state intervention preempted a new unity move which seemed to threaten to bring the bulk of the labour movement under radical leadership (Otobo, 1986; Sachikonye, 1981; Hashim, 1994). The intervention was officially motivated with reference to corruption and malpractices. Old leaders were banned as was foreign affiliation and funding. The state argued "the need to rationalize the structure and organization of trade unions and to ensure that they are selfsufficient financially and not dependent upon foreign sources of finance "(FRN, 1977b). Union members were ultimately responsible for the efficient and honest running of their organizations but "such voluntary effort will be strengthened by Government intervention". Union funds are "held in trust to be used for pursuing the legitimate objectives of the unions in a manner not inimical to the national interest". Unions must behave responsibly, "if they are to enjoy the protection of rights such as are guaranteed to them by law" (FRN, 1977b). The intervention was supported by authoritarian nationalist notions of "guided democracy" (Bangura, 1985).

Aspects of the intervention were resented in the labour movement, especially the ban on individual unionists and foreign links. There was disquiet over the way in which the state demonstrated that its recognition of basic union rights was linked to obscure and potentially threatening conditionalities. Nonetheless, the 1978 labour regime was not simply a unilateral imposition. The new central organization was widely accepted by union activists who saw advantages with the new deal. It was felt that both the central body and the new industrial unions stood a chance of becoming more effective and powerful than anything of the past (Hashim, 1994; Sunmonu, 1990). We may therefore speak of a pact, the 1978 labour pact, as the main constituent element of the political regime that has governed state-labour relations in Nigeria since that time (Beckman, 1995). Organizational monopoly made it more difficult for employers to dodge union recognition. The state offered backing for the deduction of union fees at source—the check-off system—giving as we have seen union income a dramatic boost.

Corporatist arrangements where the organizational monopoly of a union within a particular sector of employment is given legal backing by the state are common in the third world, usually as part of attempts by the state to enhance control (Beckman, 1995; Cawson, 1986; Malloy, 1977). Africa has a rich experience of state controlled unions. The new Nigerian labour regime, however, was a pact with a labour movement with considerable strength and autonomy. The pact contained definite advantages for the unions while simultaneously making them more dependent on the state. They depended on monopoly rights which could be withdrawn. While most union rights depend on state legal backing, these new rights were less "natural" and even more difficult to defend. The ambiguous outcome of the 1978 pact was therefore to make the unions both stronger and more vulnerable.

Why should the state risk strengthening potentially hostile unions, even if it retained ultimate sanctions? Hashim (1994) suggests that both state and employers may prefer to deal with well-organized centralized professionally-staffed industrial unions, capable of entering into and enforcing agreements, rather than a multitude of unstable company unions that are easily swayed by unpredictable shop-floor militancy. Bangura (1985) points to the assumptions of national labour policy inherent in the nationalist accumulation model.

As we discuss elsewhere (cf. Beckman, 1995) the built-in contradictions of the pact were soon to reveal themselves. Those who had expected a pro-government labour leadership to emerge from the government-sponsored mergers and elections were disappointed. The "progressive" leadership under Hassan Sunmonu soon came on a collision course with the conservative civilian government of Shehu Shagari that was installed in 1979. The "anti-Marxist" opposition within the Congress, the "Democrats", failed to oust the Sunmonu group at the 1981 NLC Delegates Conference, despite state encouragement. Confrontation with the state climaxed in the General Strike of May 1981 (Otobo, 1981) and continued until a showdown in 1988 when the state again intervened massively, dissolving the leadership and appointing a government Sole Administrator to take over and restructure the organization (Ogunkoya, 1989). The intervention lead to a reconstitution of the "pact" and the election of a new executive with a "balanced" representation for the two competing factions (Beckman, 1995).

Yahaya Hashim (1994), in the only substantive study of the state intervention of the late 1970s, rejects notions of the NLC having been "incorporated" by the state. Yet, the pact had, in his view, led to "greater self-restraint" and imposed a more "acceptable" and "responsible" approach to labour issues as the price for an enhanced position in society.

What did this mean for the industrial unions? How were they affected by the pact? Was it a source of strength or weakness when the textile union confronted the employers? How was the new order affected by SAP? Let us first look at the way the textile unions went about the process of amalgamation.

4. THE AMALGAMATION OF THE TEXTILE UNIONS

The new amalgamated union, the National Union of Textile, Garment and Tailoring Workers of Nigeria (NUTGTWN), was officially inaugurated at the Lagos City Hall on 9 December 1977 and took off from April 1978 (GS Report, 1980). Amalgamation was far from hitch-free and it took some time before the new union settled down. In the struggle for control of the new union the old ones teamed up in two major factions confronting each other, on the one side, a faction with Kaduna leadership, centred on the old national union, with primarily UCLN (pro-West) affiliation, and, on the other side, the "Action Committee", with Lagos leadership but with support, most significantly, from KTL and UNTL, the two biggest Kaduna house unions, with a history of primarily NTUC (pro-East) affiliation, even if some main house unions also had pro-West links. House unions which so far had been unaffiliated or ambivalent were mobilized to take sides. Two major Lagos unions, NTM and Afprint joined the side of the old national union. It seems in the end as if the two camps were of almost equal strength (interviews with Egbe, Olaleke, Oshiomhole, Shittu and Suleiman 1987).

What was the contest about? Although some individual unionists were ideologically committed, or at least socialized into the ideological language of the divisions (socialism, anti-capitalism, anti-imperialism, vs anti-communism, freedom and democracy), these are likely to have been a small minority among the activists and certainly left the bulk of the membership unconcerned. Membership of a camp did not indicate that a union was committed to an ideological tendency, or that it shared the preoccupations of their international friends. The divisions offered alternative lines of power, recruitment, and patronage, especially at the level of national union politics. At the level of industrial unions, the lines were even more obscure. The two camps were floating coalitions of only marginal relevance for the everyday operations of the unions but temporarily activated in the course of competition for some centrally allocated benefits.

The amalgamation exercise caused a momentary hyper-activation of such ideological coalition strategies, largely because of the absence of any strong alternative platform for mobilizing followers in the contest for office and control in the new national union. The regionalist and ethnic card, otherwise much exploited in Nigerian politics, was difficult to play in the context of the mixed nature of the labour constituency, due to labour migration and the homogenizing influence of industrial work place organization. "Northern" unionists in Kano and Kaduna, for instance, could not play a "northern" card without alienating much of the membership of their own local constituencies and vice versa.

The superficiality of the ideological divisions was reflected in the way in which the bitter conflict in the amalgamation phase was resolved in mutual accommodation. But it started off badly. A first unification conference held in Kaduna in July 1977 was abortive. Representation was fraudulent, according to Olaleke, the first GS of the new union, with some claiming that they represented branches which did not exist and others inflating the strength of their membership. The meeting was presided over by an official of the Federal Ministry of Labour. A new meeting was held in the City Hall in Lagos in December 1977 after further mobilization by the two factions (GS Report, 1980). The accreditation exercise (determining what unions were recognized as represented with how many votes) brought a marginal balance in favour of the old national union.

The "Action Committee" candidates were defeated with the narrowest possible margin and Suleiman recalls how they all walked out angrily. The appointment of full-time organizers, not the elected positions, however, was the prime bone of contention. The victorious camp decided that these should be distributed between the two sides in order to bring about reconciliation (Suleiman, interview 1987). Raphael Egbe who had been instrumental in organizing the Action Committee says he called his group and they agreed to sink differences and join forces although he thought that they had "facts to prove that the elections were rigged and that the result could be challenged in court" (Egbe, interview 1987). After several rounds of negotiations, key Action Committee candidates, including Dania, Egbe, Amadi, Ali Dogo, Aisagbonhi, and Dabo were given positions as full-timers (Oshiomhole, interview 1987; Dabo, interview 1993).

One of the objectives of the state when imposing the new union order was to be able to influence the appointment of the full-timers, with whom much of the real power lay and who had been identified in the past as trouble makers. It was therefore stipulated that the new appointments should be made on a competitive basis based on merit, much on the lines of the civil service. Posts should be advertised and government officials participate in appointment interviews in order to ensure that such rules were followed (GS Report, 1980). Although the procedure was formally adhered to in the textile case (Egbe, interview 1987), the government had little influence on the way in which in practice the old unions shared the offices amongst their own leading cadres. The failure of the state in this respect reflected the real balance of forces on the ground which prevented the 1978 labour pact from becoming an instrument for state control.

It took some time for the intense partisan loyalties which had been mobilized during the amalgamation exercise to die down. The new national president of the union, Bello Mohammed, said that many thought that the union would not survive the first anniversary (Mohammed, 1980b). Egbe recalls how the workers in NTM in Lagos threatened to kill any officer of the new national union who dared to enter the company premises. According to Egbe, they felt humiliated because their own leader, Alhaji Shittu, had not been given a sufficiently high position in the new union hierarchy (cf. ZR, 1979). The union had to "clamp down on the branch before normalcy was restored" (GS Report, 1980). Specomills, a key Action Committee branch in Lagos, "waged war against the union", challenging it in "six different court cases", and appealing to the Ministry to intervene (ZR, 1981). Shittu reported in 1981 that two Lagos branches were "under suspension", having "not fully integrated in the union". Other branches "that were at loggerheads with the union have reexamined their stand and fused properly into the union" (ZR, 1981). Reporting from another part of Lagos, a zonal officer claimed that "the minds of the workers had been poised against the National Union" and that they had prevented him from "exercising his lawful duties". In some branches zonal officers had been chased out of the mills (ZR, 1981). The mighty UNTL house union in Kaduna had at first also resisted amalgamation, according to Dabo (interview 1993).

The acrimonies of the amalgamation phase gradually ceased to influence union politics. The President claimed at the 1980 conference that out of the "bitter experience" had risen "the most efficient and democratic organization among the forty-two industrial unions" (Mohammed, 1980b), reflecting the confidence of the new leaders in the success of amalgamation. However, with so much obvious power concentrated in the national headquarters in

Kaduna some resentment lingered at the Lagos end. It is likely that the powerful, pro-Action Committee, house unions in Kaduna, UNTL and KTL, were more easily accommodated, benefiting from close access to headquarters. Some of the Lagos delegates at the 1986 National Delegates Conference in Kaduna were clearly appealing to anti-Kaduna resentments, accusing the leadership of taking "anti-Lagos" stands on certain issues. This was the only occasion during the conference, when the GS, Oshiomhole, became really agitated, hitting back fiercely at such insinuations. Our impression is that the national union was well established in Lagos and that the "national sub-secretariat" there was sufficiently "pluralist" in composition and powerful in its own right to withstand regionalist agitation.

The primary background of the newly elected textile leadership in the ULCN (pro-West) camp was at first visible in its mode of criticizing the "Progressives" who, to the dismay of the government, had succeeded in gaining control over the leadership of the Nigeria Labour Congress, the new national labour centre. The textile president lamented in 1980 that the central body "has never done anything beneficial to the workers of this country" (Mohammed 1980b). The critique of the NLC at this point, however, should also be seen in the light of the "crisis before the crisis" in the textile industry, and the catastrophic impact of the centrally demanded new minimum wage as discussed in Chapter 2. Before long, it turned out that the textile union became one of the steady pillars of the radical forces of the NLC in their confrontation with the government over SAP. As factionalism erupted most divisively in connection with the 1988 NLC elections (Beckman, 1995), the textile union was firmly with the "Progressives", despite its "pro-West" pre-amalgamation history.

5. CONSOLIDATION: LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The successful accommodation of the factions after 1978 and the sharing of offices created their own problems. The coalition strategies placed the new leadership under obligation to distribute rewards, especially to unionists who had been instrumental in shifting the balance of forces in favour of the winning side. Some were given positions, according to Oshiomhole, because they had voted right in the elections. One result was heavy over staffing, further aggravated by the dramatic decline in union membership during the first five years of the union's existence. The first GS had not the strength, according to his successor, to rationalize the staff structure. All union income was absorbed by wages. To Dabo (interview 1993) it was more a question of wanting to accommodate the factions and maintain peace. When Oshiomhole took over he enforced the provisions of the constitution which tied the number of zones and zonal staff to the number of workers: one zone = 6,000 workers. The zones were reduced from 14 to 8 and staff strength was cut from 72 to 56. This also allowed for an upgrading of staff efficiency, drawing on the strong views of members about who was good and who was weak in addressing union problems at the branch level (Oshiomhole, interview 1987; cf. GS Report, 1983).

There was also the problem of ensuring cohesion and discipline. Much of the staff was recruited among the organizers of house unions which had been autonomous before 1978 and accustomed to operate independently of any centre. Even those affiliated to the old national union had to change their mode of operation. Compared to the old one, the new industrial union had vastly enhanced resources for joint action, including collective bargaining for the industry as a whole. Both house unions and old branches were at first difficult to integrate. Many continued, according to Oshiomhole, to do as they liked regardless of union policy. Some officers even imposed their own levies on the members, leading to inquiries and court cases. The house unions needed to "readjust to the realities of the evolution of industrial unionism" (ZR, 1978).

In 1986, by the time we began our studies, the union had some 60 branches, most being based on one factory. A branch was headed by an executive committee (exco) with a branch chairman (or president), secretary and treasurer as the principal officers, elected on a two-yearly basis. Shop-stewards would be appointed to represent the union in different departments, especially in large firms. The few references to shop-stewards in the internal reporting suggests that they may not have played an important role in shop-floor organization. Branches were organized in zones, reduced to eight after the 1982 reforms. They were headed by a zonal chairman as elected by a zonal council made up of representatives of the branch excos. Zonal chairmen were considered "part-time" officers of the union and paid allowances, sitting on the National Executive Council (NEC), the governing body of the union in between the congresses (NDC).

Zonal officers, on the other hand, were appointed full-timers paid by the national union. Although taking their instructions from and reporting to headquarters—the National Secretariat in Kaduna or the Lagos Sub-Secretariat—the zonal officers would interact closely with zonal councils and zonal chairmen, especially on matters relating to more than one company or branch. The authority of the elected council officers would also be mobilized when the secretariat was prompted to intervene at the branch level, for instance in connection with factional struggles or other local crises. Branch elections would normally be organized with the assistance of or under the supervision of zonal officers. The secretariat had the authority to dissolve a branch and arrange for fresh elections when incumbents were deemed to be involved in "anti-union" activity or in the interest of protecting "peace and democracy" in the branch.

The lowest level zonal officers would be designated Organizing Secretaries (OS or Chief OS), the higher levels Assistant General Secretaries

(AGS) with the distinction between Senior (SAGS) and Principal (PAGS). The departments of the National Secretariat and the Sub-Secretariat would be headed by Deputy General Secretaries (DGS). In 1986, the union employed 25 full-time organizers, nine COS, two AGS, five SAGS, four PAGS, four DGS and one GS, in addition to one Education and Research Officer, one Special Assistant to the GS, and the junior office staff. There were 18 part-timers, that is elected officials, with allowances, including the National President, two deputies, one treasurer, two internal auditors, four trustees and the eight zonal chairmen (GS Report, 1986).

Olaleke was removed as General Secretary in late 1981 and replaced by Oshiomhole, first in an acting capacity, which was later confirmed. The administrative reforms were pushed through and the union was consolidated under Oshimohole's leadership. He had begun his career as a shop-floor activist and he retained the style and culture which permitted him to interact with confidence and efficiency at that level. But he had also acquired the professional skills and training of a top-level unionist, capable of talking the language of the employers, dealing with them effectively during negotiations.

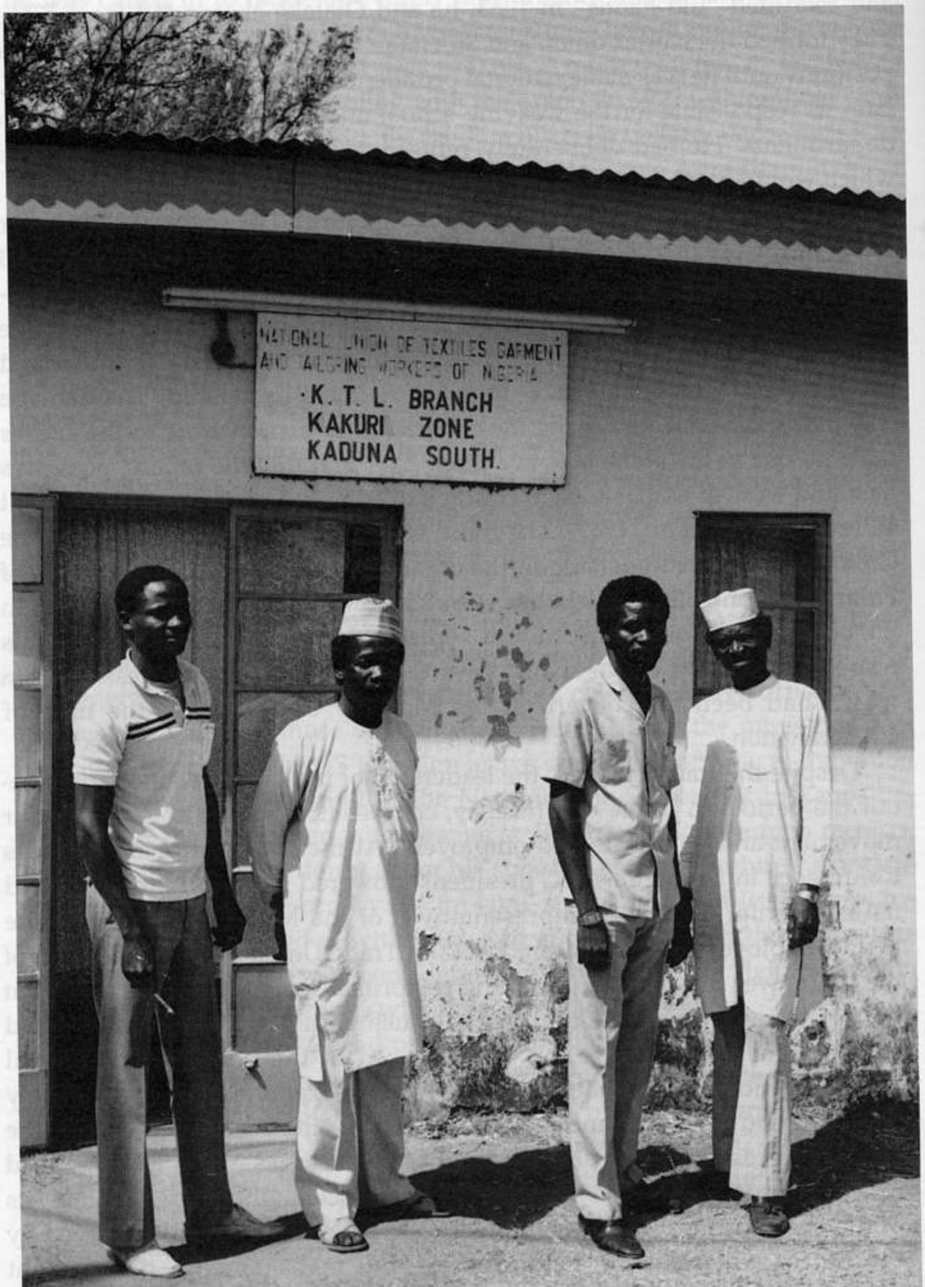
Oshiomhole came to Kaduna in the late 1960s from Bendel State in the "mid-west" after secondary school. His first job was as a chain-boy with a construction company, dreaming of becoming an architect. He joined Arewa, the big Kaduna textile firm, in 1969 while continuing with evening classes and a correspondence course and serving as an apprentice with an architectural firm in the evenings. In Arewa, he was vocal in criticizing the local union leadership and was soon elected into the exco "after a lot of crises and changes in the branch". He recalls how at that time members of the exco had no security of tenure. They could be thrown out at a workers' mass meeting at any time. In 1973 he became the branch secretary, the principal executive officer. As the labour law allowed a union organizer to work for three unions at a time, he was simultaneously secretary of the one at Arewa Metal Containers. He had no salary as a unionist but allowances plus an agreement with management that allowed him time off for union work. He was pushed from one section in the factory to another because the supervisors did not want to have a union official in their sections. "Once you are known as a unionist and troublemaker the company would make sure that your chances of advance are obstructed". He decided to leave Arewa as he saw no prospects for promotion, applied for and was given a job as a draughtsman in the Ministry of Agriculture. But the union was anxious to keep him. His allowance was raised and in addition he was given the position as state secretary of the national union. He was also made the secretary of the UNTL house union, the biggest in the country, despite the fact that it was not a member of the national union. In 1976 he became an Assistant National Secretary in charge of the Northern Area, while also organizing the union at Peugeot, another big new Kaduna industry where he was called in to tackle a severely anti-union management by workers, many of whom had worked with textile companies before joining the vehicle assembly plant. He recalls that they organized more than ten strikes before the management accepted dealing with the union. In 1977 Oshiomhole went for a two year course at Ruskin, the labour college in Oxford, encouraged, he says, by the West-German Consul in Kaduna. He wrote a graduation thesis on "Compulsory Conciliation and Arbitration System: Study from the Nigerian Experience" before returning to Kaduna in 1979, now as an Assistant General Secretary of the amalgamated union responsible for education and research. As he travelled up and down the country, organizing seminars and courses, he became well known with the cadres including them outside the north. When the first collective agreement was negotiated with the employers in late 1979, Oshiomhole was made a member of the negotiating team by virtue of his book knowledge, being well-versed in the labour laws from Ruskin. His colleagues were impressed by his performance and he was promoted Deputy GS and put in charge of industrial relations. Two years later he was the unchallenged leader of the union (Oshimohole, interview 1987).

In their concern with bureaucratic professionalism, the 1976–78 union reformers in the Federal Ministry of Labour sought to enhance the status of the general secretaries. They were defined as chief executive officers with salaries equivalent to those of Permanent Secretaries in the ministries. We were able to observe the GS in action as we spent a lot of time at the union headquarters in Kaduna and in the National Sub-Secretariat in Lagos between 1986 and 1995 when interviewing staff and examining union records. Although there was no doubt about his superior position within the organization, we were impressed by his un-civil-service mode of leadership, his office being often crowded with field staff and local branch delegates, discussing issues at length with considerable liberty and lack of rigid hierarchy, often lengthy rowdy meetings with much comradely laughter.

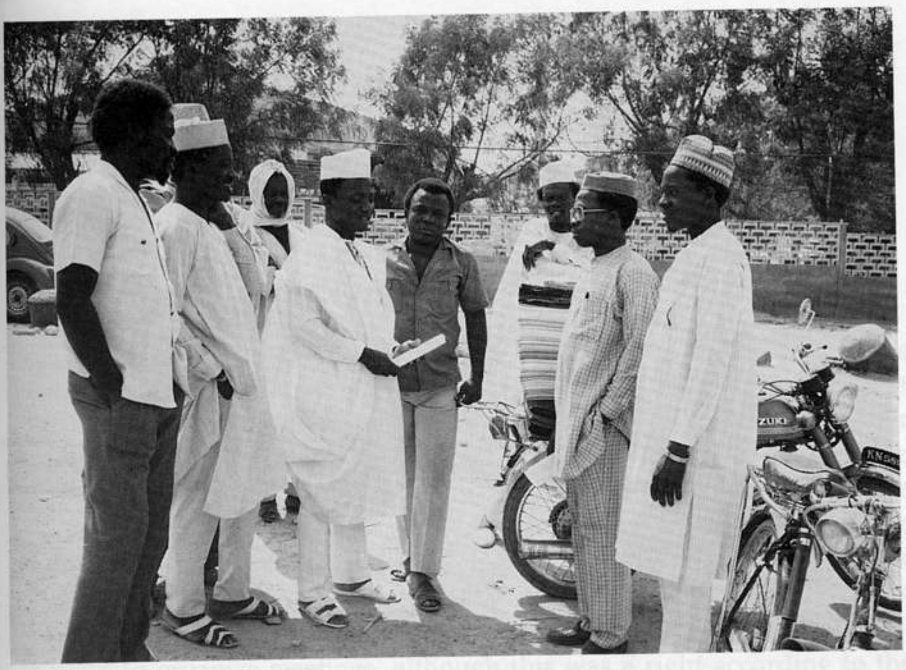
As the administrative head of the organization, the GS exercised authority over staff and assets, while being politically responsible to the National Executive Council (NEC) and its Central Working Committee (CWC), elected by the triennial National Delegates Conference (NDC). The GS was appointed by NEC as ratified by NDC. He was a full-timer, unlike the elected National President, the formal leader of the union. The first president was Alhaji Bello Mohammed, who had succeeded Alhaji Abubakar Abutu as head of the Kaduna based national union in the pre-amalgamation days. He died in a motor accident in 1983 and was replaced by A.D. Suleiman at that year's NDC. Suleiman schooled in Kano to primary seven, was anxious to proceed with his education "but had no godfathers" to support him. He was therefore an unwilling candidate for the industrial labour force, lining up in 1961 at the gate of the biggest factory of that time, KTL, pleading with the gate man to be given a chance. When a new factory, Nortex, was established and recruited "old hands" in 1963, he and Olaleke absconded from KTL. They formed the Nortex union and Suleiman remained with them in various positions until he was made national president in 1983, first as a "head boy", later as responsible for the weaving school and in the stores and accounts departments. He had deliberately refused promotion to senior positions which would disqualify him for union work.

Suleiman had a rich union career, being branch chairman of Nortex for much of the 70s, and National Treasurer of the new national union in 1978 (interview 1987). It ended tragically in 1989, when he was removed for defrauding the union (GS Report, 1989; Oshiomhole, interview 1990). The fraud also involved the National Treasurer and the Financial Controller and led to a major crisis and shake-up in the national leadership. The damage was partly contained by using the experience to demonstrate to the cadres that "no one in the union is above discipline" and that the union "possesses men and women with sufficient courage to enforce discipline and probity at all levels" (GS Report, 1989). The fraud was discovered and exposed by the GS, reinforcing his leadership in the organization. The powerful position of Financial Controller which had been held by an old unionist (Omoh Enabomhe) was discontinued and replaced by professional staff. In this respect, one may speak of a shift towards the bureaucratic professionalism which had been the concern of the Ministry of Labour at the time of amalgamation.

Despite the fraud incident, the leadership of the union retained throughout the period an image of efficiency, competence, both within the labour movement and with state and employers. At the 1989 National Delegates Conference in Lagos, the NLC president showered praise on the union and its leadership. So did the representatives of the Ministry of Labour, the textile employers and the Commonwealth Trade Union Secretariat. Much of the praise was due to the outstanding performance of Oshiomhole as GS but the organization was able to draw on much enthusiasm, competence and commitment at all levels. This is evidenced in the voluminous internal documentation, the "Zonal Reports", which we examined comprehensively for the period 1978–1991 and more selectively for the years 1991–1993, in the internal correspondence at branch level of the factories which were selected for case studies, and in the interviews we conducted with cadres at all levels of the organization. They contain lively narratives of the problems faced by the cadres when dealing with workers and managements, government officials and police, and with each other. The next chapters attempt to systematize our understanding of these interactions, beginning with the process of unionization, the struggle to establish and maintain union presence at the work place.



Branch officers outside KTL union office



Union organizer talking to workers outside factory gate in Kano

Zonal officers discussing with branch leaders in Gaskiya, Kano

KTL branch executives in their office

Branch officers outside UNTL union office

Chapter 8

The Progress of Unionization

1. FROM MANAGERIAL DESPOTISM TO CONSTITUTIONAL RULE

Union cadres recalled the bad old days. Alhaji Shittu, the veteran Lagos organizer, spoke of the time when "most private companies were against unions". Open hostility between workers and managements was the order of the day and union activists were intimidated and victimized. In NTM, the plant which pioneered unionization in Lagos, all union chairmen until the late 1960s had been sacked. It was a humiliating time when "workers were treated like slaves". A small mistake would mean that a worker lost his earnings for the whole day. Increments and salary reviews were decided at will, punishing "disloyal" and rewarding "loyal" workers. They were not allowed to organize meetings, although this was a right according to the labour laws. When activists claimed that they had the required number of workers behind them to form a union, managements would make the workers change their mind by intimidation (Shittu, interview 1987).

For Shittu the general strike of 1964 was the critical watershed. Workers were mobilized and emboldened, feeling part of a movement capable of challenging both state and employers. In the case of NTM, the strike prepared the way for the introduction of its first "conditions of service". He recalls how in 1967 they secretly collected information from workers on what people were actually paid and on who was given or not given increments (interview 1987). Similarly, Oshiomhole speaks of his early experience as a branch secretary in Arewa in Kaduna when workers had "no industrial rights", when "minor offences resulted in indiscriminate forfeiture of pay for days sometimes weeks" and when terminations and summary dismissals were "handed out at will by officious supervisors" (Udoka, 1990).

At the time of amalgamation, managerial despotism was still the order of the day in many companies, as vividly reported by zonal officers during their efforts to expand the influence of the union. In Abel Abu Industries, for instance, nobody "was allowed to talk or go to the toilet during working hours". But the union had arrived to free the workers from "management threats and bondage" (ZR in TGW, 1981). "A bill of rights had been won" (Oshiomhole in Udoka, 1990). The formation of national, industry-wide unions was a big boost to unionization at the work-place level. As only one union—affiliated to one single industrial union—could exist in a plant, it was difficult for management to refuse unionization or dodge it by sponsoring yellow, management-controlled unions. National collective bargaining gave union cadres a strong case when trying to convince workers in an unorganized plant to join: "Look at your present conditions of service and see what you will get if the union negotiates on your behalf". The automatic check-off, paid to the national union, provided for a powerful body *outside* the direct influence of individual managements, capable of supporting weak branches and pressurizing hostile managers.

As we saw in the preceding chapter, much of the textile industry, especially the large firms, was already unionized before amalgamation. But having the union accepted was one thing, effective influence in the work place, another. A formally "recognized" union could be ignored by management except on marginal issues. Many of the house unions (and branches) of the pre-amalgamation period had achieved very little by way of constraining work place despotism. The old national union had a limited reach not only in terms of the companies it covered but also in its capacity to support substantive action at the branch level. The branches at that time operated not very differently from the unaffiliated house unions. The coming of the new industrial union after 1978 accelerated the enrolment of workers in smaller and isolated companies, penetrating pockets of anti-union managements. But even more importantly, it enhanced union presence and impact in already unionized ones. Work place constitutionalism was expanded, making an increasing range of working conditions subject to negotiations.

In this chapter we give evidence of this transformation. Some companies tried to keep unions out altogether, others offered formal recognition but made sure that the union was kept at arm's length, or as one unionist puts it, the union was only "half-way recognized" (Umaru, interview 1987). Even with full recognition, battles continued over union rights and in defence against victimization. The new constitutionalism meant union involvement in enforcing rules of conduct on both managements and workers. The union sought to "monopolize" the use of force on the side of labour as a precondition for the implementation of collective agreements and the generalization of working conditions.

2. ESTABLISHING UNION PRESENCE

By 1978—by the time of amalgamation—all major companies in Lagos and Kaduna, primarily the large spinners and weavers, were unionized. Smaller and specialized firms, carpets, blankets, towels, lace, and the garments factories in particular, of which there were many in Lagos, were considerably less covered. There were also industrial concentrations in Kano in the north and Aba in the east which had been particularly hard to penetrate. In terms of workers in formal production perhaps half the industry was unionized by 1978, in terms of number of companies far less. The first few years after amalgamation were a period of fast expanding unionization, leaving only pockets of resistance.

The zonal reports from these years celebrate the achievements. In Atlantic Mercantile in Lagos, for instance, the union organizer was pleased to announce that "the turbulent waves and troubled waters have been contained and brought under control at last" in a company where workers had faced an "ultra conservative and hostile management" (ZR, 1979). The new branches were welcomed at the first National Delegates Conference in 1980, including some from large companies (GS Report, 1980). The union president claimed on this occasion that the union now organized 75 per cent of the total labour force in the industry, or some 74 industries with 60,000 workers (TGW, No. 2 1981). This calculation excludes numerous small garments and tailoring work shops considered to be outside the effective domain of the union. Small factories not previously known by the union continued to be "discovered", especially outside main industrial locations. This was the case for instance in the densely populated and commercialized rural hinterland of Lagos and around Aba in the east (cf. ZR ABIR, 1979; ZR Ikeja/Ogun, 1984). Such peripheral locations were more cumbersome for the union to cover in terms of visits to factories and continuous support for local activists. It was also more difficult to invoke the culture and institutions of work place legality which had emerged in the core industrial areas. A union organizer recalled a visit to Austro Laces Industries in Aiyepe (Ogun State), where the managing director "became mad and ordered us to get out". They tried to make him realize that "we are not gamblers but we are from a well constituted and responsible organization empowered to operate by the law of our great country" (ZR in TGW, 1982). Any major new company that was established after 1978 would almost automatically recognize the union, although some such as the Lagos spinner, Aflon, would appeal for some breathing space (ZR, 1988). Gaskiya, the large new Kano factory, despite the general anti-union culture of that city, felt obliged to fall in line after some initial resistance, living up to its status of a modern factory, with an "enlightened" work place order (see Chapters 5 and 9).

State support for the organizational monopoly of a single industrial union was certainly important for undermining management resistance. On occasion government Labour Officials agreed to intervene on the side of the union. In Lai Tailoring in Lagos, for instance, a Nigerian owned company, the Federal Ministry of Labour intervened when the union reported how its official was assaulted and how the elected branch chairman had been subjected to "management tyranny" (ZR, 1979). In the case of Niger Sanitary Industry, another Lagos company, representatives of both state security (NSO) and the Ministry "tried their best to make the man (the recalcitrant manager) see reason but to no avail". He continued to refuse to answer union letters, obliging the union to declare a trade dispute (ZR, 1981). An official declaration of state support for union rights did not mean an end to obstruction. We also find references to labour officers colluding with management to keep the union out, especially in Kano (see Chapter 9). In most cases, the state seems to have taken a rather passive role unless effectively pressurized by the union. The enforcement of unionization depended primarily on the strength of the union. Its organizing monopoly, however, shifted the balance of power in the non-unionized factories, reducing the ability of managements to resist or ignore it. Individual managements were made to face the power of the national union. Alhaji Shittu noted with self-confidence: "If I write to a management they know that I am serious and they can only refuse at their own peril" (interview 1990).

The shift in the balance of power made previously "despotic" managements more interested in constitutionalizing industrial relations, including teaming up with other employers with the purpose of counterbalancing the support that local unions were able to muster from their national organization. Victor Eburajolo, the Executive Director of the Nigerian Textile, Garment and Tailoring Employers' Association (NTGTEA), noted with satisfaction that five new companies had recently joined the association: "When they get too much problems with the unions they come to us" (interview 1990). The employers' association had its own interest in reaching out to unorganized firms. Once national collective bargaining was institutionalized, the credibility and bargaining power of the association vis-à-vis the union depended on its effective support within the industry. Non-recognition of the union was incompatible with membership of the employers' association. Once obliged to abide by national collective agreements, members of the association had also a self-interest in expanding membership in order to avoid unfair competition from non-unionized firms. This was the case, for instance, with Alao Knitting Mills in Lagos, a unionized member of the employers' association, where the management was complaining bitterly about unfair competition from two other factories, Olaiya and Yashop Mills, also producing baby's wear but successfully resisting unionization. According to the union, workers were paid "below subsistence level", without basic fringe benefits, and without due procedure in hiring and firing. They could therefore reduce their costs in a way that undercut the market position of their unionized competitors. The union argued that they had to be unionized in order "to save our own members" (ZR, 1988).

The most immediate sign of recognition was regular check-off payments. Some managements continued to dodge them or to make only occasional payments, claiming various excuses, including resistance from the workers. In a few cases, managements could mobilize workers' support for refusing the check-offs, especially when further deductions were added to finance the construction of the two secretariat buildings. In one big Lagos company with mixed production, Bagco, workers signed a letter of no-confidence in their branch committee, wanting to leave the textile union and join the Food and Beverage Union because of "excessive union fees" (ZR, 1986). In some cases, the check-off was seen by managements as a way of buying off the national union: "You have got your money, why don't you leave us alone?"

Many hurdles had to be overcome before the union was fully integrated into the work place regime. Managements had to learn to deal with the elected branch officers as well as with national union officials. In Woollen and Synthetics (Kuratex) "some light industrial action" was necessary before the management agreed to meet with the newly elected branch exco (ZR, 1985). Often, zonal officers would make it a point to formally "introduce" new exco members to managements, making the latter realize that the branch leaders had the full backing of the national union. The level of union presence varied strongly between companies, which was reflected, for instance, in the facilities provided for the union by management, including a union office on company premises which came to be expected, especially in larger companies. Zonal Reports complained, for instance that one big Lagos company, Subaco, had failed to arrange for a union office despite being unionized for eight years (ZR,1984).

More important still was the granting of time-off for branch executives to attend to union business. Suleiman recalls the protracted struggles in the past over this issue. He himself was almost dismissed because he was "constantly in meetings" with workers who came to see him in his section over cases of dismissals, disciplinary actions etc. The section manager sought to prevent workers from coming and him from absenting himself when he wanted to go and investigate the workers' complaints (Suleiman, interview 1987). The question of time-off for union work was a matter of management discretion. The Labour Decree merely stipulated that union officials were allowed a "reasonable time". Getting a written agreement on what this was to mean in practice was therefore an important frontier of unionization (Suleiman, interview 1987). By mid-1980 the established practice in the major branches, at least in Kaduna, was to allow the principal branch officers full-time off with retained pay (Oshiomhole, interview 1987).

The right to hold union meetings during working time and on company premises was another frontier. An angry exchange of letters in the KTL union file (1980) concerns management objection to the scheduling of a union meeting, "most disturbingly", during working hours. Hostile managers could obstruct the union by refusing to allow it to hold elections at times and places convenient to the workers. All such aspects of effective accommodation were partly but not only, a matter of the size of a company, the big ones being more forthcoming. It would also depend on the balance of power, managerial culture and the nature of the work place labour pact.

3. DEFENDING UNION PRESENCE

Once established, union presence had to be defended. In many instances, recognition was half-hearted and less than sincere. Zonal officers complain of managers pretending to enter into agreements only to turn around to flout them. Despite recognition, some managements would try to undermine the union, subverting its support among the workers and victimizing active members and cadres when engaged in conflict. The effective presence of the union in a factory rested on its ability to defend itself against such subversion and victimization. When confronted with hostile managements, local cadres needed the support of both the workers and the national union. Workers had to calculate the risks involved before rallying behind an exco under threat. Would they be victimized? Were they prepared to "damn the consequences"? Would they stand up to intimidation? Would management ride roughshod over workers' opposition, resorting to wholesale dismissals, lockouts and factory closures? What avenues were open for dividing and demobilizing the workers? What protection would the national union be able to provide?

Unless union power carried some credibility workers would hesitate to take on functions on behalf of the union, whether as exco members or shop-stewards or even to attend union meetings, either fearing victimization or having no confidence in the ability of the union to "deliver". Kano, in particular, had a history of workers refusing to take on union leadership (TGW, 1981). Experiences of failed union actions and management reprisals could destroy workers' confidence for a long time to come. A number of companies that were unionized in the early years after amalgamation slipped back, out of the effective reach of the union. Attempts to reorganize Niger West Embroidery in Lagos, for instance, after a period of closure were unsuccessful. Management had succeeded in mobilizing opposition to unionization among the workers who feared another closure (ZR, 1984).

The records contain ample evidence of both victories and defeats in confronting victimization. Branch reports from Enpee in 1988 speak of "incessant provocations and intimidation" by management (ZR, 1988). As the exco was considered too militant, the management had decided to lure them into a trap (Shittu, interview 1987). The workers were provoked by a circular announcing fresh restrictive gate rules. They reacted promptly, causing a tussle with a company security officer who was beaten up when attempting to remove the workers' placards. Management used the crisis to dismiss the exco militants, holding them responsible for what had happened. The union objected strongly, taking the case to the Industrial Arbitration Panel where it was "effectively pursued". The two days of public hearings were intensely watched by workers who had cause, according to Shittu, to jubilate over the union's performance in defence of its cadres.

Intervention by the national union in victimization cases was often complicated by local divisions which allowed managements to play factions against each other and opened up for collusion. In Spintex (Lagos), the branch chairman was terminated without adequate compensation for electric burns on the face and chest. As the case was investigated, the zonal office discovered a "dubious relationship" between the branch secretary and the management (ZR, 1990). In some cases, management intimidated the branch exco by spreading rumours and orchestrating protest petitions among the workers (cf. Royal Spinners, ZR 1989). Competition for union office was often intense, creating resentments between winners and losers which could be exploited by managements. A defeated former branch chairman in NTM (Lagos) was sacked for having spread rumours that the food in the canteen was not fit for human consumption. The incumbent chairman was lectured by Shittu in our presence about the need to fight this case, despite it concerning a "rival": "Never collude with or tolerate management in such cases. Next time it may hit you" (interview 1987).

When the branch secretary of Western Textiles was terminated with three other workers as the alleged ringleaders of "a sabotage plan", it was suspected that the branch chairman had colluded with management. In this case zonal intervention was particularly firm as the branch secretary was also the zonal vice chairman. Management agreed to reinstate him but insisted that he should be transferred to another department. This was unacceptable to the union as it would still imply punishment. After a series of inconclusive meetings the zonal officer (Egbe) summoned a general workers' meeting which issued an ultimatum, resulting in seven days' industrial action, supervised by all the zonal officers, and resulting in an agreement on full reinstatement (ZR, 1981).

In many cases, the union had to settle for much less, accepting both transfers and changes from dismissals to terminations, on occasion getting management to sweeten the defeat by having termination benefits topped up. A series of meetings with the management and a six-day go slow by the workers in Hong Kong Synthetics, for instance, did not succeed in ensuring the reinstatement of the dismissed branch chairman but brought him at least an "ex-gratia fee and compensation" (ZR, 1981). A branch secretary in Oriental Carpets, who had been dismissed, having been found sleeping under his machine, was not taken back despite union pressures but was at least given an 800 Naira "ex-gratia" payment (ZR, 1989).

The national union hesitated to intervene in full force when it judged the chances of success to be slim, especially if the affected unionists were deemed to have been engaged in clearly "unconstitutional" activities, as when the branch chairman of Nigerian Weaving & Processing was terminated for locking out his supervisor, leading to intervention by the police (ZR, 1989). In some cases, the lack of a good "legal" case, could be compensated for by workers' militancy in defending union cadres, forcing management to come to terms. In other cases, with a management fully committed to breaking union resistance, militancy would not help. The workers of Subaco, for instance, reacted immediately and strongly when their branch chairman was dismissed, resulting in seven days of action on both sides. Management was adamant, claiming that the chairman had received several warnings. In the end, further action in his defence was preempted as he went ahead and collected termination benefits from the company, thereby acknowledging defeat (ZR, 1989).

This was a recurring problem: how to sustain the morale (and livelihood) of victimized cadres while their cases were being pursued either in negotiations with management or in court. In one newly unionized company (Olaiya) the entire new exco was terminated soon after branch elections had been held. When challenged by the national union, management engaged in legal wrangling claiming that the terminations were due to lack of work—redundancy. The union saw this as an unacceptable subterfuge and was anxious to fight it out, teaching the management a lesson. But it could not pursue it because most of the workers affected went to collect their redundancy pay (ZR, 1981). Some victimized cadres could be helped, as in this case, by the union assisting them in getting new jobs in other industries. Others had little confidence in the ability of the union to protect their interests, especially in this time of retrenchments. When Terytex in Kano sacked 15 workers including the branch chairman the union was unable to fight their case as it failed to keep them from collecting their termination pay (ZR, 1990; Dabo, interview 1990). In NTM (Lagos), the union was convinced that it could quash some wrongful dismissals but as the case dragged on "the boys became feverish, and terribly uncompromising". One worker wrote to the union that he would hang himself, making the union responsible for the upkeep of his wife and children after his death, unless he was allowed to collect his termination benefits and go away. The zonal office gave in, conceding that the workers were not only desperate but also "doubtful of the capabilities of the union" to handle the case successfully (ZR, 1984).

Fighting victimization was a central feature of the formation of work place constitutionalism. It contributed to the development of "a code of conduct", which set boundaries not just for managerial arbitrariness but also for "unconstitutional" behaviour by unionists. Commenting on a case in Weaving & Processing, Alhaji Shittu noted that the branch "had a difficult chairman who believed in force in everything". On one occasion when he had been queried by management because he had left his section without reporting he responded by locking out the management, insisting that they should withdraw it. The police were called in, forcing their way into the company. As the chairman was terminated, there was little the union could do except plead for leniency. "We couldn't declare a trade dispute", said Shittu, "because the case was ridiculous —how can you answer a query by locking out the management?" (interview 1990).

The national union was obliged to accept the disciplining of its local cadres by management when rules were transgressed. But who determined the rules? Some were formalized in labour legislation, others were part of the logic of production, but all were subject to contestation and alternative interpretations. The 15 terminated in Terytex in 1990 , for instance, were accused of being "enemies of progress" because they "discouraged production". They had been investigated by a committee of supervisors and managers trying to find out why there was a go-slow in the company (Dabo, interview 1990). But how far was this go-slow a legitimate industrial action, aiming at putting pressure on management over the annual bonus? Officially, bonus negotiations were out of order, bonus being a non-negotiable ex-gratia benefit and go-slows did not feature in the statute books. Yet, the union insisted on the legitimacy of both.

The floating lines between legality and illegality, between acceptable and unacceptable forms of struggle, placed the national union in a position of interpreters of the rules of conduct, a position which was also used for asserting its own authority over the local branch. In one case, the zonal officers (Bello and Aiyetemimowa) noted that they could not pursue the case of a branch chairman who had been removed by management for making excessive demands for "incentives", on top of the chicken, the vegetable oil and the semolina agreed with the union. He could not be helped, they claimed, because he had made the extra demands "without first informing them" (ZR, 1989). Such internal union "red-tape" could of course be used by zonal officers to deal with branch cadres they disliked. But the national union did not have a free hand in deciding on "fair" industrial relation practices. Workers would often have their own strong views about the rights and wrongs of a particular case as in the one mentioned above about the secretary found sleeping under his machine. The workers refused to accept the ex-gratia settlement secured by the union, insisting that two managers who, in their view, had equally "misbehaved" should also be removed, unless the branch secretary was taken back (ZR, 1989).

4. ENFORCING WORK PLACE CONSTITUTIONALISM

The decisions when to accept and when to reject management disciplinary measures were part of the wider contest over the content and direction of the labour regime. Unionization meant ensuring that both workers and managements abided by some collectively agreed and sanctioned legality—the development of "work place constitutionalism". The labour laws laid down procedures for solving disputes based on arbitration, where in the first instance the two sides were to be made to talk to each other. A "Procedural Agreement" at the national industry level established a framework for negotiations and the handling of grievances which was confirmed and elaborated in individual work place accords. The national union drew up guide lines on good industrial relations behaviour (see, for instance the outline of "Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures" in TGW, No. 2,1981).

The new constitutionalism contrasted with the rough times of the past. Suleiman, the national president, recalls the constant crises and strikes, especially over annual increments and bonus, when he first joined KTL and Nortex in Kaduna. "It was a terrible time—workers were throwing stones, breaking glasses, beating up management staff and smashing cars". When the police came they would run away, climbing over the fence. During rowdy negotiations workers would "bang the tables", threatening the management who would often give in out of "fear of violence and destruction". Now, said Suleiman, "we sit down and talk in peaceful negotiations" (interview 1987).

The distinction between a properly unionized company and a non-unionized one, according to Umaru Mohammed, another senior unionist, was that in the former case workers would engage in proper strikes while in the latter they would "go on the rampage" (interview 1990). Raphael Egbe tells of a dramatic incident in Afprint in the mid-1970s when the Personnel Manager was beaten up, tied up and placed in a gutter and almost burned alive by workers who had been angered by a circular announcing a change of shift schedule. Egbe asked the manager to withdraw it, not because the union was necessarily opposed, but because workers had not been properly consulted. But the manager refused and told the union to "go to hell". The following morning workers engaged in a running battle, with many arrested and many wounded by police bullets. Much money had to be spent by the union on lawyers and court cases (interview 1987).

The picture of a newly-gained constitutional order based on "peaceful negotiations" presented by Suleiman was certainly exaggerated. Yet, it reflected a general direction of change towards trade union professionalism, discipline, and legality. Particularly important was the shift towards centralization of decisions on industrial action. "Before even a small section of a branch would resort to direct action", now an exco would first have to report and seek approval from the zonal office (Suleiman, interview 1987). The union constitution was revised at an early point to reinforce this aspect. The need to establish and maintain national union control over the use of force was a primary preoccupation and the zonal reports speak of both successes and failures. "Efforts were made at all times to tackle cases promptly" to prevent a "breakdown of law and order", reports an officer from unruly Arewa (ZR, 1978). In Zaria Industries, another claims that he had averted a violent crisis by applying a "cool, diplomatic and sensible approach" (ZR, 1978). Zonal officers complain about the "excessive use of force" by workers and branch excos. In the Atlantic Mercantile branch, for instance, there was the "erroneous and misguided belief that only by the use of force can they achieve their demands". Force was "the only language", they said, that "the imperialists understand". The reporting officer (Jelenke) felt that the only way to "install sanity" would be to leave the local militants "to face the music" (ZR, 1979), that is, to withhold union protection.

A particularly sensitive issue was managerial refusal to negotiate "under duress". Suleiman recalls the constant crises in earlier days over increments and bonus when workers would embark on wild-cat strikes and the union would have to plead with them to go back to work so as to allow negotiations to resume (interview 1987). Zonal reports speak of the growing acceptance of the new legality, even if they contain frequent references to the need for "more education". In the Igalu Zone (Lagos), the officer noted that the excos were "getting more mature" although "many cadres are still of the breed who always pressure for volatile actions", believing that they "easily solve industrial problems" (ZR, 1988).

Discipline and protection were closely linked in union philosophy. Workers could only be protected against managerial despotism if they in their turn behaved in a responsible and disciplined manner. It meant monitoring work place rules, differentiating between legitimate and illegitimate grounds for disciplinary measures at, for instance, coming late and absenteeism. One striking feature of the local union records is the amount of work spent on this type of case, often successfully preventing or softening disciplinary measures imposed by management. 250 cases of dismissals, terminations, suspensions and warnings, for instance, were handled by the union in KTL and 185 cases in Arewa from January to September of 1985 (ZR). An officer reported proudly from Arewa that he had succeeded in getting all but one of 15 cases of summary dismissals fully reinstated. He claimed that the management case had been "frivolous and baseless" (ZR, 1978). Most cases required independent investigations by the union and protracted discussions with management.

While certainly enhancing workers' rights, union involvement also served to legitimate managerial control. "Enlightened" managements realized their dependence on the union in this respect. After the elections in Afprint in 1987, the management, "sensing the danger" of an imminent breakdown of law and order, appealed to the national union to organize seminars to train the new exco because its members had "no idea of industrial relations" (ZR, 1987). Some companies insisted on applying their own rules and disciplinary procedures, as in the case of NTM in Lagos which at one point refused to pay the official entitlements of workers who had been dismissed for absenteeism (ZR, 1985). But the great majority seems to have accepted the new collective legality and union assistance in disciplining the workers. While insisting that the NTM management should "stick rigidly to article 2 of the Collective Agreement in the dispensation of justice on absenteeism", the zonal officer sought simultaneously to address the problem of rampant absenteeism by organizing lectures on "Poor Attitude to Work" (ZR, 1984). In Nigerian Weaving & Processing the exco was invited to the secretariat for a one day seminar during which the zonal officer "explained the do's and don'ts in union-management relations". This was be-cause the branch was "always at loggerheads" with management and often at fault, pursuing excessive demands and "defending workers without genuine grievances" (ZR, 1985). In a similar case of acute confrontation between unruly workers and a "bad" production manager, it was agreed that the latter should not enter the factory until such time that the union had been able to "re-educate and cool down the workers" (Nitol, ZR 1985).

Educating the workers also involved defining managerial prerogatives; what managements had the right to do without workers interference. In Five Stars, the branch exco were dismissed for taking the law into their own hands, demolishing walls being constructed by management, although in this case the zonal office secured their reinstatement by making them apologize (ZR, 1985). Upholding managerial prerogatives, however, seemed at times to go against natural justice as in Bagco where only the workers were dismissed for pilfering despite the fact that management staff had also been involved. The branch exco threatened "hell fire" if the staff were left unpunished. But the zonal officer who had been called in—by management—warned them to not arrogate for themselves "the authority to administer punishment". They should "leave the management to manage" (ZR, 1988).

5. GENERALIZING WORKING CONDITIONS

A central feature of the new legality was the generalization of "conditions of service", something which existed in the better organized house or branch unions before amalgamation. In many cases, managements had issued their own, without consulting a union. Others offered no formal conditions of service at all. Variation in coverage was enormous. With most of the union organizers coming from the large, early unionized companies, their reports express amazement over the poor conditions they met in the previously non-unionized ones. In K. Issardas, for instance, a middle-sized Lagos company, Jelenke found no medical facility, no social security benefits such as gratuity and redundancy benefits and no regular hours of work: "Workers are made to do compulsory 12 hours daily", with a poor bonus or none at all (ZR, 1979). Egbe reports, similarly, from Continental, another Lagos company, the most "backward company in my zone" where he met "inhuman exploitation"—low wages, no fringe benefits, 50–52 hour working week, compulsory overtime on Saturdays, only six days annual leave, etc. (ZR, 1979). The extreme differences were reflected in salary structure, gradings and increments. In a fully unionized company, a worker's wage would follow the grade at which he/she was employed, based on the job classification negotiated and agreed with the union. Workers would be entitled to annual "increments" according to a schedule of incremental steps within each grade, with the possibility of being promoted to a higher grade.

Many companies had neither an agreed salary structure nor a system of grading.

The introduction of national collective bargaining had a revolutionary impact in these respects, facilitating the enforcement and generalization of conditions which in the past had only been obtainable in the best organized companies. Both the employers' association and the national union were dominated by staff recruited from big firms with a high level of formalization of industrial relations. The results achieved in the national negotiations, while often merely confirming or marginally improving the conditions already existing in such firms, had a dramatic impact on the rest of the industry. Implementation was far from automatic. Some companies claimed that they were not affected because they were not members of the employers' association. Non-members in the Isolo Zone in Lagos, for instance, refused on such grounds to implement the conditions of service, while the union insisted that the agreements should be applied to the industry as a whole, irrespective of membership (ZR, 1987). There were also some members of the association who equally refused to implement national agreements. The agreement to abolish work on Saturdays (except as overtime), for instance, was widely resisted in the industry as reported in the debates at the National Delegates Conference in 1986 (our notes). Lagos zonal reports complain of the insincerity even of those members of the employers' association who had themselves participated in negotiating and signing agreements (ZR, 1988). Implementation had to be actively pushed. A union officer in Ilupeju Zone in Lagos issued a "serious warning" to the companies which had failed to respect agreements on important issues such as redundancy pay. "Before I was transferred to this zone there was nothing like food subsidy, transport or motorcycle loan and allowances, Long Service Award, uniform or canteen", all of which had now been achieved—"except in a few branches" (ZR in TGW, 1982).

The implementation of nationally negotiated agreements meant major improvements in conditions of service throughout the industry. But even where immediate benefits were marginal, the exercise was important in building the new work place legality. It served to institutionalize the process by which workers' rights and benefits were determined. Just as with the disciplinary cases discussed above, it required that the union monitored the manner in which the agreements were applied in individual cases. The grievances submitted to the union were numerous and they required investigation and negotiations. As in the disciplinary cases, the performance of the union in securing redress was intensely observed by the workers. Its credibility was at stake. If it performed below expectations, it risked losing control of the situation as in the case of Enpee in 1985. An expatriate manager was accused of favouritism in the award of merit increments. The workers insisted that he should be removed, backing their demand with wild-cat strikes. The immediate tension in this case was diffused by having the manager sent away on leave (ZR, 1985). The new legality also depended also on workers' acceptance.

The consolidation of the new legality required the elimination of categories of workers which were excluded from the new order, the casual, daily-rated and those engaged in sub-contracting. Casual workers were common in non-unionized companies and their "conversion" into regular permanent employees was a priority in the unionization exercise. Again, it was not merely a question of improving their conditions of service but preventing casualization being used by the firms as a method to circumvent the collective agreements.

The frontiers of constitutionality were pushed beyond the Collective Agreement. The issue of the annual bonus and other "incentives", for instance, was not in the national agreement. But they were the fringe benefits that made the biggest difference between the basic and the take-home pay in a year, amounting in most cases to one or more months' extra pay. Although some employers insisted that this was a non-negotiable ex-gratia benefit, the union could not let go, in view of its importance to the workers. Wide variations between firms and in the same firm from one year to another made the bonus a cause for intense agitation. This was also where an exco was expected to prove itself, show its capacity to deliver. By the end of the 1980s, most companies seem to have accepted the inevitability of bonus negotiations. Some had already realized long ago that involving the union was the best way to prevent workers' agitation from getting out of control. Pockets of resistance to bonus negotiations remained, for instance in NTM in Kano as discussed in the next chapter. Specomills in Lagos sought to assert its rights to refuse negotiations by declaring a trade dispute and taking the union to the Industrial Arbitration Panel (ZR, 1989). While the company had the law on its side it was still fighting a losing battle. The ground had already been conceded in practice by the industry, underscoring that there were other, more substantive sources of work-place legality than the statute book.

6. UNIONIZATION, CRISIS AND ADJUSTMENT

The remarkable progress of unionization discussed in this chapter occurred simultaneously with the textile industry going through a series of profound crises, as outlined in the first part of this study. The new union was born at a time when the industry experienced a phase of dramatic decline—"the crisis before the crisis" ; the new legality was expanded and consolidated during the recession and policy changes of the 1980s. It is inconceivable that such dramatic developments at the level of production, markets, and policy context would have left the process of unionization unaffected. But what was the relationship between the two? Was unionization advanced despite such developments or was it facilitated by them? The experience of our company case studies in this respect was discussed in the final section of Chapter 6. Looking at the wider union material, there is no lack of evidence of crises and adjustment interfering with the progress of unionization. In many instances, the attempt to generalize work-place rules and conditions of service was obstructed by the acute economic difficulties faced by individual firms, deprived of markets by smugglers, domestic competition and recession, or denied access to raw materials and imported inputs by foreign exchange crises and devaluation. In the extreme cases, unionization was blocked because the firms were closed down. Although union records are understandably taciturn on such issues it is reasonable to assume that the "threat" of unionization, with all its potential implications for wage bills, conditions of service, and modes of operation added to the motives for closure. Sometimes union reports make references to closures soon after a firm has been unionized as, for instance, in the case of Rising Textiles (TGW, 1983). Would the closure have taken place anyway or was unionization the final nail in the coffin? In the cases of Olaiya and Yashop Mills discussed above, hostility to the union made them decide to "either terminate all workers or close down on the advent of unionization" (ZR, 1988). As many other smaller firms, particularly in garments, they built their operations on casual labour paid below the minimum wage, with no security and benefits, and who could be fired and re-employed at short notice in response to short-term shifts in stocks, markets, and access to raw material. "They produce, close, and start selling and when stocks are exhausted they reopen again". Alhaji Shittu had to laugh when thinking of such a backward mode of operation (interview 1990). As we saw in Chapter 3, there was an attempt in the industry as a whole to move in the direction of such greater "flexibility", including the casualization of labour, a tendency which was fiercely and largely successfully contested by the union.

As the conditions of production deteriorated, the threat of closure became an increasingly effective bargaining device for managements seeking to keep out the union or refusing to implement collective agreements. They could play on workers' fears of the implications of unionization for the survival of the firm, a fear which was by no means unfounded. This is why, for instance, the workers in Olaiya and Yashop wanted to keep the union out (Shittu, interview 1990). In Oduatex, the old state-owned company in Ondo, management invariably threatened with retrenchment when the union sought to implement collective agreements, including the regulation of working hours. Although the union was unwilling to grant any exemption because it would "connote a bad precedent", Akinyemi, the officer in charge, noted that "our chances of success are slim". The management had "cleverly played" on workers' fears and succeeded in getting their support (ZR, 1985). In another sick state firm, Edo Textile Mill in Benin City, the union was helpless in the face of constant closures, and failures to observe basic agreements, including the minimum wage, although the firm had been formally unionized since 1979 (ZR, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1986, 1988). In many firms, acute problems, such as shortage of raw material, made union officers feel that meaningful negotiations were impossible (cf. GDM, ZR 1985). Especially in the early 1980s, there are frequent references to new branches that "succumbed to the wave of austerity measures" (Abel Abu Knitted Wears, ZR 1988). While such firms were unionized, the union had little effective presence.

The sick mills were many. Managers could fall back on the bad times to justify resistance to union demands and were in many cases successful in mobilizing frightened workers behind their anti-union stance. The union was obliged to accept being kept out or had to strike some compromise. Yet, despite such evidence of the debilitating impact of crises and adjustment, the predominant picture is that the textile industry as a whole was characterized by major advances in the process of unionization during this critical period, even in the pockets of resistance to which we now turn.

Chapter 9

Resistance to Unionization in Kano

1. KANO IS DIFFERENT

Our studies of the textile union commenced close to the present and historical centres of union power, in the large, transnational or state-owned firms in Kaduna and Lagos. Most of the leading cadres at National Headquarters in Kaduna and in the Lagos Sub-Secretariat had their background in such firms. They conveyed an air of authority and self-confidence and were in most cases treated with respect by managements. Although our further studies made us realize that the picture in Kaduna and Lagos was far from homogenous, the overall impression remained of an industrial relation culture where the union played a prominent and substantive role—a union-based labour regime. During our field work in Kano we (GA) confronted a very different situation. Here, in some instances, security agents at the gate refused us entry because we came together with a union official or we were brusquely shown to the door by a manager who refused to discuss union–management relations. We (GA) were privileged to accompany the union district organizer, Patrick Dabo, on his daily rounds to the Kano factories. The widespread anti-union attitudes of management and the weakness of local branches were often demonstrated in front of our eyes. On one occasion (January 1987), we were caught up in an acute confrontation when a company (KTP) was closed down and the workers sent home on compulsory leave without the union having been informed, much less consulted. Dabo improvised a meeting with the workers outside the gate to discuss what to do. Only few Kano companies would allow meetings to be held inside the factory. The presence at the gate of a group of recently dismissed union activists reinforced the picture of an anti-union labour regime.

Not all Kano factories were the same and the level of effective unionization varied. By the end of the 1980s most companies offered formal recognition and made check-off payments regularly. Only few refused to deal with the union altogether. But in at least half of the dozen firms documented in interviews, zonal reports, and branch correspondence recognition was half-hearted or partial. Even where the union itself spoke of “cordial industrial relations” it did not necessarily imply that union facilities were granted, central collective agreements respected, or local issues properly subjected to negotiations. In some cases “cordial” seems to have meant no more than that the union was on "talking terms" with management, in contrast to the outright hostility encountered in others. The senior zonal officer Mohammed Umaru reported "good" or "cordial" relations in three out of twelve companies in 1985 (KTP, Terytex, KTIL). In another three, collective agreements were about to be implemented, at least in part (NBB, NTM, Fahid Dayekh). Six firms were still either resisting unionization or making life difficult for the union (Nornit, UTIL, USL, Bagauda, NSD, Gaskiya) (ZR, 1985).

This chapter explores the uneven penetration of the new, union-based labour regime and the problem of reproducing effective union presence over time. Successes were achieved in some, including Gaskiya, one of the case companies discussed in the first part of the study. Failures were apparent in some (UTIL, USL), while others showed an uneasy stalemate, a half-way house between acceptance and resistance, as illustrated here with the case of NTM, another of our case companies from part one, not to be confused with the large Lagos firm with the same name which was an early unionizer. The contrast with the consolidation of unionism in other parts of the industry was striking. In Chapter 6 we discussed the differences in labour regimes between Kano and Kaduna, drawing primarily on our six case studies, three in each city, which were reported in Chapter 5. We showed how the differences were related both to structural characteristics at the company level (size, products, ownership, labour recruitment) and the nature of the local political economy. In this chapter we look closer at the struggle for unionization in Kano and the obstacles it confronted.

2. A HISTORY OF ANTI-UNION MANAGEMENT

Paul Lubeck, a US scholar, studied the Kano industrial working class in the early 1970s. He did intensive field work in three companies, two of which were textile producers, with brief follow-ups in the mid- and late 1970s. A first report was widely circulated (in Sandbrook and Cohen, 1975) and a full, book-length study was published ten years later (Lubeck, 1986). Lubeck undertook his main field work at the time of the Adebo strikes of 1971 when the organizational capacity of the Kano workers was put to a major test. At the end of the civil war, after a period of wage constraints and inflation, a wage review commission chaired by Simon Adebo had been appointed by the federal military government. While primarily relating to public sector workers, a pattern of expectations was set for the private sector, as in the case of earlier public wage reviews. A retroactive cost-of-living allowance (COLA) became the focus of struggle. Lubeck notes that, unlike Lagos (and we would add Kaduna), Kano industry was at this time virtually non-unionized. The civil war had contributed to stalling unionization by chasing away many of the English-literate, migrant workers from further south who had formed the backbone of earlier organization efforts (Lubeck, 1986:253).

We noted that no firm in Kano played the role that KTL in Kaduna and NTM in Lagos had done in providing a bridgehead and a training ground for unionism. The largest Kano firm in the 1970s was NTM, Lubeck's company "B". It had once had a union but it had degenerated, according to Lubeck, into a "supervisor-dominated extortion agency". In the case of Lagos, Shittu suggested that the 1964 general strike over the Morgan Wage Award mobilized workers on an unprecedented scale, preparing the way for unionization. For Kano, Lubeck argues that the struggles over the Adebo Award of 1971 had a similar impact. The big difference, however, was that the Kano strikes did not produce any lasting results in terms of the formation of unions. In the case of NTM, the way in which workers were cheated of the Morgan Award—only supervisors received it—was in fresh memory and contributed to militant anger when management tried to dodge Adebo. Violence and the threat of violence made them negotiate a deal with an ad-hoc workers' leadership which insisted that it must be democratically approved by the workers. The achievement, while a major step forward as compared with the 1964 experience, could not be translated into solid organizational gains. Within four months, the strike leaders had been dismissed "for disrespectfulness to a supervisor" (Lubeck, 1986:233–41). The workers themselves were not sufficiently united to prevent it and there was no outside union force to intervene on their behalf.

Workers in the second textile plant studied by Lubeck (his company "C") were even less successful. Despite a two week strike, management did not budge. No Adebo award was paid. The workers were made to suffer additional weeks of lock-out as punishment for damage caused to looms by angry and disappointed workers. While no unions emerged as a direct result of the Adebo strikes in this or the other companies studied by Lubeck, he concludes that it was a collective learning exercise of crucial importance for the evolution of the union movement in Kano (Lubeck, 1986:241–249).

The Adebo strikes encouraged the Kaduna-based and ULC-affiliated textile union to seek to break into Kano. Some of the senior organizers interviewed by us (Olaleke, Oshiomhole, Samson, Umaru) recall the difficulties confronted, especially as a result of violent intimidation and the collaboration between managements and the law enforcement agencies. According to Samson, the union did not allow Olaleke to go back to Nornit for several years after he had been chased out at gun point. Oshiomhole, who was put in charge of the Northern Area in 1976, had similar experiences in NTM and Bagauda, two of our case companies presented in Chapter 5. Bagauda, owned by the Kano business tycoon Isyaku Rabiu and managed by his son Nafiu, was established after the Adebo strikes. The union was tolerated at first but relations soon broke down, erupting in 1975 in a violent strike and demonstration over the Udoji Arrears, another public wage award, this time prompted by the oil boom. While workers in the end were given part of the arrears, the union leaders were dismissed (cf. Lubeck, 1986: 249–252). The workers, fearing victimization and doubting the ability of the union to stand up to the hostile MD stopped paying their union dues. This is where Oshiomhole came in. In 1977, he wanted to reestablish workers' confidence in the union by demonstrating its ability to deliver. He picked a concrete grievance over an uncompensated extension of working hours. The workers were told that they did not have to pay union fees until the company had been forced to pay the arrears for unpaid work. The employer sought to dodge the issue by offering to pay the workers a bonus equal to one week's pay. No bonus had previously been paid. Oshiomhole told the workers not to accept the offer but many disagreed and demonstrated in protest against the union which they felt prevented them from collecting the unexpected bonus. At this point, Oshiomhole called a meeting in an open field. He invited the police as witness in order to try to forestall any violent intervention at a later point. Not quite truthfully he told the workers that the government (Ministry of Labour) had asked the MD to pay what was due in full. What the Ministry had done, though, was to advise the firm to negotiate with the union. Oshiomhole tried to undermine the legitimacy of the management position in terms of Islamic values, abusing the owner and the MD for being un-Islamic when cheating the workers of their rightful dues. Oshiomhole advised the workers to collect the bonus but then to strike until they were fully compensated for increased labour time. The workers "sat down" for two weeks. Oshiomhole went to see the MD taking a police officer along for protection. The MD tried to buy him off. When he refused to take the bribe the MD slapped him, threatening to kill him, and told his men to beat him up. He was rescued by the police officer. There was no point taking the MD to court over the brutal assault: "He would certainly be able to buy himself free". Fearing for his life, Oshiomhole went into hiding while the MD sent word around to the union that he would be eliminated. He slept in the house of the police officer who had protected him. But the officer's sympathy for his case was limited: Why did he not take the money from the MD and stop fighting?

Oshiomhole insisted. He got the Kano police chief, the Commissioner of Police, to accompany him back to the raging MD. The Commissioner pleaded with the latter to realize the strength of the union and that it would not help killing Oshiomhole. But the MD refused to talk to someone who had rejected his money, abused him, and incited the workers against him. In the end, the union was defeated. While the state, in its concern for "law and order", could offer some element of protection against managerial violence it was not prepared to push the union case further. Management made the intimidated workers sign letters renouncing the claim for the over-time arrears. The letters were passed on to the Ministry of Labour as evidence that the issue was now finally resolved and that the Ministry should advise the union to keep off (Oshiomhole, interview 1987).

3. AMALGAMATION: A LIMITED BREAK THROUGH

The struggle over Bagauda took place just before labour reforms and amalgamation caused a shift in the balance of power in favour of the unions. The consolidation of the new national textile union, with its headquarters in Kaduna, only some 250 km to the south, opened up for a fresh attempt to bring Kano into the fold. At the time of amalgamation in 1978, only three or less than one-fifth of the recorded textile firms in Kano were unionized, according to Samson. These were NTM, KTP and a lace company which soon closed down (interview 1987). Also KTP, owned by the Kano state government, was lost to the union for three years when it closed in 1982 due to "financial problems". The union frowned at the unprofessional way that KTP handled its labour relations. Much of the work force was made up of experienced textile workers but when the crisis set in they were forced to do menial work like cleaning and bricklaying. The union insisted that the company should honour its obligations under the collective agreement and advised the workers to refuse to do non-textile work. So the firm closed. Although it re-opened in 1983 it took until 1985 before it allowed the union in again (interviews with Samson and Dabo, 1987; ZR, 1986).

Most of the Kano textile companies, however, were organized for the first time in the early years after amalgamation. The union was emboldened, feeling that the law was now on its side. Even if managerial hostility and collusion with local state and police authorities continued, there was more scope than before to exploit divisions within the state apparatuses to the union's advantage. Federal agencies, like the Ministry of Labour, which in the past had been dependent on local power brokers, developed greater autonomy. Distrust and competition between the state and federal police and security services could also be exploited by the union, once it could claim the backing of federal legislation. Most importantly, workers were emboldened by the more forceful intervention of the new national union, making them more willing to defy the despotism or repressive paternalism of the employers.

Samson Omoruan was the officer most directly engaged in grass root organizing on behalf of the national union during these years. He gave a lively account of the events. In KTIL, for instance, management was by no means impressed by the union's attempt to claim state support by quoting the new Labour Decrees. It refused to allow the union in. After some early failures and after Samson had been away on a trade union course in Israel the efforts were stepped up. The main problem was how to ensure a sufficient commitment from a sufficiently large number of workers before management hit back. Samson claims that he spent almost every day for six months mixing with the workers during break hours, explaining the benefits of a union and citing achievements from other companies. In the seventh month he succeeded in getting a branch committee elected. At this point management "got jittery", trying to scare the activists with warnings and suspensions. Having achieved a proper base among the workers, however, the union could now turn its attention to management, using "softened methods" in order to convince them that "we are responsible people". Through such confidence creating tactics the union managed to bring a temporary halt to the harassment of the activists, allowing for a branch to be officially established and recognized in 1981. But the problems were not over. Having succeeded in getting its foot in, the union now activated the demands on which it had canvassed for support, including compensation for overtime, revision of the shift system, time-off for praying etc. To management this was no longer "responsible unionism" and it hit back angrily at the "trouble makers". The chairman and secretary of the branch were "sent packing because they had talked to the workers while on the machines". Now this was the crucial test for the survival of the union. Would the workers be prepared to come out in defence of their leaders? They did. The union called a strike and the workers did not allow themselves to be intimidated by the police which were brought in by management. After three months and with some mediation by the Ministry of Labour, management gave up its resistance and agreed to take back the sacked leaders. Except for some "minor troubles" subsequent relations were said to be "cordial" (Samson, interview 1987).

The KTIL story shows a typical pattern for unionization during this period: strong initial hostility; the union operates outside the plant; confidence building, both on the side of the workers and in relation to management; the persistent recourse of the latter to the police on the assumption that they will back management positions; a show-down when it is demonstrated that the workers physically stand by the union; and finally reluctant (and in most cases) qualified acceptance. Early cooperation from management, as in the case of Terytex, which was unionized in 1982, was an exception rather than the rule. It all went smoothly, according to Samson. The Indian manager was eager to please, anxious to avoid trouble. He paid the highest bonus in Kano even in the first year. The company had recruited experienced workers from already unionized firms who knew the union and what it could do for them.

Typically, the union selected one company at a time in order to obtain maximum coverage and impact, then moved on, using previous achievements to sell the union idea to a new group of workers. The initiative, however, was not necessarily with the national union. In the case of Nigeria Braiding & Brocade the workers pleaded with the union to come and organize them. The conditions were said to be terrible, no fixed wages, and ugly stories about workers being physically manhandled, even tied up, without the police intervening. In 1980 the workers wanted to pay Samson money to come and fight their case. He went to speak to them outside the gate. He was tricked by security men who pretended they were workers and was taken to the police. The police warned him to keep off but allowed him to go. The manager refused to see him but he forced his way in, "accompanied by all the 800 workers". Before the police arrived the manager was made to sign an agreement recognizing the union. As the police moved in with teargas and all, Samson had escaped back to the union office. He was able to mail a report—his "life insurance"—with the agreement attached, notifying the Chief Inspector of Police, sending a copy to the President, before the police arrived to arrest him. He was released after two days and warned by the Ministry of Labour to stop fomenting "labour troubles". But management was obliged to accept the union which clearly had the workers' support. Also in this case, the achievement seems to have been lasting, at least for the rest of the decade. Subsequent union reports on NBB speak of "cordial relations" and a company which "is responding to industrial relations" (ZR, 1985 and 1986).

4. CONTINUED RESISTANCE: BAGAUDA AND UNIVERSAL

By the early 1980s, while most Kano companies had officially recognized the union, the momentum of the initial gains was difficult to keep up, especially in the context of the deepening crisis of the industry and the economy at large. The process of expanding work-place constitutionalism which we observed in Lagos and Kaduna was in Kano feeble and incoherent. In more than half of the companies managerial resistance continued. In some instances hostility was explicit, management doing what it could to undermine the union, refusing to negotiate, victimizing activists, and ignoring industrial relations procedures. Bagauda, one of our case companies, where unionization had been so violently resisted in the 1970s, never allowed the union to develop real roots, although formal recognition was offered in 1979/80. Zonal officers were refused access. But even branch officials were not allowed to meet with the management. They were told to address their complaints to the group headquarters of the Isyaku Rabiu Group of companies. "How can we go about improving conditions then?", complained frustrated branch leaders interviewed by us in 1987. The workers were constantly threatened with retrenchment, whatever demands were raised. Collective agreements were not implemented and the mode of operating the factory was highly irregular. The zonal officers were convinced that the branch chairman and secretary had been bribed by management which used them to keep the national union out as well as denying the workers benefits to which they were entitled (Umaru, interview 1987). Other branch executives who remained loyal to the union had been victimized and were leaving the company out of fear (Branch vice-chairman, Bagauda, interview 1987).

Basic things like check-off payments continued to be obstructed. The company insisted in 1987 that it would only make deductions for those workers who had submitted an authorization despite the fact that the law said that it should be the other way round: those wanting to opt out of the union should make the submission. Dabo, the district organizer at the time, gave the manager a copy of the Labour Decree but he refused to read it (see exchange of letters with management in the union file). Titus, the branch vice-chairman told us that the manager had threatened to kill him if he insisted on the check-off payment (interview 1987).

Most of the time the union felt helpless. Bagauda was a “sick company”. It had no proper management. Production was irregular and wages were paid irregularly. According to Dabo it was not even possible to think of improving the conditions of service. "We have been left with lobbying for workers’ survival” (ZR, 1985; see also ZR, 1986, 1987, 1988). But everything could not be blamed on the general crisis, especially not as the textile industry picked up towards the end of the decade. The combination of a highly irregular mode of operation and a despotic management style (with a few paternalistic embellishments) made Bagauda an unlikely candidate for genuine unionization.

Resistance did not only come from companies in trouble. Even more successful ones, such as Universal, continued to sabotage the union. There were two Lebanese-owned sister companies, Universal Textiles (UTIL) and Universal Spinners (USL), which pursued the same anti-union line. As late as in 1990 and 1991, the managers refused to meet the union. Patrick Dabo who had struggled to organize Universal for many years said that the company behaved “as if they owned the workers”. “No union had any right to tell them anything.” When workers came for employment they were made to sign an undertaking not to join any union. Union members were intimidated and discriminated against. It had been impossible to form a full branch executive because of fear. “All the elected officers and active floor members are gradually being driven away”, denied most of their rights, such as permission to go on casual leave. They were given less annual bonus than non-members. It was a system of divide and rule (Dabo, interview 1990, 1991; see also ZR, 1987, 1990).

The company had been formally unionized since 1980 but this had no consequences for labour relations. No collective bargaining was allowed. By the end of the decade the company claimed that it had implemented the central collective agreement but the union had difficulty in checking if that was actually the case because they had little access to the workers (John Bull, interview 1990). Samson, who dealt with Universal before Dabo and John Bull, was bitter. “They operate like fascist people—exploiters to the core.” The manager, Albert Agbona, had threatened to kill him (Samson, interview 1987). At one point, workers were emboldened to rejoin the union in large numbers but then as fresh intimidation set in membership declined mysteriously again (ZR, 1985, 1986). Attempts to organize union meetings were obstructed. Meetings were not allowed inside the company and when the union tried to organize one outside on a Sunday, over-time was imposed to prevent the meeting from being held (ZR, 1987).

The union wrote a series of letters, sending copy to various authorities but to no avail. A letter from Samson to the Managing Director in 1984 speaks of one Malam Hassan Amadu who is said to have "several times boasted to workers that since he has been assigned to root out any worker known to subscribe to the union or have leaning towards the union, any worker who loves his job should immediately resign from the union or else they will be systematically terminated". The union urged the company to train its manager in industrial relations. "The era of he who pays the piper dictates the tune is gone". Look at other textile companies in Kano where "progressive managements now take unions as partners for the progress of the industry". The company was warned that workers could not be taken for granted because nowadays they were conscious of their rights. If driven underground "the eventual eruption of their anger comes one day" (Samson to MD, 22 March 1984). The union sought a trade dispute. While the company was advised by the arbitrator to respect the workers' rights to have a union, it was not prevented from continuing its anti-union practices (Dabo, interview 1991).

5. SUCCESSFUL PENETRATION: NIGERIAN SPINNERS AND DYERS

Universal was an extreme case. It was typical of an anti-union culture that prevailed at the commencement of the period but which lingered on in individual companies as the industry was only gradually converted. By the late 1980s and early 1990s a more accommodating position had spread to most Kano companies. We witness a renewed offensive on the side of the national union, which at this point had successfully established its presence in the industry generally and was now turning to the remaining pockets of resistance. The offensive was facilitated by the modest stabilization and upturn enjoyed by the industry at this point in time. Nigerian Spinners and Dyers (NSD), another Lebanese controlled company, had a heavy anti-union record very similar to that of Universal. In this case, however, the union succeeded finally in breaking the resistance after a dramatic confrontation. Patrick Dabo who meticulously planned and led the attack told us of the victory with special satisfaction in 1990 as we (GA) had been with him at the gate three years earlier when he most humiliatingly had been refused access. Gate security had been instructed not to allow any unionist to enter or receive any letter or message from the union. It was one of the companies where managers in the 1970s were said to have been touting guns in the face of unionists, hoping to scare them off for good. It had happened to Olaleke, according to Samson, who was the one trying to unionize the company after amalgamation. In 1983 the union declared a trade dispute over the company's persistent "Refusal to Recognize Lawful Trade Union" and the Ministry of Labour instructed the two parties to meet and resolve the issue (see union letter to management 19 December 1983). The manager remained uncompromising and tried to buy Samson off. Samson succeeded in getting a Labour Officer from the Ministry to go and brief the Managing Director on the 1978 Labour Decree and the right to establish a union branch. The MD ignored the Labour Officer's admonition which, according to Samson, made the latter very annoyed. In the meantime police with teargas had dispersed the workers assembling by the gate. Samson was arrested and told by the police that he had no right to disturb production. While set free on bail paid by the Kaduna headquarters he was visited by a NSD manager who told him to stop bothering them or he would be killed. Workers identified as "ring leaders" were dismissed and police were stationed in the factory to prevent a "breakdown of law and order" (Samson, interview 1987).

The union persisted. Dabo who took over on the ground told the Ministry of Labour in 1985 (letter 31 July) that "all efforts to get in touch have proved abortive despite perennial visits to the company only to receive excuses from the gate 'Don't enter, no personnel is ready to receive union man here'". "There is still the threat of dismissal for any worker who dares to speak about union in the company." Samson had pleaded with the Ministry to talk to management. Dabo in his turn wanted them to send somebody who could boost the moral of the workers by assuring them that the law was on their side. By mid-1985 there seemed to be a break- through. Management offered recognition and enclosed a check for union fees (letter 11 September 1985). But it was mere trickery. No more payments were received and no further replies to union letters for over two years. The company had again succeeded in repressing the union by making workers sign a form renouncing membership.

In August 1989, Dabo returned from studies in the Soviet Union, much energized and bent on breaking the resistance in NSD. He spoke to educated workers during break hours, documenting in detail the current conditions of service in the company. It was still paying some workers below the minimum wage, no yearly increments, miserable fringe benefits, and workers were dismissed without notice. His contacts helped circulate the union's collective agreement and they jointly planned a strategy to get the company unionized without anybody being victimized. The problem, according to Dabo, was how to prevent the police from being used by management. Dabo went to great length to reduce the likelihood of this happening by making sure that the police got involved in his own planning. He exploited the potential divisions within the police, both between the federal and the state level and between the regular and the "political" police, the SSS. He explained to the SSS what the union was doing and educated them about the Labour Decree of 1978. When ready for action he demanded a meeting with management, sending copies to the Police Commissioner, the SSS, and the

Ministry of Labour. By pretending to be a businessman he deceived the company security guard who had instructions not to receive any mail from the union. The whole operation was planned secretly with his own contact persons inside the plant, meeting them in their homes. If management refused to meet with the union the workers would come out on strike.

Management had its own informants among the workers and got wind of the plans. It launched a counter-offensive, forming a committee of both senior and junior staff to take the place of a union, which was then allowed to negotiate a Food Subsidy "in order to show that they had the workers' interest at heart". Dabo was kept informed of what was going on because five of the members of this "yellow" union committee were his own contacts. On the date of the requested meeting with management (who did not respond), Dabo came to the gate. Those on night shift had been instructed not to go home and those on the afternoon shift to come to the gate. If the company refused to let him in, they should stop all the machines. If asked who directed them to do so they were instructed to answer that "the Senior Organizing Secretary of the Union did it in order to protect their Fundamental Human Rights". The MD was at the gate waiting. He told Dabo that he had no business with the union. He said he was "the owner of the company and nobody has the right to dictate to him what to do". Dabo told him that he "was not there as a rioter but to protect my members under the law". The manager refused to listen and Dabo gave the signal to stop the machines.

The police moved in. The officer in charge was particularly upset because it was a bad time for industrial unrest. The Head of State, General Babangida, was expected in Kano the following day. Dabo said he would be only pleased if the President came and that the union would prepare placards to make him realize that there is "apartheid in the company" and appeal to him to come to the aid of the workers. Although the Head of State failed to turn up, the police apparently hesitated to attack the workers who were picketing the company. They merely watched from a distance. Dabo suggests that they had been instructed by the Commissioner of Police not to touch the workers, because "he had been properly notified by me".

Having failed to secure the cooperation of the police in suppressing the strike, management made a last desperate attempt on its own. All senior staff were instructed to go and see "their brothers among the workers" and arrange for them to be brought by car to the back gate, which was not in use. They were told to move in at one go, early in the morning, well before normal working hours. But the union was informed. When the column of vehicles, with their lights turned off, tried to sneak in though the back, the "scabs" had the fright of their lives. They were chased away by the agitated and angry workers who had taken up positions at the gate some armed with sticks and pepper and other "traditional" weapons. It was a scaring experience and management was thoroughly humiliated. The strike went on for eight days and the shifts continued to take turns to guard the gates.

Management gave in. Senior union officers from Kaduna (Samson and Umaru) were brought in to finalize the settlement. The company which so far had refused to deal with the union felt obliged to request the union "to make sure that union activities in this factory are carried out with the utmost sense of responsibility" and that "adequate notice" was given "before any industrial action can be embarked upon"(GM, NSD to AGS, NUTGTWN 22 November 1989). Although the company at first obstinately refused to pay for days lost they in the end conceded a bonus—for the first time in the history of the firm —more than twice that amount. Negotiations for a general revision of the conditions of service were also successfully concluded (Dabo, interview 1990).

Was resistance to unionization in Kano finally subsiding? The union had certainly become more experienced and skillful in dealing with recalcitrant managements. Workers were better informed of what was at stake. As more firms around them submitted to the union, workers were in a better position to know what they were being denied by their anti-union managements. Their fear of victimization remained a major obstacle but the intimidating alliances between employers and the state seemed to be cracking up. It was no longer obvious, for instance, that the police would side with the bosses.

6. GASKIYA: ADVANCES IN INDUSTRIAL STRUCTURE AND LABOUR REFORM

The reform of the labour regime in Kano was also influenced by changes in industrial structure. As we saw in Chapter 4, the Kano textile industry had been dominated by small and middle sized companies, most of which were controlled by Lebanese, often naturalized, merchant families in alliance with an indigenous bourgeoisie, also with its roots in trading, an alliance which was partly forced by the indigenization laws of the 1970s. The ambitions and capacity of the indigenous bourgeoisie were given a further boost by the oil boom. The industrial activities of the Isyaku Rabiu Group were evidence of this, although manufacturing remained subordinated to commerce, with a bias towards simple assembling and packaging. The example of Bagauda, the group's venture into textiles, suggests that it had less capacity to handle and sustain genuine industrial processes, as reflected in an erratic production record and a despotic-cum-paternalistic labour regime.

The opening of Gaskiya Textile Mills, one of our case companies, in 1985 marked a qualitative change. As we noted in our case report in Chapter 5, the principal owner, Alahji Nababa Badamasi, was a successful textile trader but unlike Bagauda and most of the Lebanese firms, Gaskiya was not operated as a family business but as a modern enterprise with professional management. The story of the unionization of this company illustrates a conversion, within a short time span, from the "traditional", anti-union labour regime inherited from the Kano environment to an all-out acceptance of the constitutionalism that had come to characterize relations in the big Lagos and Kaduna firms.

The story of management's early resistance is told in a long letter from the Kano District Office of the union (Dabo) to the Ministry of Labour (5 December 1985). It was a story of harassment and intimidation, including the dismissal of the chairman and secretary of the duly constituted branch. At first the union had sought the cooperation of management, including permission to hold a general workers' meeting and elections. But management had refused. It did not help that Dabo tried to convince them that it was in the company's own best interest to have workers' grievances channelled through duly elected representatives and that workers were properly educated by the union on what was within and outside their rights. As management refused, the union called the meeting on its own. When the company was informed it "quickly imposed over-time on that Sunday—for the first time in this company" to prevent the meeting from being held. Although one shift was thus prevented from attending, the union went ahead, which was later used by management as a pretext to "declare the elections null and void". Two of the newly elected branch officers were dismissed for "absenteeism and disobedience". Dabo told the Ministry that the workers had now had enough of these attempts to "wipe out the union". Workers must be allowed "their bargaining right". The Ministry was called upon to arrange for a meeting between union and management.

The Ministry of Labour at first stayed passive while the struggle for the souls of the workers was raging (letter from Dabo to union HQ 20 January 1986). Management was calling workers in small groups, dissuading them from joining the union. "Some of the workers in fear of their employment were trying to hide themselves." Dabo and the activists, many of whom were experienced workers with a background in fully unionized Kaduna companies, were busy trying to encourage them to stand firm. He brought a group of workers to the Ministry to impress upon them the seriousness of the union's commitment. The Ministry was told that if it did not come to their help, the union had no other option than to call a strike "to back up their fundamental human rights". It was only, according to Dabo, when it was rumoured that a major strike was imminent that the Ministry finally called for a meeting. At this point, management gave up all resistance. It agreed to fresh elections being held. "It was like a miracle", says Dabo, when management decided to "join hands in seeing that the election was free and fair". The workers were "jubilating, jumping and shouting: Welcome Union, we are behind you!".

When we (GA) interviewed the branch executives a year later (December 1987) they were pleased with the performance of the management. Negotiations for the implementation of collective agreements had been swift and successful. The company had even donated money for the May Day celebration! With 1,300 workers at the time Patrick Dabo was proud to have organized such a large factory. The company joined the Textile Employers' Association and participated actively in national negotiations. Interestingly, subsequent incidents, according to union records, were mostly outbreaks of workers' dissatisfaction where the national union had to intervene in order "to cool down the situation". This was the case, for instance, when management on one occasion was a few days late in paying wages and "the entire workers became angry" and stopped work (letter from union to management, 7 August 1986), or when workers wanted to strike because the bonus was too small (one week only) (interview with branch exco, 1987), or when they resisted the simultaneous deductions of both a special state "economic recovery" tax and special union levy (for headquarters' construction) in February 1987. In the latter case, as workers went on a protest demonstration, Dabo recalls how the Chief Personnel Officer came running to the District Office for help. It took Dabo some time before he managed to get the action called off. Dabo noted that at least "there was no damage" (report to union HQ 12 February 1987).

How much did the union achieve? The meagre bonus and revolt over the levies may suggest that workers were not too impressed. In a zonal meeting the Gaskiya branch secretary complained that increments and fringe benefits were poor. In an interview (1987) the branch chairman regretted that he had left UNTL in Kaduna because both pay and industrial relations in Gaskiya were much worse. While his disappointment certainly reflected the continued stratification of the textile industry in terms of the conditions of service and work-place labour regimes, it also indicated the forces pushing for homogenization. The establishment of a large modern plant like Gaskiya meant that Kano could no longer be insulated from the standards set within the more advanced industrial environments of Kaduna and Lagos. By Kano standards Gaskiya may be well ahead of most of the traditional family firms. For the branch chairman it was the comparison with Kaduna that was the source of disappointment. The fact that he and other branch activists had been recruited from the Kaduna industry underscored the diffusion of both experiences and expectations, a critical input from below into the expansion and deepening of work-place constitutionalism. In Gaskiya's case such diffusion of experience at the level of the labour force interacted with advances at the level of industrial structure in opening the company for the new, union-based labour regime.

7. A HALF-WAY HOUSE: THE CASE OF NTM

The transformation of a backward labour regime proceeded from both ends of the industrial spectrum, both in the penetration of traditional family firms like Nigerian Dyers and Spinners and in the expansion of a modern industry, as represented by Gaskiya with its greater propensity to conform to a more advanced industrial relations culture. Remaining pockets of outright resistance, like Universal, were deviant cases by the early 1990s—the end of the period studied by us—likely to be conquered by the union at any time. While most firms accepted the existence of a union, compelled by the realities of the 1978 national labour pact, widespread resistance remained, although taking a less dramatic form and with less reliance on the police to intimidate the workers. The constitutional standing of the new labour regime had been enhanced but the accommodation to formal legality did not mean accepting the union as a legitimate force with a right to represent the interest of the workers. The union spoke of a "half-way house" where managements met some minimum formal obligation but otherwise avoided or undermined the union. We take the case of NTM, another of our case companies, whose dramatic early record of workers' struggles was documented by Lubeck and whose crisis and adjustment history was told in Chapter 5, to illustrate this ambiguous state of affairs.

Umaru, the senior union officer in charge of Kano, spoke of the branch in NTM as being "only half-way recognized". Collective agreements were only selectively implemented, mostly without any prior discussion with the union. Management dodged meetings (interview 1987). It stuck rigidly, for instance, to it position that the annual bonus was non-negotiable which resulted in repeated confrontations and, in fact, union defeat. Management set its percentage each year without consultations, making it very clear to the workers that they would be punished if they engaged in any industrial action. When we (GA) visited the company in 1987, workers were reluctant to back up a union ultimatum on the bonus with a go-slow. They had bad experiences from the past. On one occasion, for instance, when the union asked for a discussion on bonus, the manager posted a notice of the rate offered before the meeting could be held, underscoring that it was a non-negotiable issue. The branch went to the union district organizer, Samson, who issued an ultimatum demanding that the notice should be withdrawn and the workers began a go-slow. Two lorry-loads of policemen arrived the following day to re-establish "law and order". The police pressurized Samson to call off the action but he insisted: "He does not negotiate with the police". He was once again arrested for causing a public disturbance. The workers, who so far had been peaceful, began throwing stones when he was taken away. It was now a full-blown strike. Samson refused to call it off and went on hunger strike while in police detention. Although he was bailed out as usual by the national union, the latter was unable to prevent key branch activists from being dismissed. After a week the factory was back in full production without any concessions from management. Samson was "bound over" by the judge of a local Area Court (Alkali Court) "not to do union work in Kano for two years" (interviews with Samson and Umaru 1987, 1993; also Zonal Reports).

The defeat in the bonus struggle undermined the confidence of the workers and made them more cautious. It correspondingly reinforced the confidence of the management in its own strategy of keeping the union at arm's length. An angry letter from union HQ to the MD (Umaru, 4 December 1986) noted "to our dismay" that the claim by the firm to have recognized the union was "barely not realistic due to your attitude of not meeting the union to discuss workers' problems". The union issued a seven day ultimatum; either agree to meet us or "face the consequences". The MD was warned that "the union will not be responsible for any action the workers may decide to take".

Would this threat of "uncontrolled", potentially violent workers' action impress the manager? Its effectiveness depended on the readiness of the workers to actually "take the law into their own hands, not minding the consequences", something that the union, of course, could not officially support. Part of the problem in transforming the Kano labour regime as illustrated by the experience in NTM was precisely that the workers were reluctant to offer such extra-legal backing to the union's claim for workplace legality. The reluctance had many reasons, including bad experience of intimidation and lack of confidence in the union as in this case, but also, as was discussed in Chapter 6, structural features, such as clientelistic modes of labour recruitment and labour control that facilitated domination, acquiescence as well as repression. We emphasized on that occasion how the structure of the Kano political economy, its informal labour market and management culture, influenced workers' perceptions of the employment options open to them, both inside and outside the factory, and therefore their strategies vis-à-vis both union and management.

The bonus conflict in NTM had a strong symbolic importance. The union saw the firm's refusal to negotiate, "despite a series of letters written", as a deliberate strategy of destabilizing the union, demonstrating to the workers that whatever they received was something only decided by management and has nothing to do with the union. Management sought to break the connection, in the minds of the workers, between negotiated benefits and obligations and loyalty to the union. In companies where the union was stronger, the deduction of special levies for the union was directly coupled to success in bonus negotiations. If the union had no influence on benefits, why should workers bother to pay union levies? The District Office noted bitterly that management had succeeded in undermining the workers' loyalty to the union. In 1986 only a few workers paid the special levy that the management had refused to deduct. It took the union much time to convince the workers the following year to agree to a deduction (ZR, 1987). The increase of the union fee from one and a half to two per cent of the members' basic monthly pay that same year further complicated matters (union letter to workers, 14 April 1987).

The problem was therefore increasingly seen by the union as one of getting the workers' support in the face of such undermining strategies. When the firm in 1988 refused to pay a food subsidy which had been negotiated nationally, the branch exco felt unable to mobilize the workers for the industrial action recommended by the District Office as "workers feared being victimized" (ZR, 1988). The issue remained unresolved in 1989 when "surprisingly the majority of the workers did not respond" to the call for industrial action in support of the collective agreement (ZR, 1989). The union was obliged to go the long way via the Industrial Arbitration Panel. Although the ruling was in its favour, IAP only directed payment from the day of the ruling, ignoring the arrears. The weakness of the branch was again demonstrated when the union sought to mobilize for action. The branch exco was split over whether to accept the management's offer or support the demand for the full arrears. The legal wrangling continued, now in the National Industrial Court. Activities in the branch were paralysed by the division. The fear of being identified (and victimized) when taking sides made most workers stay away from the union elections in February 1990, especially as elections in Kano—unlike in Kaduna—were by show of hands, not by ballot box, also reflecting a less consolidated, formal, union culture (ZR, 1990; interviews with Dabo, John Bull, and Umaru 1990).

8. UNIONIZATION IN KANO: SUMMARIZING THE EVIDENCE

The purpose of this chapter has been to give flesh and blood to an argument over how to explain the variations in unionization and resistance to unionization which was developed in Chapter 6. The variations were dramatic, constituting a wide spectrum of forms of accommodation or lack of accommodation to the new union-based labour regime, with Gaskiya, once it had been successfully unionized, at the one end, and stubborn Universal at the other and with NTM being somewhere in between. The unionization was energetically pushed by the national textile union with the backing of the 1978 labour pact. It is a history of major advances and rich in evidence of the skill, dedication, perseverance, and personal courage of union cadres. In summarizing the evidence we draw primarily on the cases discussed above but add evidence from other Kano companies.

First of all it is clear that the union in Kano had a weak position as compared to both Kaduna and Lagos. This was shown both at the level of the branches and in the ability of the national union to intervene. Branches were in most cases weak and dependent on the district office of the national union. They had poor facilities in terms of time-off for union work, branch office, scope for holding meetings on the premises and during working hours. Branch excos were restricted in their movements in the plants during working hours and in their ability to attend to workers' grievances. Even important functions such as general meetings and branch elections had in many instances to be held outside the factory. Although there were marked improvements in this respect over the years that we followed developments, managerial acceptance remained limited. Only in a few plants was the union accepted as the normal and natural channel to the workers. We cannot therefore speak of a union-based labour regime in the same sense as in the dominant Lagos and Kaduna plants. While the reluctance to deal with the national union diminished towards the end of the period, the access of the district staff continued to be constrained. We also found reluctance on the side of the workers to participate in union activities and compete for elected positions. In this respect too branches were often dependent on the district to ensure the maintenance of branch functions. In an extreme case, in KTIL in 1990, no contestants applied for nominations and the supervising district officer felt obliged to ask the company security guards to close the doors to prevent the workers from leaving so that the meeting could be held (ZR, 1990).

The tendency to keep the union out was also reflected in the process whereby the content of the conditions of service was determined. At the end of the period most of the Kano firms felt obliged to adjust to national collective agreements, despite the fact that most were not members of the textile employers' association. Implementation, however, was often partial and handled unilaterally by managements as wage awards without letting the union into the process. The same was true for local conditions and benefits, including job classification, wage structure and increments. Resistance to negotiations over annual bonus and incentives was in some cases particularly adamant. Nor could managements be relied upon to adhere to due process when hiring and firing. The union was in many instances not notified or consulted when firms retrenched. It complained that some firms operated like in the construction industry: "When you have a contract you employ when you do not you lay off" (the quote refers to NTP).

In Kano, the general economic crisis and the drastic changes of economic policies thus hit an industry where the union was far from consolidated. The crisis further obstructed consolidation. This was in contrast to the firms in Kaduna and Lagos where the union was already well entrenched at the outset and managements therefore were compelled to accommodate union demands when designing their crisis strategies. Kano managers were in a position to use the crisis and the related decline in workers' bargaining power to obstruct unionization. With the absence of effective union control at the plant level, the national union was less able to challenge managerial strategies, including erratic, partial, and unilateral implementations of collective agreements.

The weakness of the union was reflected in the way in which managements often ignored due process in disciplinary matters. In NTP, for instance, management had a habit, according to Dabo, of engaging in "indiscriminate sackings and summary dismissals" (interview 1987). This heightened the insecurity of the workers, reinforcing the insecurity caused by the depressed and volatile economic situation. It also opened up for more effective intimidation and victimization of branch activists and executives. The union had difficulties in overcoming the climate of fear inherited from an earlier phase with more unrestrained and aggressive repression of the union. Intimidation in combination with selective incentives (negative and positive) made many workers hesitant to be seen as union activists, facilitating strategies of divide and rule.

In Chapter 8 we discussed the critical role played by rank and file militancy in defending branch executives against victimization. Confidence in the workers' support in this respect was a precondition for branch leaders daring to confront hostile managements. Most Kano branches remained weak in this respect. It could only be partly compensated for by the intervention of the national union. When the whole branch exco of KTP (owned by Kano State Government) was sacked in 1987, the union appealed to the workers to come out in their defence. The strike was maintained for two days, as long as Dabo, the district officer, was around, but when he was called to Kaduna the workers succumbed to management pressures. The strike died without having achieved anything (Ene, interview 1987). It was a vicious circle. The workers' willingness to stick out their necks in defence of the union depended on the ability of the union to offer protection if they were victimized. In many instances workers held back because of the experiences of union failure in this respect. In the case of Angel Spinning and Dyeing, for instance, the workers were "very sceptical" about industrial action because the union had failed to ensure the re-employment of 41 workers who had been wrongly sacked (ZR, 1989).

In the KTP case, the union appealed to the Ministry of Labour which reported to Lagos, although the Labour Officer claimed, according to Ene, that there was little he could do. "So many reports" had already been submitted without any result (Ene, interview 1987). This leads on to what appears to be one of the more distinctive features of the Kano labour regime—the ambiguous role of state agencies including the police in upholding (or subverting) work place legality. We met at the onset a situation where managerial autocracy relied extensively on the support of the police in repressing unionization. Attempts at organization were treated as interference with the legitimate property rights of the factory owners. The police were routinely called upon to impress this position on the workers and to prevent any "break down of law and order" that might occur as a result of it being challenged. As we saw in Chapter 7, Nigerian workers had been ensured the legal right to form unions since the 1930s. The evidence from the Kano textile factories, suggests that the police as late as in the 1980s continued to be used to subvert this right. We also find that the Ministry of Labour, supposedly there to help ensure respect for the labour laws, was largely impotent, if not directly subversive. The 1978 reforms caused a major change in this respect, not because they gave legal cover for unionization—it had been legal all the time—but because the enhanced position of the national union made it more difficult for management to rely on the agencies of the state when subverting the law. We thus notice a gradual neutralization of state power, a more cautious use of police intervention and a more active, mediating role by the Ministry of Labour. The Kano union records suggest two distinct phases in the union's mode of handling the ambiguous position of the state. First, an early phase, marked by confrontation, where the union relied primarily on its own newly-gained strength, expecting the law to be on its side, but often ending in defeat. This was followed by a phase where much attention was focused on weakening the unofficial alliance between firms and the local agencies of the state. This was largely successful, although all sorts of informal bonds remained rooted in the special features of the labour regime in Kano with its repressive managements, collaboration between management and state, less state support for workplace constitutionalism, less assertive and more divided workers, and less autonomous shop-floor militancy.

Chapter 10

Militancy and Mediation

1. MANAGING LABOUR RELATIONS: ON WHOSE BEHALF?

Substantial advances had been made in expanding and deepening a union-based labour regime in the Nigerian textile industry. While pockets of managerial resistance remained, the overall picture is one of success in enforcing union presence and making hostile managements accept collective bargaining and work place constitutionality. In noting the success of unionization, however, questions about the nature of the labour regime still need answering. Whose interests were looked after by the union? Unions may serve many purposes apart from protecting workers' interests. Some are imposed on labour either by state or management or by the two in collusion. It should be clear from the account so far that the Nigerian textile union was not an "incorporated" or "yellow" union in such a crude sense. Yet, questions about its relations to state, capital, and workers have not been exhausted. The actual workings of the new labour regime must be assessed in terms of different interests competing for influence. The fact that unionization was resisted by some managers, in collaboration with the police and some state labour functionaries, is not necessarily enough proof that the union served the interests of the workers. The dominant sections of the employers took an accommodating position and most labour officers were committed to some form of work-place legality where the union was recognized as having a legitimate place. Moreover, the central role played by the state in creating the favourable conditions for union expansion by legislating amalgamation, organizational monopoly, and compulsory check-off payments also needs to be properly considered. The state may have failed to achieve the level of control it had hoped for but how did these strong statist features affect the labour regime?

Trade unions, according to Richard Hyman (1989:36–39), play an "ambivalent role in relation to managerial control and the dynamics of capitalist relations of production". On the one hand, they are supposed to "formalize and generalize the processes of workers' resistance to, and negotiation with, the structure of capitalist domination in the employment relationship", while, on the other, they serve as "the institutional meeting point of the contradictory demands and interests of different sectional groups of workers, of employers and state functionaries". Their key task is to "*mediate and accommodate these conflicting pressures*" (our emphasis). Nigerian textile unionists, while naturally seeing themselves as the representatives of the workers, were aware of being part of such a process of mediation. Raphael Egbe (1983), in a treatise on "The Role of the Branch Leaders", spoke of unionists as "middlemen between workers and management", a "tricky situation" where they must "satisfy the workers who elected them to office and ... not incur the wrath of management". Egbe thought the conflict could be resolved because both workers and management needed the services of the union as it provided a vital channel of comunication (Egbe, 1983). Unionists complained, often bitterly, about their un-gratifying task, being both victimized as "trouble makers" by management and suspected of collaboration by the workers.

This chapter discusses how the textile union "managed" labour relations, mediating conflicting pressures from workers, managers and the state. It looks first at the way in which it managed the managers, how they were confronted or accommodated. Workers' militancy was the principle safeguard against incorporation or co-optation. Managing militancy involved attempts to offer direction and to apply brakes. The national union (zonal officers) intervened in local conflicts. This is where the mediating role of the union was most apparent. Much of the mediation took place against a backdrop of threats of violence by angry workers. Did mediation mean pacification and demobilization? In whose interest? To what extent was workers' militancy a source of union strength?

The second part of the chapter discusses the intervention of the state (police, labour officers, courts) in work place labour relations, often on the side of management but also at times on the side of the union. The implementation of industrial relations legality depended on the balance of forces in a particular case, including the willingness of the union (and the workers) to defy state impositions. In conclusion, we argue that the autonomy of the union vis-à-vis state and capital and its credibility as an organization of the workers depended on the autonomous assertion of workers' self-organization as expressed in a work-place militancy, which was largely independent of the union, and which narrowed the scope for co-optation and incorporation inherent in the statist features of the labour regime.

2. MANAGING THE MANAGERS

Getting employers to recognize the union, respect national collective agreements, and to make check-off payments laid the framework of union–management relations. Conditions of work and effective take-home pay depended largely on decisions in the individual enterprise. The extent to which the union was admitted into decision-making at that level varied strongly between the firms. Union records are preoccupied with the problems of overcoming managerial resistance; how to get management to the negotiation table. They are full of laments over confrontational and irresponsible managers who have to be educated and disciplined and made to realize the virtue of entering into dialogue with the union. The quest for dialogue was neither submissive nor accommodationist. Dialogue was something to be struggled for. The strength of the union in a particular plant was measured in terms of the range of issues on which management was prepared to enter into discussions. The demand for dialogue had often to be backed up by threats of confrontation. The union asserted its authority, its ability to call out the workers, in order to be met with respect and make dialogue possible. A zonal report from Ikeja/Ogun speaks of the need to "suppress the rinder-pest activities of confrontational managements" and scoffs at the propaganda which portrays unions as irresponsible and prone to engage excessively in industrial action. "Most unions", the report asserts, "are more mature than most managements" (ZR, 1984). "Recalcitrant managers who see nothing good in the union" were those responsible for provoking confrontation (Nigerian Ropes, ZR 1988).

The quality of branch executives was judged in terms of their ability to establish an effective dialogue with management. This met with a severe test during the period of declining and irregular production in the early and mid-1980s. The branch exco of NTM in Lagos, for instance, was praised for the way in which it was engaged with management in a "joint consultative committee" to work out a strategy on how to deal with the shortage of raw material (ZR, 1984). This is how it should be, according to the zonal officer, who felt that the NTM management had showed itself to be "purposeful, understanding and objectively enterprising". That of Specomill, in contrast, facing the same "epidemic shortages", was described as "planless and anarchic", with an aggressive attitude to the union. In this case, the zonal officer called for "Positive Action" to stop such "diabolic and opportunistic" behaviour (ZR, 1984). Bad managers were typically "confrontational and devious", using delaying tactics and insincere arguments, failing to honour agreements, and provoking emergencies in order to block union demands (GCM, ZR 1986). Some bad managers were seen as beyond redemption and unfit for dialogue. They should be removed altogether. While the union would caution the workers "not to take the law into their own hands", as in the case of GCM, in many cases it supported the "manager must go" campaigns. The GCM manager (Printing Department) was alleged to be "stingy, anti-union, partial and very autocratic". In Chitra Knitting and Weaving (at Sango Otta) the zonal officer asked the national union to intervene and deal with "the most recalcitrant, stubborn and uncompromising" management in the whole zone (ZR, 1981).

Personnel managers were particularly likely to become the targets of workers' wrath. The PM in NTM in Kano was notorious; "an illiterate, political appointee", according to Patrick Dabo (interview 1990). In this case, the union insisted that the whole management structure of the company should be reformed, including a clear division of responsibilities between different management staff. A report on another Kano company, KTP, complains bitterly that management is "composed of a bunch of rudes and unskilled in all ramifications of industrial relations" and with no understanding of the problems on the shop-floor. Rather than going around and making sure that things work "they feel that life starts and ends at their desks". It should be the duty of the workers "to use their labour power to put these parasite managers in check" (ZR, 1989).

A frequent complaint concerned the arrogance of managers, their failure to behave respectfully in their dealings with union officials or workers. According to Olaleke, the first GS of the amalgamated union, such grievances were a primary cause of the frequent spontaneous shop-floor revolts of "the olden days" (interview 1987). Shittu recalls a protracted struggle in Westex against managers who were prone to shout at and insult the workers (interview 1987). The Syrian manager of Novelty was notorious for his "contempt and disregard for the trade union movement and the law" (ZR in TGW, 1982). In this case, the union had risen "gallantly to the occasion and fought like a wounded lion". "The hands of economic imperialism", according to the eloquent zonal officer, "have been burnt and the ability of this great union to repel aggression is no longer in doubt". With many foreigners in managerial positions the concern with respect and dignity often took on a racial and nationalist dimension. The evils of apartheid were invoked when protesting the maltreatment of workers by bad foreign managers as in a case where fifteen workers were "forced at gunpoint" to sign their termination letters (NTM-Lagos, ZR 1983). In a case of racial insult in K. Issardas (Lagos), the zonal officer was pleased to report that management was made to apologize: "It was the first time that management committed itself to the misbehaviour of the expatriate and promised that such malpractices would not occur again" (ZR, 1989).

Union reports return to the need to educate the managers. While this occasionally meant that those who misbehaved had to be disciplined by "positive action", the general tendency was to encourage dialogue in order to elicit co-operation and more responsible behaviour. The union saw itself as engaged in a project of building a culture of industrial relations based on mutual respect.

3. MANAGING THE WORKERS

Getting both managers and workers to respect the new constitutionalism with the constraints it imposed on both parties was a major task in building the union as was discussed in Chapter 8. It established the framework within which mediation was performed. Workers and managers had to be assisted in finding workable solutions to their conflicts. The General Secretary told us in 1990 of a conflict in UNTL in Kaduna which illustrates some of the complexities of mediation. The Chinese Chairman of the company, during a recent visit to Nigeria, had ordered that the workers should be given a gift of food—as a "gesture of sympathy" at a time of hardship. Management decided to buy semolina but to its surprise and annoyance the "ungrateful" workers refused to accept the gift and insisted that they should be given rice instead. Management told them that they either accepted the semolina or they would receive nothing. The General Secretary intervened, making management reluctantly add rice to the semolina "for the sake of peace". He argued that "it would be an open wound for a long time" unless management conceded. As he reported back to the workers on his success, however, he met with fresh demands. A rumour had it that the UNTL Chairman had in fact promised a substantial cash gift which workers now insisted on. The GS judged this to be totally unrealistic. What should the union do? Were the workers merely trying to raise the bid? They had successfully added the rice to the semolina, why not some cash as well? Their awkward behaviour could perhaps be explained by their mixed feelings in the face of the paternalistic benevolence of the management at a time when it was unprepared to pay them wages on which they could live. The element of humiliation was compounded by the take-it-or-leave-it attitude as well as by the suggestion that workers should not be given cash because they might spend it wastefully, on beer, for instance. In addressing a workers' meeting, the GS managed to defuse the tension by acknowledging that their uneasiness was legitimate and that management must be taught to behave more respect-fully. The workers agreed to take the offer as the best that could be achieved at this point (Oshiomhole, interview 1990).

Most of the mediation was in the day-to-day discussions with management over disciplinary actions, promotions, transfers, end-of-service benefits etc. relating to individual workers. These discussions were at branch level, although with occasional involvement of zonal officers when the branch felt the need. Management would also call on the zonal office when they thought that branch positions were unreasonable and they expected greater understanding from more senior union cadres. Such individual cases would rarely result in industrial action, official or unofficial. But also negotiations over the implementation of collective agreements and over local conditions of service were predominantly peaceful. A notable exception was the annual negotiations over bonus and incentives with their tradition of workers' demonstrations, placards, war songs, and other forms of agitation.

This official process of peaceful negotiations, however, was set against a backdrop of latent shop-floor militancy, easily inflamed, frequently erupting in more or less violent, more or less spontaneous, unofficial industrial action. Managing workers' militancy was a critical aspect of mediation which tended to bring into the open the balance of forces in a particular plant. It put the leadership and credibility of the union to a public test. Branch executives could not on their own call out a strike or go-slow without clearance from the zonal office. In practice, however, the readiness of workers to initiate and carry out actions on their own was central to the dynamics of mediation. It was by intervening and mediating in the crises that arose as a result of such unauthorized actions that the union provided its most vital "service" to management and it was in return for this service that management was expected to make due concessions.

The zonal officers often served as "fire brigades" which were rushed in at short notice to quell outbreaks of militancy that threatened to disrupt production or cause a breakdown of law and order. Zonal reports are rich in dramatic incidents of this nature. Failure to intervene effectively and in time would have damaging consequences not only for production but also for branch union activity, including the victimization of workers and branch leaders. How could enraged workers be made to "pipe down" without loss of dignity or confidence in the union's ability to protect their interests?

Mediation in these situations was a sensitive balancing act. The credibility of the union in the eyes of the workers depended on its response to shop- floor grievances, including its ability to protect workers against "illegitimate" victimization. Legitimacy in this context was not in a formal, legalistic sense but was based on the merits of each case, including the substance of the grievances that had sparked off the unauthorized action. But the union had also to worry about its credibility in the eyes of management. It needed to ensure that workers kept within the law, preventing managements from settling for alternative strategies of undercutting the union.

Some of the unofficial militancy at branch level was tacitly encouraged by the national union in order to put pressure on management and set the stage for union intervention. This happened, for instance, in the bonus negotiations where the ground was prepared by the "habitual restiveness" of workers. The union was implicated not necessarily through direct incitement but by doing little to discourage this restiveness. Managements were of course annoyed by the "duplicity" of the union but they were mostly wise enough not to stick to their formal rights, e.g. by dismissing workers who had embarked on an undeclared go-slow, especially not in a situation where the "illegal" action could be expected to have unofficial national union support, apart from being popular with the workers. Rather than seeking confrontation, most managements would aim at a settlement with the union.

Occasional encouragement of "spontaneous" industrial action by the national union, should not detract, however, from the basically autonomous character of grass root militancy. It expressed a stand among the workers (or branch leaders and activists) on what should be their fair due, depending on the condition of the company, the conjuncture, and the plight of the workers. Union mediation was real. It had to accommodate real forces at work at the shop-floor level. In many cases, militant grass root action was strongly resented by union officials. It risked spoiling relations with management that may have been built over a long period, in the attempt to overcome initial hostility. It often left the union with the precarious task of restoring "normal" work place relations which had been shattered by workers "taking the law in their own hands". As the bonus was being negotiated in Nichemtex in 1981, workers embarked on action in support of their demands, beating up managers as well as workers who refused to join the action. It degenerated into a pitched battle with the police, with workers setting up road blocks and burning tyres. The union had to engage in "frantic efforts" to get workers back to order (ZR in TGW, 1982). The situations were often beyond redemption, for instance, in "sick" mills unable to sustain production and employment on any consistent basis. Shortages of raw materials in West African Thread, for instance, led to repeated closures, compulsory leaves, and reduced pay (ZR, 1984, 1985). When workers finally went on the rampage to give vent to their pent up frustration there was hardly any scope for the union to intervene and mediate constructively.

Mediation in such cases was often a matter of minimizing the damage. Some forms of militancy were more difficult to defend than others, for instance, the locking up or manhandling of managers and senior staff. An angry letter from the Senior Staff Association at KTL accused the union of failing to prevent workers from threatening the lives and property of senior staff "on the slightest provocation" (KTL 1983, union file). In Zamfara Textiles, Funtua, the Financial Controller, a Chinese, "was carried shoulder high from his office to the gate by the irate workers for his refusal to honour the date of payment of the arrears" (ZR, 1988). The union had to bail out the whole branch exco in Fahid Dayekh in Kano who had been detained by the court for allegedly threatening the life and property of management (Dabo, interview, 1987). The workers in Subaco, having not been paid their bonus, lost their temper and locked up their own management. The branch exco members were arrested and charged in court and many workers dismissed (ZR in TGW, 1982). While in this case, the union succeeded in having all reinstated and the court case withdrawn, mediation often meant settling for far less, depending on the strengths and weaknesses of the workers' case. It often meant protracted negotiations over the various punitive measures imposed.

On occasion, zonal officers felt no sympathy with the local militants and either incapable or unwilling to protect them. On the contrary, they should be dealt with—flushed out or disciplined. In one Lagos company, ITI, the local branch management had been so terrorized by the branch militants that it was now "dancing to their music" (ZR, 1981). An "iron fist", was required, according to the zonal officer, to bring discipline to the branch. In Jaybee, "a problem area", branch leaders were said to be "self-righteous, impervious to correction and rude in their approach" (ZR, 1979). In GDM, "another hot spot", the zonal officer complained that workers and the branch committee were "selfish and anarchical". They had "gone wild" during bonus negotiations. Normalcy had now returned since management "carried out a mass purge" (ZR, 1986). In Afprint, regarded as a particular trouble spot, the zonal office "commended management" for having terminated twenty-eight workers who were said to have engaged in a "barbaric action", maltreating the Industrial Relations Manager (ZR, 1990).

4. MEDIATION AS SUBORDINATION?

How do we understand the role of the union in controlling workers' militancy? What does it tell us about the balance of forces sustaining the labour regime? One zonal officer noted with satisfaction the absence of any serious confrontation in his zone. Union and management, he said, had come closer to each other in maintaining industrial peace. "Despite the economic problems... we have maintained the enlightenment of our members who seem to understand the hardship" (Kakuri, ZR 1988). Understanding ..? Absence of confrontation ..? The closeness of union and management ..? Did mediation mean union participation in the pacification and subordination of the workers?

There is no shortage of evidence of union intervention benefiting management. In Kay, following complaints from management over poor attitude to work, the zonal officer organized a symposium in the factory canteen where workers were lectured on "Factory Discipline and Productivity". "Since that memorable lecture", declared the proud officer, "absenteeism and late coming is very rare" (ZR, 1984). It is unlikely that all the workers at Kay's felt equally pleased with being subjected to a tighter and probably more taxing factory regime. In whose interest were they disciplined? As discussed in Chapter 8, the union had a stake in establishing and defending work place legality as distinct from the despotic regimes of the past. We saw the achievement of the union in this respect as part of the emancipation of the workers. But where does emancipation stop and subordination start? At what point would the union turn into an instrument of corporate control? No clear-cut answer could be expected. While it may be possible to identify situations where a union takes on distinctly repressive or emancipatory roles, there is reason to expect a wide "grey zone" where union and managerial interests in controlling the workers overlap and fuse.

Some textile managements certainly saw it as being in their interests to cultivate close and friendly relations with the union in order to encourage an understanding and co-operative attitude. There were many ways in which a company could be accommodating, including the provision of a union office, furniture, fans or even air conditioning. The issue of time off for union work was particularly sensitive. It affected all elected union officials from the branch exco to the top. Suleiman, the then National President, told us in 1987 that he was on the pay-roll of KTL but was free to use all his time for union work. He only went there occasionally. Interestingly, he was not even a KTL worker in the first place. His own company, Nortex, had closed down, but he was hired as a Purchasing Officer (without being expected to do the work) by the KTL manager Alhaji Mansour Ahmed whom he had known for a long time (Suleiman, interview 1987). One can easily imagine that such generous accommodation would have a price, if nothing else, in terms of greater "understanding".

Branch officials could also be accommodated by being given a role in the distribution of company products and "essential commodities" (e.g. rice and palm oil). Consumers' co-operatives operated by the union often depended on management generosity for their access to goods for sale. Other sources of petty-patronage would be in union management of the company canteen, creating openings that might benefit individual union leaders and their friends. Company credit for a wide range of purposes, including the purchase of motor cycles, was another potential source of undue influence. It is not surprising that allegations of union leaders being "settled" by management featured during contests for union office, especially in the context of a political culture of the society at large, often spoken of as the "politics of settlement", where alliances are formed on the basis of expected material gains, immediate or future. The branch exco at Aswani were accused of misusing a motor cycle loan which they had been given by management, according to the zonal officer, in order to influence them (ZR, 1981).

Union cadres at all levels could be expected to be under pressure from management. This was even openly acknowledged in the design of union negotiating strategies. The General Secretary spoke, for instance, of the importance of binding negotiators through collective decisions to certain minimum demands, a restrictive mandate, something "to fall back on when pressurized by the employers". He illustrated the argument with the 1983 bonus negotiations where government had directed that bonus should be maximized to one month. Most union leaders felt that they should be given an open mandate to get as much as they could but the GS insisted that no branch should accept less than they received the previous year. The employers would be made to realize that they faced a collective decision and that there would be no use in trying to buy off or pressurize individual leaders (Oshiomhole, interview 1987).

Cases of suspected undercover deals were occasionally dealt with through disciplinary actions as when the officer in charge of the Onitsha zonal office was sacked. Allegedly, he had allowed the employers to start paying the new minimum wage (1991) from a later date than agreed at the national level, thereby making a substantial saving for the company at the workers' expense (Oshiomhole, interview 1991). The problem of zonal officers becoming too friendly with individual managements was partly addressed by rotating and transferring them between zones, not necessarily in expectation of outright collusion, but in order to guard against relations becoming too personalized.

Even with such precautions, the scope for individual deals could not be effectively checked from above. Nor could those higher up in the union hierarchy be expected to be beyond suspicion. It is in this context that shop-floor militancy takes on its particular significance as a source of control from below too. Both union and management were under pressure from workers who felt frustrated by the failure of either to respond effectively to shop-floor grievances. Occasionally, such militancy was prompted by suspicions that the union was playing under cover with management as in the case of the bonus negotiations at Zaria Industries. In order to prevent the situation from getting violent, the zonal officer had to prove his worth (and integrity) by achieving a bonus above the level obtained the year before (ZR, 1978). In a similar case in CAP, also in Zaria, the zonal officer noted that "the union regained its lost glory by cancelling the idea of doing things on a friendly basis" (ZR in TGW, 1982). By demonstrating its willingness to confront the management the union sought to ensure the confidence of the workers.

Union mediation of workers' militancy went beyond issues of subordination and control. The union was under pressure to respond to the aspirations of its members. Occasionally it was spoken of as "riding a tiger", a force which threatened to get out of control and become destructive. But it was also a force which sustained the union as an autonomous organization of the working class. Mediation was not merely fire-brigade interventions when "normal" industrial relations were threatened with breakdown. It also meant making sure that management realized the consequences of its actions if it did not adequately respond to workers' grievances and union demands. While this may partly have been a matter of keeping management informed about the likely mood and responses of the workers, it was also a question of the union exploiting the possibility of militant action as a means of pressurizing management. Union assertions that they could not prevent workers from engaging in spontaneous action were perhaps occasionally less than sincere. But the frequent claim that it was "not in a position to vouch for the safety of the management" was not just tactical. It also reflected the actual autonomy of shop-floor militancy, a force that the union could tap for its own purposes, but which it also could not afford to ignore.

5. STATE AND MEDIATION

One more set of actors influenced union mediation, the state and its various agencies, the Ministry of Labour officials, the official institutions assigned with regulating industrial conflict, the police and the courts. How did intervention by the state affect the outcome of mediation? On whose side did it intervene?

The police were used for a wide range of purposes. In 80 per cent of the cases, according to Oshiomhole, the police intervened on the side of management. "They enforce management decisions as if they were a court order" (interview 1987). The legitimacy of police involvement was often contested by both union and workers. In Zamfara Textiles, the police were prevented by the branch exco from making an arrest and therefore detained the branch chairman. But he was hurriedly released on bail when it was rumoured that the workers were planning to raid the police station (ZR, 1989). Oshiomhole saw the problem of the police as essentially a political issue. Their collaboration with management and disrespect for due process had to be exposed politically (interview 1987). Police intervention could be minimized by educating the workers. If for instance they chose to go-slow rather than have open demonstrations they would be less vulnerable. As things were the frequent breakdowns of law and order, including real or perceived threats to life and property kept legitimizing police involvement on a routine basis. The police rarely looked into the nature of the conflict but responded to the calls of management, teargassing and dispersing demonstrating workers, rescuing managers who had been locked in, or forcing their way into the factories where workers had barricaded themselves in. Arrests of local militants were common, even if only a minority of cases were brought to court. Few cases were pursued beyond the district courts to the state high courts. Yet, the union had a busy time keeping the law enforcing agencies at bay, constraining their intervention, bailing out workers and paying their fines.

In most cases, union and managements seem to have had a joint interest in settling the issues without the involvement of the law courts. Both parties would make a political judgement based on an assessment of the balance of forces and the substantive issues at stake. As in the internal disciplinary cases discussed above (Chapter 8), an important aspect of union mediation was to make managements realize that it was in their own interests to take an accommodating approach. Many foreign factory owners and managers, according to Alhaji Shittu, would also be anxious to avoid getting involved in legal tussles. They were worried, especially the Indians who dominated the Lagos industry, because of their vulnerability to anti-foreign agitation which might complicate relations to the authorities and even lead to their expulsion from Nigeria (Shittu, interview 1987).

The Labour Officers, representing the Federal Minister (Commissioner) of Labour and Employment, were the official custodians of industrial relations procedure. They could be called in by either side in a conflict or they could themselves decide to intervene. Most of the cases involving the Ministry would not go beyond the participation of a Labour Officer in plant level discussions. He or she would offer advice depending on an informal assessment of the rights and wrongs of the case. We noted in Chapter 8 that the new trade union laws were officially supportive of unionization and we saw how Labour Officers were called in to explain to anti-union managements why they had to accommodate and obey the laws of the land. It did not prevent them, however, from also collaborating with management in obstructing the process. The experience of Kano was particularly revealing in this respect (Chapter 9). The union had to spend as much time to avert or neutralize hostile state intervention as to solicit reluctant support.

While the law on the establishment of trade unions was at least in theory supportive, that on the regulation of "trade disputes" was much more problematic from the union point of view. The Trade Disputes Decree No. 7 of 1976 was part of the package of labour reforms of the late 1970s (Davison, 1977; Fashoyin, 1980; Iwuji, 1987). It subjected the parties to an elaborate procedure for settling conflicts, starting with voluntary mediation, and if that did not help, the appointment of a conciliator by the Ministry of Labour, or the referring of the dispute to an Industrial Arbitration Panel (IAP). If the "award" was not accepted, either party could take the case to the National Industrial Court (NIC), the decisions of which were final with no right of appeal. Any industrial action, strike, go-slow etc. engaged upon without exhausting this process was illegal. However, the illegality of the action would have to be established in a normal law court, not by IAP or NIC, which opened up for another avenue of litigation, including appeals to superior courts. The advantage from the union point of view, was that management would be constrained from taking any action against the union on the substantive conflict as long as the case was in court. But the same scope for legal obstruction could be exploited by the employers. In the case of the fiercely anti-union management of Niger Garments in Aba in the Southeast, for instance, it simply refused to implement a ruling of NIC which favoured the union. The court had no mandate to enforce its rulings which meant that the union had to take the case of the company's non-implementation to a High Court, which again opened up for legal obstruction, adjournment on technicalities etc. (Oshiomhole, interview 1987). Litigation was particularly intense in Lagos. Alhaji Shittu, the head of the Lagos office had over the years become the "legal expert" of the union. When we saw him in 1990, he told us that he had cases in court several days a week (interview 1990). Cases could drag on over several years causing much frustration and suffering for the affected workers as in the notorious case of Oduatex (former Western Textiles) where the company only complied—after seven years!—and paid compensation due for non-payment of wages (Bello, interview 1987). The case had been in IAP and NIC for five years, as shown by the voluminous records of proceedings and submissions with the union.

In view of the cumbersome formal process the union would avoid declaring an official dispute if it could handle the matter more directly. According to the General Secretary, it would encourage "spontaneous actions" by the branch excos or activists, advising them "to react immediately to any situation", allowing no time for "niceties of procedures". The purpose was to send clear signals to both management and the Ministry of Labour that workers were firmly committed to a particular position and ready for militant action, and that both should be well advised to seek a settlement with the union rather than risking a protracted conflict. Union officials would simultaneously seek to impress the Labour Officers that they were committed to a responsible solution. The GS suggests that ministry officials would hesitate to take positions against the union when both workers and union officials had made their stance clear. In that situation the role of the Labour Officer would primarily be to encourage the parties to talk, including convincing management that it would be in its own interest to settle with the union (Oshiomhole, interview 1987). The union would itself invite the Ministry to intervene when it felt that spontaneous industrial action was not viable, for instance, when it faced a particularly reckless or stubborn management. On some occasions, managements refused to talk, insisting on their rights, confident of state support, as when the government had placed a ceiling on bonus payments. But even in a case where managements could expect full state backing, many would prefer to make their own deal with the union. The state would be of little help in maintaining production in the face of workers' obstruction. On the issue of the bonus ceiling, most managements therefore had a joint interest with the union in defying the law and keeping the Ministry out (Oshiomhole, interview 1987).

While the union distrusted the formal process under the trade disputes legislation it was also obliged to take it seriously, especially when it came to asserting principles which later could be used to back more informal modes of conflict resolution at the factory level. One such principle was the binding nature of collective agreements, including their applicability to companies which were not members of the textile employers' association. The union, for instance, declared a dispute when NTM in Kano refused to pay a new food subsidy which had been introduced into the 1990 collective agreements. The IAP award, while favouring the union, did not cover payments of arrears. As this concerned another major principle, the union pursued the case to the Industrial Court (NIC) (Umaru, interview 1990).

In some instances, the union judged that it was in its interest to contest an issue in court, not because they thought they could win but to expose management and influence its future behaviour. Alhaji Shittu told us of a case in Enpee where management had behaved very unreasonably, refusing to allow a worker, who needed a certificate to take to the doctor, to enter the company while off-duty. The union protested but management refused to discuss the matter, claiming to be formally in its right. While the IAP ruling was in favour of management, the facts of the case were exposed during the cross examination at the Panel in a way which was highly embarrassing to the company. It had certainly not acted in the interest of work place peace.

The union felt that management had been taught a lesson and "since then, there had been no more attempts to confront the union" (Shittu, interview 1990).

The blend of formal and informal processes, industrial action and negotiations, internal deals and external intervention was complex. Involving the state did not necessarily mean abandoning extra-legal pressures. Once the state had indicated, for instance, its recognition of the legitimacy of the union position, the union could decide to "enforce" it by extra-legal means. This happened in cases where managements refused to abide by IAP or NIC rulings and when they failed to respond to advice from Labour Officers. When the management in Western Textiles refused to take Ministry advice on the reinstatement of a union branch secretary who had been dismissed, the union called a strike which lasted seven days and which was supervised and enforced by zonal officers. The company gave in and an agreement was reached, again with the help of the Ministry (ZR, 1981). The strike was illegal, but was legitimized informally by being supportive of an official mediation process. Similarly, the zonal secretary decided to call for "Positive Action" when management in Specomill refused to talk to the union after having been advised to do so by a "conciliator" appointed by the Ministry (ZR, 1984).

The union would call on the assistance of Labour Officers only when it felt it had the upper hand. The general impression is that it made good use of them in dealing with managements that were slow in accommodating to unions and industrial relations legality, for instance, those refusing to engage in collective bargaining, claiming not to have been party to the collective agreements (cf. Continental, ZR 1979). They could also be of help in making managements read and interpret the agreements correctly (cf. Aswani, ZR 1988). Companies who sought to dodge the arrears payments under the minimum wage agreement were brought in line with the help of the Ministry (cf. Lagos, Ogun Ondo ZRs 1982). Union records also credit the Ministry with good work in breaking deadlocks in negotiations, as in Nigerian Fishing Net where the company met a strike with a lock-out and refused to talk. It only gave in "after a few dramatic efforts by the Ministry of Labour" (ZR 1988). Similarly, the "dubious" owners of Novelty were forced to reopen "with the help of the Ministry" after the union had refused an extension of the period of closure (ZR, 1988).

The Labour Officers had no right to issue rulings, merely to make people talk. Yet, they would tend to support a particular solution, once they had assessed the balance of different forces and found, for instance, that the union would not "pipe down" (Oshiomhole on Supertex, interview 1987). If management refused to cooperate, the Labour Officer could advise the union to declare a trade dispute and take the case to IAP (Shittu on Specomills, interview 1990). With such initial Ministry support, the chances that the award would favour the union were enhanced. Of course, some employers had their own illicit ways of winning over the state, as in the case of Angel Spinning and Dyeing in Kano where the union claimed that the Labour Officers were "known to be the key advisers to the management on anti-labour handling" because they had "their relatives employed by the Director of the Factory" (ZR, 1989). Oshiomhole claimed that Kano managers in particular thought that Labour Officers could be bought, just like any government official. They would bring in the Labour Officers to give rulings which they had no right to give, hoping to intimidate the workers, who saw them as acting with the authority of the state. The union fought this misuse of authority, pointing to the violation of the Trade Disputes Decree (interview 1987).

6. SHOP-FLOOR MILITANCY: THE BASIS OF UNION AUTONOMY

State intervention, both legal and illegal, was a potential source of subordination. The elaborate and time-consuming procedure regulating trade disputes was designed to constrain labour militancy. But union mediation went beyond the scope defined by such legality. The application of the law and the nature of state intervention depended on the balance of forces, in the industry as well as outside, nationally and in the individual locality or workplace. The willingness of workers to fight it out, with or without support of the law, was based on their assessment of these forces but also on their views of the rights and wrongs of the issues at stake. Company managers were therefore constrained by the forces on the ground, even when the state was on their side. The bonus struggle is a case in point. While employers made attempts to enforce the law, calling on the Ministry of Labour for support, workers' readiness to resist obliged them to deal with the union, outside the law.

Oshiomhole spoke of the need for the union to refuse to submit to bad laws. Very little would be achieved, he said, if the union decided to restrict itself to the methods offered by official industrial relations procedures. But also when the laws were on the side of the union, as in the drawn-out case of Niger Garments, it had to be prepared to ensure its enforcement. Good laws were only useful, in his view, if their implementation could be backed with real power, that is, organizational strength based on workers' commitment (interview 1987).

However, the union and its mode of mediating the relationship between capital and labour was equally constrained by the forces on the ground. It was not free to make its own deals. Pressure from the workers, including the very suspicion that union officials had been "settled" by management, made the union vulnerable. The workers preparedness to offer or withhold support from the union was decisive precisely because the ultimate basis of union bargaining power was the possibility of using force—"Positive Action", either to defend achievements made within the existing legal framework or to ignore its constraints. The wide gap between the consensual industrial relations of the law book and the contestation that characterized work-place realities enhanced the dependence of the union on shop-floor support. If withdrawn, state and employers would be swift to exploit the changing balance of forces to their advantage and could do so within the existing legal framework. For an illustration of this point, see the traumatic May 1993 events discussed in Chapter 12.

We have seen in this chapter how the autonomous militancy of the workers was a cause of concern for the union. The function of "fire brigade" was central to its mediating role. We also saw that shop-floor militancy was a source that was tapped by the union and used to put pressure on state and management. Both these aspects are amply acknowledged in documentary records and interviews. What is less obvious, however, is the decisive role, as we understand it, of this autonomous militancy in constraining the potential for incorporation and co-optation, a potential which was inherent in the strong statist features of the labour regime. The maintenance of the substantive autonomy of the union vis-à-vis state and capital was facilitated by the workers themselves asserting their autonomy as political actors vis-à-vis the union. This enhanced the credibility of the union as an organization of the Nigerian textile workers, with roots in their self-organization.

Chapter 11

Union Bureaucracy and the Democratic Process

1. THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS

The union-based labour regime of the Nigerian textile industry was sustained by the autonomous militancy of the workers. It was a source that could be tapped by the union but it also served to discipline the union from below, providing for some rough accountability, and reducing the scope for co-optation by management and state. Did it also sustain democratic practices? The union was clearly under considerable pressure to be responsive to workers' grievances, but so was management. In both cases, responses could be repressive as well as accommodating. Concessions do not make hierarchical and authoritarian institutions any more democratic or less authoritarian. We therefore need to know the extent to which pressures from below fed into democratic processes, affecting the scope for contesting power, organizing opposition, and achieving change of leadership by democratic means.

As will be shown in this chapter power was intensely contested in the union branches, providing for a regular change of leaders and a basis for representation in zonal councils, the national executive, and the delegates conference. The process was often subverted by factional strife, victimization of opponents, and intervention by management. The officers of the national union intervened, suspending elected officers for anti-union activities, convening branch meetings, and organizing fresh elections. To what extent were such interventions in defence of democratic practices? Or did they subvert them? In any case, how significant was branch level democracy for the overall organization of power in the union? Was it able to offer any significant counterweight to the entrenched, hierarchical institutional power of the union bureaucracy?

Richard Hyman (1989:39) suggests that there is an "area of institutional autonomy available to union representatives in mediating the conflicting pressures and expectations of members on the one hand and external agencies on the other". We argued in the last chapter that the autonomous militancy of the workers boosted the autonomy of the union vis-à-vis state and management. But whose autonomy was boosted? Was it the autonomy of a democratically rooted organization of the workers or of a "labour aristocracy", a privileged core of functionaries within a state-sponsored labour regime?

The chapter closes with a discussion of the balance between bureaucratic and democratic features in the political organization of the union. While the democratic process was certainly constrained and subverted from both above and below, we see major advances in the direction of a culture of union democracy with significant consequences, we believe, also for the development of democratic forces generally. In conclusion, we draw attention to the dilemma of union democracy in the context of crisis and adjustment. Whose interests were served by the union at a time when it experienced massive redundancies? This raises another dimension of the "labour aristocracy" problematic: the conflict between those who remain employed, who have a voice in the union which protects their interests, and those outside, the redundant, without voice and organization.

2. CONTESTING ELECTIONS AT THE BRANCH LEVEL

Expressing dissent, organizing alternative opinions, challenging those in power, and contesting for office are all central features of a democratic process. The records of the Nigerian textile workers' union suggest that there was a lot of scope in this respect. Branch elections were held every second year and they were often intensely contested. Election times were periods of agitation arising from the campaigns of the various candidates and factions. The Lagos office complained in 1985 that the city's textile industry was "overwhelmed with tension arising from elections" (ZR, 1985). Allegations and counter-allegations were voiced and rival factions clashed, sometimes violently. Zonal officers had a busy time organizing the elections and guarding procedures. Normally the elections would engage the vast majority of the members of the branch. Occasional poor turn-outs were seen as evidence of a deliberate boycott, not of disinterest or lethargy. When, for instance, only 200 out of 1,000 workers turned out for the elections in Bagco in April 1985 something had gone wrong. Maybe the workers had been frightened by the "power struggles" that had been raging in the branch. Maybe they stayed away because they feared that union activity endangered job security. In the year before workers had felt so intimidated by expected retrenchments that they were said to have "resigned massively out of sheer fright" (ZR, 1984, 1985).

Elections brought about actual changes of leadership. The incumbents, that is, those in office, did not seem to have held an overriding advantage over those challenging them. While, as we shall see later, some used "dirty tricks" on their opponents, they themselves were exposed to the same thing, with or without management involvement. Reports comment on the outcome at the zonal and branch levels: "Almost all the former executives in the Ilupeju zone were voted out" (ZR, 1981); only few top branch officers in the

Igalu zone were "fortunate to retain their portfolios" (ZR, 1985); in Supertex "all outgoing executives contested and lost" (ZR, 1988), and so on. At the National Delegates Conference in 1986, which we attended, the delegates, mostly branch executives themselves, fought unsuccessfully for a revision of the constitution allowing for elections every three, not every two years, to prolong somewhat their insecure tenure. On the other hand they successfully resisted a proposal from the national secretariat to further restrict the number of terms for which they could be elected.

There was not much security of tenure between elections either. The records contain evidence of frequent mid-term challenges, with opponents gathering the necessary signatures from workers to call emergency branch meetings, demanding the suspension of one or more of the branch executives and fresh elections. In Sunflag in 1982, such an emergency meeting threw out the whole exco which was accused of "inaccessibility, dictatorship and corruptly receiving 500 Naira (from management) to offer sacrifices to the God of Iron" (ZR in TGW, 1982). Depending on the seriousness of the allegations, zonal officers would intervene either to effectuate the demands or to appeal to the opposition to wait until regular election time. When the KTL workers demanded that the branch exco should be sacked for mismanaging the distribution of cloth, rice and palm oil, the exco was merely warned by the Zonal Officer, while the workers were "implored to maintain peace and act constitutionally" (KTL, Minutes of Joint Meeting, June 1984).

Over what issues was elected office contested? The basic one concerned the failure of the incumbents to "deliver"; they had not done "enough" for their members. They would be accused of being too slow or inefficient and for not standing up to management. The opposition, on the other hand, would be branded as irresponsible trouble makers likely to wreck the union. Both sides would seek support both from the national union and occasionally from management. To what extent did such polemics represent "ideological" differences? Or would differences in "radicalism" and "moderation" merely reflect whether one was in or out of office? Incumbents were certainly under pressure both from management and from the national union to behave constitutionally which would often make them appear less radical. The opponents, on the other hand, would feel more free to use non-constitutional methods to press home their points, strengthening their radical image. "Positive action", like strikes, go-slows, and demonstrations, would sometimes even be directed against branch leaders. The latter, in their turn, would often feel obliged to support militant shop-floor demands, even when pressed home by unconstitutional means, for fear of being out-radicalized by their rivals. Zonal Officers would try to dissuade them from pulling the union into battles which could not be won. The branch exco in Bhojsons, for instance, was warned of the consequences of supporting an illegal action by the workers who had been stirred up by a rival leader (ZR in TGW, 1982). A few years later, a group calling themselves the

"Revolutionists" alleged that the management had "backed the present branch exco and terminated a lot of workers" (ZR, 1985).

The step was not great from allegations of being too soft on management to suggestions of collusion and betrayal. In Bagco, the exco members did not dare to go to work because posters had been pasted up accusing them of collaboration and threatening their lives (ZR, 1985). The charges against the branch chairman in Five Stars illustrate the floating line between accommodation and collusion. 1) He had not protested management's suspension of workers found sleeping in the canteen; 2) he did not follow "first-come-last-out" in retrenching workers. Instead, "all those who contested elections against him were flushed out"; 3) he was "too arrogant and proud"; 4) he had participated in a course organized by management; 5) he had been promoted to the position of Industrial Relations Officer "in order to suppress the workers" (ZR, 1985).

While some allegations of collusion may have been spurious, zonal investigations often showed that they had a substantive basis. In Stretch Fibres in Port Harcourt it was revealed that branch minutes were regularly passed on to managements and that the branch vice chairman had "private invitations" to the General Manager's home where he was offered and accepted a "loan" of 1,000 Naira (Panel Report, August 1986). All the allegations would not necessarily originate with rival factions within the union but rather reflect the suspicions of the zonal officers against "difficult" branch leaders. In Texlon, the exco allegedly entered "into an understanding with the management", turning a "deaf ear to contrary suggestions and opinions" (ZR, 1988). The Specomill branch leaders were said to be "unprogressive and nonchalant" and to have "always taken management directives" (ZR, 1989).

The extreme turbulence in the industry caused by successive crises and drastic changes of economic policy was a particular cause of strain on the integrity of union officers at all levels, especially when it came to negotiating over the number of workers to go and the level of compensation at times of compulsory leave. The uncertainties of the situation necessitated personal judgments that no doubt opened up for dubious relationships. A.B. Dania, the senior Lagos officer, complained that retrenchments and compulsory leave had led to "complicity and blackmail" and to the "treacherous" behaviour of some committee members who held "separate meetings with managements" (Lagos, ZR 1984). Although such relations were not necessarily corrupt, the context of crisis provided fertile ground for the animated divisions and allegations that characterized branch electoral politics.

3. FACTIONALISM AND THE SUBVERSION OF THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS

Could a democratic process at the branch level be sustained in the face of such strains and tensions? There were certainly major hurdles, due to the violence of factional divisions, the difficulties of maintaining mutually acceptable rules of contest, and the subversion of the process by management. A basic problem was getting both sides in a contest to accept defeat. There was much evidence of both losers and victors being prepared to use foul means against each other. A report from the large General Cotton Mills in Onitsha was full of alarm. The branch secretary lamented that the defeated former exco had established a subversive "Workers Solidarity Front" that "lends money to needy workers who first have to swear that they will vote for them in the next union elections". They had heaped "a bundle of juju medicine" in the union office, causing an officer to have a car accident and his house visited by a snake on that very day (report from J.C.Okonkwo, Secretary GCM Branch to GS, Kaduna 30 July 1984). Fresh elections could not be held, despite concerted attempts by the secretariat. The factions could not even agree on the venue for the elections. While there were "no physical clashes as in the past", both factions were said to use "all tricks and intrigues". Elections were finally held but the problem persisted. The opposition which was narrowly defeated, refused to accept the result and walked out. The case was even taken to court but reconciliation failed. "Both parties stick stubbornly to their positions" (ZR, 1984, 1985).

Factions that lost elections were often seen as a principle source of unrest, making life difficult both for the new exco and for management. In Woollen and Synthetics (Kuratex), the defeated faction was claimed to have instigated a series of work-to-rule actions (ZR, 1983). This opened up for collaboration between management and branch leaders in victimizing opponents. A similar case was discussed at the 1986 national delegates conference in Kaduna: a former branch chairman of Bagco and other former exco members had been dismissed on "trumped up charges" after a deal had been struck between management and the new exco (GS Report, 1986:29–30). Managements and branch excos, however, did not necessarily agree on who were the trouble makers. In the GCM case just quoted, the union branch secretary was equally anxious to "expel the ring leaders" and have their jobs terminated, "if possible". But the problem in this case was that management was "solidly behind" those making trouble for the branch leaders (Okonkwo's 1984 report, as above).

Management intervention was a major source of subversion of the democratic process, but not necessarily on its own. Managers certainly held strong views about which union leaders were "reasonable" and "responsible" and who were not and they offered support for or opposition to factions and individuals. The union expected that management would try to play a game of divide and rule. If the branch was solidly behind its leaders and if the leaders were united among themselves there was little that management could do in getting at individual, "undesirable" leaders. This point was emphasized when cases of victimization were discussed at the 1986 delegates conference.

But the cracks were there and they could be exploited. The real source of subversion therefore was not so much management intervention alone as the way it fed into factional victimization. An "ugly incident" of this type happened in Arewa in 1989 where the branch exco had taken advantage of an unauthorized industrial action and helped management to identify fifteen "ringleaders" to be terminated. The ones they picked were those seen as leading the opposition against them on the shop-floor. The sacked workers took their case to the national union which queried both management and exco. The latter denied all knowledge of the matter but the General Manager said that the branch leaders had "insisted" that the workers should be sacked. In this case, the story had a happy ending. The workers were not only reinstated but contested elections—and won! (Umaru, interview 1990).

Westex (Western Textiles) had a long record of management involvement in factional victimization. At one point the branch chairman was said to have collaborated with management in terminating the branch secretary and workers who were accused of being the ring leaders of a "sabotage plan". As one was also a zonal vice chairman, the national union strongly intervened to have them reinstated. Management resisted but was forced to give in (ZR, 1981). On another occasion, exco members connived with management in terminating workers who had contested elections against them. The contest was bitter. Both management and workers were "troublesome and controversial", according to the zonal officer, who spent three nights in a police cell together with a group of arrested workers during the election fracas. At one point, the officer had appealed to the police to protect the meeting to enable elections to be held. But they had refused, forcing the meeting to disperse instead, arresting and charging workers with unlawful assembly (ZR, 1985).

In the report from Onitsha which opened this section, factional antagonism in the branch was said to have "degenerated into a tribal battle" (GCM, ZR 1985). To what extent did divisions in the union take ethnic, communal, religious or regional form? The question is bound to be posed, especially in view of the role of "sectionalism" in dominant perceptions of Nigerian politics. The striking feature is therefore the virtual absence of similar references in the union records. Too much cannot be made out of such "negative" evidence, yet, Nigerian society is not known for being reticent over such issues. On the contrary, there is a readiness to give communal interpretations to conflicts, leading to allegations and counter-allegations that are widely publicized. Would there be any reason why zonal officers should systematically refrain from reporting communal conflicts? They might perhaps be less than outspoken in cases were they themselves were allied to the dominant "section" in a particular conflict. But if there were such cases, we should expect opposite situations as well, cases where officers had an interest in reporting sectionalist scheming among the workers. Similarly, if union officials themselves were seen as sectionally partisan would it not have been used against them by those contesting union power, both from within and outside the union?

The absence of evidence to the contrary is not conclusive. Some embarrassing sectionalist evidence may even have been ignored by the reporting officers in order not to offend the ideological sentiments of the union leadership which had a proud, non-sectionalist perception of its own politics. The latter was demonstrated, for instance, when a proposal for "zoning" of officials was rejected at the 1983 National Delegates Conference (see Proceedings) or when some "Lagos" resentments against "Kaduna" domination were dismissed at the 1986 Conference (our notes). The commitment was also invoked by a group of workers protesting the "mischievous game of sectionalism" when Ghanians were made the first to be retrenched at KTL and the union came out in their support (letter to GM, KTL, cc Union GS, 1980).

Even if it cannot be ruled out that there was more sectionalist politics in the textile union than the records suggest, the extent to which it was prevented from penetrating the public discourse over power and democracy was in itself a remarkable achievement. It reflects, in our view, a tendency within the Nigerian labour movement towards transcending the ideologies of sectionalism prevailing in national politics, a tendency rooted in the objective conditions of integration in industrial work-places but also consciously fostered by the union in its effort to build union strength, protecting itself from the potential divisive strategies of state and capital. We may recall in this context the failure of attempts in the 1960s to organize unions on regional-sectional lines for political purposes, as in the case of the "Northern Progressive Front" of Ibrahim Nock (Ananaba, 1969; Cohen, 1974; cf. Olaleke, interview 1987). The way in which "ethnic tolerance" was promoted in the experience of industrial labour was also demonstrated in Lubeck's study of the Kano working class (Lubeck, 1986:302).

4. BUREAUCRATIC INTERVENTION IN THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS

The national union had the constitutional right to intervene when there was a breakdown at the branch level, either between the leadership and the members, or within the leadership, or when the latter were suspected of "anti-union activities" such as colluding with management and victimizing opponents. The national union would mediate in such internal conflicts and advise erring leaders and call them to order. It could suspend branch excos, appoint caretaker committees, and arrange for fresh elections. The initiative would in most cases come from within the branch. An aggrieved party would call for assistance from the national union which at times would receive "a flood of petitions", as in Enpee where petitioners were taking sides for or against the chairman and the vice chairman who were in conflict (ZR, 1989). In that case, the national union was able to settle the issues and reestablish the peace which had been seriously threatened by the "show of power" of the contending parties.

What were the implications of such interventions for the democratic process? Our general impression is that they were largely supportive. Most national leaders seem to have taken it to be the business of the union to uphold constitutionality and protect the process against subversion. Checks and balances in the organization constrained individual officers from diverging too much from the general norms in this respect. Union intervention, however, was not itself immune to the influences of factionalism. Just like managements, union officials had their own notions of good and bad branch leaders and their intervention in the democratic process was not unaffected by their own partisanship.

There was a basic tendency to protect elected branch officials from "unnecessary" disruption and challenge between elections even when they had committed offences. Especially if these were considered minor, reconciliation would be sought and opponents urged to bide their time until the next regular election. When, for instance, a group of workers in the CAP ginnery in Zaria passed a vote of no confidence in the exco and nominated themselves as caretakers the national union waded in to reestablish "constituted authority". The union officer in charge reported that he had been able "to return the bona fide exco members to office" and that the quarrel had been settled. He had strongly warned the chairman who had been accused of "dictatorship and acts of terrorism" to stop his "one-man show" (ZR, 1988). A zonal officer reported in conjunction with a similar incident at Horizon Fibres that the protesting workers had been "advised to reserve their intentions until the branch elections later in the year". The workers suspected financial mismanagement and demanded both a financial report and that the exco should be removed. But the zonal office was not prepared to do this. "We are trying to avoid setting a precedence whereby members could cry out any time for financial reports and subsequent removal of the incumbents" (ZR, 1990).

Occasionally, the defence of branch leaders meant protecting them against victimization by angry branch members. The General Secretary's report to the 1986 Delegates Conference made reference to an instance when the branch chairman of Afprint, who was accused of wrong-doings, had been chased out of the factory and not allowed to return. "As a democratic organization, the Union recognizes the right of workers to challenge any act of wrong-doings by their leaders. But ... the union will view it as extraordinary abuse of democratic privilege if the removal of an officer from

Union duties implies his losing his employment and means of daily bread" (GS Report, 1986:26–27). The Afprint case is further discussed below.

The defence of "due process" was often reinforced by a natural bias in favour of the incumbents. The latter were more often than not people with whom national officers had learned to work, who had attended meetings and training programmes organized by the union, and who may have been socialized into a common culture of union professionalism. The shop-floor contenders, on the other hand, apart from being less known, were more likely to engage in rough action and to be critical of the national union which they, rightly or wrongly, would see as supporting those in office at that time. If the contenders succeeded in ousting the incumbents a new situation would arise, usually leading to mutual accommodation in recognition of the new realities on the ground. On occasion tensions would persist.

Much depended on the way in which the zonal officers judged the qualities of incumbents as well as contenders, if they were "reasonable", "cooperative", "efficient", and "understanding". In the Enpee case just referred to the branch leaders were said to be "very active in protecting the interests of the workers". The national union upheld their authority despite the accusations of mismanaging branch funds and the protests among the workers against the suspension of the branch vice chairman who had spearheaded the criticism. The national union called in auditors to investigate the allegations and as "only little misappropriation was discovered" arrangements were made for the refund. Both sides agreed to settle the issue after the offenders had been reprimanded (Shittu, interview 1990).

National union officials, however, were neither free to follow their own personal preferences, nor to impose what they considered to be the "proper", constitutional solution. The scope for intervention was conditioned by the balance of forces on the ground, including the following which contending parties could muster among the workers and their alliances with management. Occasionally, the union came up against stiff resistance. Alhaji Shittu told us how the branch exco in Westex locked out the national union for six months with support of the management. The exco had posted workers at the gate with knives. They were given money for drinks and cigarettes and instructed to prevent union officials from entering the factory. In this case, a majority within the exco had colluded with management to sack forty workers, including the branch chairman, who were victimized for leading an industrial action. Management refused to listen to the national union, claiming that it had been given the go ahead from the branch. When the exco was told by the national union that it risked being dissolved for engaging in anti-union activity they were confidently defiant: You try it! You go ahead! The workers were divided. While the union managed to organize fresh elections, the defiant leaders were still returned by a majority of two votes. But this was not a democratic verdict, according to Shittu, because the department of the factory where the local opposition had its main following was closed down by management and the workers were sent home on compulsory leave just before the elections were to be held. Two years later, in the next election, however, Shittu noted with satisfaction that the "anti-union" exco was flushed out (Shittu, interview 1987).

The line between legitimate disciplining of anti-union branch executives and factional victimization was not always easy to draw. In the Westex case, the members of the old, "anti-union", exco were all fired "on the basis of individual offences" after there had been a shake up in management. The General Manager who had protected them in the past was himself sacked for defrauding the company (Shittu, interview 1987). Their termination did not give rise to any protest either from the new branch leaders or the national union.

The national union would find it difficult not to be partisan having once been pulled into such local struggles. Its interventions were bound to legitimize some factional positions and de-legitimize others. On occasion, it would find itself on the same side as management and with less difficulty in dealing with "anti-union" elements. But with anti-unionism at the branch level more commonly associated with collusion with management, it was more likely that the national union would find itself, as in the Westex case, engaged in mobilizing support among the workers, defending the democratic process, against branch leaders who had management on their side.

The notion of anti-union activity was necessarily a floating one. How much would have to be embezzled by a branch leader, for instance, for it to be anti-union enough to warrant suspension and fresh elections? While the issue would normally be discussed at a general meeting of the branch called by the zonal officer, the line pushed by him would be influential. Yet, his ability to direct the meeting would be conditioned by workers' sentiments and factional balances. Branches would vary greatly in terms of the politicization and factionalization of their members. In some, the national union could effectuate the removal of erring branch excos without meeting much resistance from the shop-floor. In others, it would be like poking into a bees' nest with a stick. Afprint was such a branch.

5. UNION OPPOSITION: THE AFPRINT CASE

In some factories, the intervention by the national union met stiff resistance from branch leaders with sufficient shop-floor support to ignore its directives. Afprint, the large Lagos company with one factory in Isolo and one in Ignamu, was considered "notoriously troublesome". Zonal Reports are much concerned with workers' aggressiveness. Management insisted on one occasion on the renegotiation of an agreement which it claimed had been signed under duress. The workers had carried out "latently violent picketing" outside the hall where the negotiations took place, "singing provocative songs as well as shouting intermittently". As it grew dark and picketing became more intense, management wanted to adjourn, but the union—this is the management's version—pressed for continuation because "the workers had set their minds" and "no one was safe to leave without producing an agreement" (Afprint Management to Union, 22 May 1990). On another occasion, when management proposed a change in the procedure for reviewing annual increments, the union had no objections but asked for caution "in view of the tendency of some sections of the workers to misinterpret genuine and good intentions" (minutes of union/management meeting, 15 December 1992). The union felt as intimidated as management. It was under pressure from the agitated workers to deliver, or "face the music". Physical harassment of union officials was not uncommon.

A crisis precipitated by the bonus struggles in late 1986 demonstrates the precarious balance of forces at work. The events were documented at some length in a report submitted by Alahji Shittu (1987), the most senior union full-timer in Lagos. Workers were misled about "what was really signed with our staff and the branch exco on bonus". They were made to believe that the branch exco had been bought off by management and had defrauded the workers when allowing the bonus to be cut from 190 to 150 per cent, that is, to a payment equivalent to the basic wage for one month and a half. The rumours led to serious factional fighting, including the use of dangerous weapons (chemicals/acid). The exco members and some of their supporters were chased out by the workers. Management did nothing to assist in getting them back, nor did they explain to the workers what was actually agreed during the bonus negotiations. In Shittu's view, management was a "complete accomplice". When pressurized by the national union, it agreed to help in reinstating them if the union, in return, arranged for the election of a new committee. The elections brought into power the faction hostile to those who had been chased out and neither the new exco, nor the management did anything to facilitate their return. In April 1987, Alahji Shittu was instructed by the Central Working Committee to "exercise all possible efforts", including calling on the police for protection. He was mandated to write to management and "condemn in strong terms its lukewarm attitude" while simultaneously making the workers realize that management has the "absolute prerogative to hire and fire" and that "no group of workers has the right to carry out that power for the management either peacefully or forcefully".

The new exco remained unco-operative, although told of the serious implications, including those for their own future security: some other group of workers may well decide to chase them out in the same illegal manner! The branch chairman was unimpressed. He disputed the right of the national union to defend workers who had "run away abandoning their duties", having offended their fellow workers, including spraying chemicals on some. From the point of view of the branch, they should be considered "lost". They were not wanted back and "unless the workers agreed, they (the branch leaders) will not agree”. He told the officers of the national union that if they wanted to change the minds of the workers they would have to popularize the union by negotiating some notable new benefits (cf. ZR, 1987). The branch chairman was willing to let national officers speak to the workers to see if they could convince them to change their minds, but the branch leaders were not going to be part of this.

Would it be possible for the national officers to address the workers on their own? Shittu did not think so. Unless the branch leaders were committed to a joint position, they would merely incite the workers in advance and sabotage the attempt. This was also, according to Shittu, what happened after the abortive meeting was adjourned. The branch leaders went to “raise the temper of the workers against the National Union”, stationing their own guards at the gate to monitor the movements of the national officers.

Having failed to get the support of the branch exco, the national union went back to management, this time with the support of the Executive Director of the Textile Employers’ Association, Victor Eburajolo. Although accused of “aiding and abetting disobedience to the National Union”, the manager claimed that there was nothing the company could do to overcome the resistance of the workers. The Ministry of Labour intervened. The Assistant Director of Labour wanted the defiant exco to be called and addressed “seriously and strongly” in the presence of the police and the State Security Service (SSS) so as to bring home to them the grave consequences of continued obstruction. They should all go to the factory and talk to the workers with full police protection. The national union disagreed: police protection would be of no use if the workers were hostile. It was instead agreed to invite the shop-stewards (“sectional representatives”) along with the exco to a new meeting. “The Government could not tolerate a situation where workers usurp management functions and started to sack themselves from employment which does not belong to them.”

The workers were unrepentant and “so rude to the Government officials that they were asked to go out”. Their continued defiance of "constituted authority” at all levels was so scandalous that the Ministry of Labour decided to force them to submission. It instructed management to arrange “with immediate effect” to bring the outside workers back under police protection. The SSS would be stationed in the company “to monitor the unruly activities”. Before the order was executed, however, the representative of the Employers’ Association developed cold feet, possibly sensing the dangers of a major police operation. He shifted to a line of appeasement. The outside workers would be encouraged to collect their final pay which could be topped up with “heavy compensation”. The proposal was rejected by the workers concerned and led to more rounds of ineffectual meetings with management and ministry officials.

In the end, the national leadership of the union arrived at the conclusion that “neither the Ministry of Labour nor the Police could help us find solutions to our problems" and decided to sue for peace directly with the Afprint leaders, despite the fact that these had been suspended by the Zonal Council. The national union had been defeated and humiliated by the Afprint branch. It had failed to protect duly elected branch leaders from victimization by the workers and their successors. The new branch leaders had apparently sufficient militant support among the workers to defy not only the national union but also the Ministry of Labour and the police. Why was management unwilling to take action against the branch exco, despite the prodding of both the Employers' Association and the state? It was probably more because they feared confronting the workers than out of deliberate collusion with the branch leaders. While management may have had a preference for dealing with local leaders, as a way of undercutting the power and impositions of the national union, it also needed the latter to enforce discipline in a volatile work force. The inaction of the management may therefore be interpreted as opportunism, staying "neutral" while the opposing forces on the ground sorted themselves out.

Union intervention in the Afprint crisis was, at one level, about upholding the democratic process, in defence of constitutionally elected branch leaders who had been chased out without due process. At another level, the conflict was a contest between the bureaucracy of the national union and an alternative set of popularly elected branch leaders, claiming to execute the will of the workers and insisting on running the branch without the interference of the union bureaucrats. Each side claimed a different source of legitimacy. While the branch leaders fell back on "popular will", union leaders invoked the constitution.

6. HIERARCHY VERSUS DEMOCRACY

The tension between rule by union bureaucrats and participatory democracy was real. It may be argued that a genuine scope existed for contesting power at the factory level, despite the occasional subversion of the democratic process from both within and outside the branch. But how much was this worth in the context of the general organization of power in the union? Unions, as other hierarchical political institutions, may allow for intense competition at a level which only marginally influences overall power relations in the organization. How important was branch democracy for the distribution of power within the Nigerian textile union? At the level of the constitution, power was subordinated to democratic processes at all levels. Union bureaucrats were appointed and dismissed by the elected representatives of the workers. They were accountable, on a continuous basis, to the elected leadership and to the National Delegates Conference. The power exercised by union bureaucrats over the branch excos was similarly subjected to democratic control. Their interventions were justified in terms of the need to ensure that branch leaders kept to rules that were democratically constituted. When they suspended an elected officer it was merely temporary and subject to the confirmation by a democratically constituted forum.

Democratic constitutions, however, do not necessarily reflect the actual balance of power and bureaucracies wield more autonomous power than is reflected in such texts. This is true of organizations generally and not specific to trade unions or to the Nigerian textile union. Although bureaucracies are collectively accountable to democratic structures, individual bureaucrats are only accountable to their superiors. This means that they tend to be insulated and protected from membership pressures and that a lot of power is concentrated in the central bureaucratic leadership. While elected leaders have the formal, constitutional right to control the bureaucrats, they would have little direct control over those whose operations affect them most immediately. The bureaucrats, on the other hand, would have direct influence on the elected leaders through their control over funds, expertise and access to other resources which could be made available or withheld depending on the judgement of the bureaucrats. In the Afprint case, for instance, the branch exco wanted the national union to "negotiate something" that would popularize them with the workers.

The bureaucrats have access to both sticks and carrots and control can be maintained by a combination of disciplinary measures and rewards. Branch leaders who are trusted could probably count on greater support when negotiating favours from management, including time-off and funding for union work and participation in workshops and courses. Elected officers from zonal councils upwards would be paid allowances that depended on the approval of the full-timers, even if formally decided by elected bodies. Our general impression is that the union bureaucracy took a restrictive position while elected cadres sought to vote more benefits for themselves. This was the case, for instance, when the 1986 National Delegates Conference debated to what extent senior elected officers would be entitled to official cars. Notwithstanding the constraining role of the bureaucracy in this case, it underscored the dependence of the elected officers on the full-timers.

Frequent breaches of union "codes of conduct" made branch excos vulnerable to bureaucratic intervention. The mismanagement of branch funds, for instance, left much leeway for personal discretion on the part of the supervising officers when judging the seriousness of the case. The 1986 National Delegates Conference hotly debated such issues. Delegates (branch leaders) pleaded, for instance, for leniency with those who had mismanaged cooperative sales while the National Secretariat took a tough line, warning that standards must be set and discipline upheld. The process of "setting standards" and enforcing "codes of conduct" was essentially a process of exercising bureaucratic powers over elected representatives. The line between legitimate discipline and victimization was not always clear. Alhaji Shittu recalled one occasion when discontented members had been lying about him, spreading rumours that he had received "fine furniture, big beds and chairs, a Grundig TV and Radio" from management when negotiating an agreement. "I could have sacked those who spread the rumour", he said, "but I have never sacked anybody" (Shittu, interview, 1987). His way of putting it suggests, however, that he felt that he had the right to do so if he had wished it.

Tensions between democratic and bureaucratic features exist in all organizations. The extent to which it becomes a problem—an area of struggle—depends on the substantive issues at stake. In some organizations members seem quite content to allow the bureaucracy to rule with only a modest input of formal democratic sanction by elected representatives. The 1986 National Delegates Conference which we attended gave no evidence of any significant resentment on the side of the delegates against the union bureaucracy and its mode of wielding power. If anything, there was a move from the floor to expand the disciplinary powers of the National Secretariat. Yet, the evidence from the branch level suggests that the conflicts were many and that the problem of "who controls whom" was real.

The views of branch activists, in and out of office, on what should and could be done often differed strongly from those of the union bureaucrats. The annual "bonus convulsion" in Lagos was a case in point where branches and officials clashed over targets and strategy as well as over how to evaluate achievements. Dania complained that "almost all the comrades underwent a terrible period considering the general attitude of our members (anger, disappointment) towards the end of year bonus". He claimed that on that occasion the tensions between the union and the workers were so intense that it was not possible to hold general meetings in many branches (ZR, 1984).

Divisions over strategy (what to demand from the employers) were enhanced by crises and policy changes. What was "realistic" and what was a "sell-out" in such a volatile situation was not easy to judge either from the shop-floor or from the union office. Zonal reports speak of branch leaders "who want things done their own way" and "want equal treatment like any other textile company" despite the fact that their own company was on the verge of collapse (Nigerian Fishing Net, ZR 1988). Elsewhere, workers and local leaders opposed attempts by the national union to enforce collective agreements because they feared that it would lead to closure and retrenchment, as, for instance, in the case of Oduatex reported below. The conflict of interest was real. Enforcing collective agreements was a general union objective and not an issue to be decided from case to case. If one company was allowed to flout agreements it would undermine the chances of enforcing it elsewhere. Workers in an individual company, on the other hand, might strongly disagree out of a legitimate concern with their own job security. The questions of who had the right to decide what, when, and how went beyond rules of conduct and constitutional procedure. They were linked to conflicts of interests, reflecting differences not only in judgement and choice of strategy but also in objective conditions relating both to the uneven development of the industry and position within the structures of union power.

7. "LABOUR ARISTOCRACY"?

Arguments on union power and democracy often centre on the notion of a "labour aristocracy". It suggests that not only are union bureaucrats powerful but power is used to further their own interests as a privileged elite in conflict with the interests of the members. The conflict of interest within the organization is reinforced from outside by the open or concealed alliances between union leaders and state and capital. Theories of labour aristocracy are used to explain why, for instance, unions are more accommodating and less radical than they are expected to be. Accommodation, it is argued, helps in cementing the privileged positions of the labour bureaucrats and divorcing their interests from the common workers. The argument is premised on a notion that internal democratic control does not work or is too weak to challenge the power of the bureaucracy as reinforced from outside. This is a continuing preoccupation in the discussion of unions and organized interests everywhere, with roots in a "Leninist" critique of "social democracy" and "class compromise". The discussion has been extended to various African post-colonial contexts, adding a further dimension, also with some Leninist roots, which suggests that the African wage-earners generally may be considered a privileged class, a "labour aristocracy" (Bottomore, 1983; Adesina, 1994; Waterman, 1983; Parpart, 1982).

What sense does such an argument make in trying to understand power relations in the Nigerian textile union? The issue was raised in the 1986 National Delegates Conference, not by a delegate, but by a guest speaker, Brown Audu from the Chemical Workers' Union. He warned of labour leaders becoming labour aristocrats, paying themselves high salaries, acquiring fancy life-styles and privileges, and becoming divorced from the common workers and insensitive to their demands. The General Secretary responded in a personal manner. It is true, he said, that he was doing well, had a fine car, fine suit etc. But he felt that workers would not object to that as long as he was looking after their interests effectively (our conference notes). Commenting on an early report written by us on the subject the GS added that he felt that it was a good thing that union officers were well paid because it would reduce temptations to make money corruptly. They would also be more respected in negotiations with management and the state if they were paid in line with their authority and status. In any case, leaders were not free to help themselves. Their remunerations were decided by the National Executive Council and the general pattern was set with direct government involvement, drawing on civil service norms, at the time of the formation of the new amalgamated industrial unions. The salary of the GS, for instance, was made equivalent to that of a top executive in a ministry. With respect to illegitimate enrichment, Oshiomhole felt that the record of the textile union contrasted with those of other unions (interview 1987).

The subsequent fraud involving two top leaders, the National President and the Financial Controller, as reported above in Chapter 7.5, may have tainted the reputation of the union in this respect, although the manner in which it was exposed and the culprits disciplined may have compared favourably to practices elsewhere. The evidence from this and other less dramatic cases suggests that bureaucratic discipline was indeed taken seriously which does not exclude, of course, the possibility of other malpractices escaping exposure, either because they were not detected or because they were covered up.

Yet, neither the wage differentials between ordinary workers and top union leaders nor individual cases of corruption and misappropriation would be sufficient to suggest that the Nigerian textile union was ruled by a labour aristocracy. One would also have to demonstrate that such bureaucratic self-enrichment was part of a more general failure of the union to look after the workers' interests and that this was caused by the external alliances of the labour leaders which allowed them to escape accountability. Our discussion in Chapter 3 suggests that the textile union was notably effective when bargaining with the employers, in addition to being a driving force behind the 1990 minimum wage negotiations with the state. The performance was also generally believed to compare favourably to that of other industrial unions.

How was the performance affected by the 1978 Labour Pact? Was this not a potential breeding ground for "labour aristocrats"? The compulsory check-off system gave the union a capacity to hire and pay permanent staff on a scale which was unthinkable in the pre-1978 situation. The evidence does not suggest, however, that statutory support for collective bargaining held back the wages and benefits of the workers. On the contrary, national agreements served rather as the floor, the common minimum, on which branches were able to improve on the basis of their own bargaining position and with the direct assistance of the zonal officers. Moreover, there is much evidence of employers being forced, thanks to the monopoly powers of the national union, to grant benefits to workers that most individual company unions were unlikely to have achieved on their own. The external alliance" with the state as implicit in the 1978 Labour Pact therefore enhanced rather than detracted from the capacity of the union to serve the interests of the workers. Rather than being evidence of a labour aristocracy, the emergence of a powerful (and well-paid) union bureaucracy was an essential part of that capacity.

Of greater relevance, however, is the aspect of the labour aristocracy argument which suggests that external alliances may undercut internal democratic processes, including the responsiveness of labour leaders to shop-floor aspirations. The 1978 Labour Pact granted the union the exclusive right to organize the workers, a monopoly which could also be used for purposes of control. Listen, for instance, to Alhaji Shittu when, at the height of the Afprint crisis reported above, he reminded the defiant branch leaders that "any attempt to disobey the National Union, the Central Working Committee and its Secretariat is sabotage and disobedience to the Federal Government that certificated the union to operate, defend and control its members" (Shittu Report, 1987). While the Afprint leaders were unimpressed, the invocation of the authority of the state is likely to have further alienated them and their followers from the union, making them even more anxious to assert their autonomy. Many would remember when Afprint had its own house union, which had played an independent and leading role in Lagos union politics.

Were the old independent house unions more responsive to the workers? Raphael Egbe, a senior union official with his own background in Afprint, felt that there was more mutual understanding between unionists and workers in those days. He spoke of cracks in the relationship after 1978 and blamed it on the autocracy of the branch leaders, too much manoeuvering, and less than fully democratic elections (interview 1987). While these were the reflections of an individual unionist based on his own experiences they raise a general question: Had the union lost in responsiveness while enhancing its capacity to look after the workers' interests? Had it become more efficient but less democratic?

It seems to have worked both ways. On the one hand, we have seen how bureaucratic intervention served to defend democratic processes, constraining, for instance, the intimidation of opponents and collusion with management, thereby widening the scope for organized dissent and contestation. In this respect, organizational monopoly and bureaucratic power were supportive of union democracy. On the other hand, union bureaucrats may in many instances have contributed to insulating not only the branch leaders but also themselves from the moods and sentiments of the workers when protecting the branch leaders from the rough and ready "justice" of angry members, a form of accountability that may have had freer rein in the pre-amalgamation period.

The Afprint case, however, also suggests the limitation of bureaucratic power in enforcing its own "constitutional" solutions on a defiant branch. It did not help that Shittu invoked the authority of the state. Even state intervention was defied. State, union, and employers, all ended up realizing that the least damage would be done to their respective interests by seeking accommodation with the opposing of forces on the shop-floor. While this may be seen as a defeat for democratic constitutionalism it demonstrated the autonomy of shop-floor power which had a democratic potential of its own, reducing the scope for the union being hijacked by the bureaucracy for purposes contrary to the interests of the workers.

8. CONCLUSIONS: WHOSE UNION?

The organization of power in the Nigerian textile union had strong bureaucratic features, reinforced by the organizational monopoly awarded it by the 1978 Labour Pact. There is no evidence, however, that this external support caused the subordination of the union to the agenda of either state or capital in such a way as to significantly undermine the pursuit of objectives autonomously defined within the union. The autonomy of the union was sustained by internal political processes with a significant democratic content, largely inherited from the pre-amalgamation period, but reinforced by a commitment to constitutionalism within the new union structures. This commitment was kept on course by a continuous challenge from the autonomous activism of the workers. It prevented the process from being emptied of its democratic content and obliged the union bureaucracy to uphold democratic constitutionalism in order to defend itself against the unpredictably volatile and often violent implications of this activism.

Union power was contested from below too. A zonal officer complained that he was "blackmailed and intimidated" unless he "toed the line" of the branch activists "whether right or wrong" (Nigerian Weaving & Processing, ZR 1988). In another company the workers were said to be of "the type that would not be grateful with whatever the union achieves". They would not be content to see the sweat on the foreheads of their leaders. They wanted to see blood! (KTIL, ZR 1986). But the most common complaint was that branches ignored the national union and embarked on their own industrial actions "without even consulting" it (Igalu and Ikeja, ZR 1988).

The main challenge to bureaucratic power came from the militants who felt that the union was not doing enough. Our discussion of power and democracy in the union cannot be concluded, however, without also mentioning those whose worries were the opposite; that the union was demanding too much from the employers, thereby threatening their jobs. The textile industry lost about one-third of its work force during the turbulent first half of the 1980s. What should the union do? Minimize retrenchments at all costs, even if it meant allowing a "free fall" in real wages? Or should it fight to maintain a living wage, even if it meant accepting accelerated retrenchments in companies unwilling or incapable of paying? The strategies of a particular group of workers would depend on their position in the industry, the strength of their company, technically, financially, and market-wise, as well as on their understanding of managerial competence and intentions.

The power to influence union strategy, however, was not evenly distributed between the branches. We noted in the first part of the study that big, integrated firms with transnational ownership and management adjusted more easily to economic crises and new economic policies, while disruptions of production and complete closures were more common in small indigenous firms and in the older state controlled companies. Union branches in big companies had a greater share of union power and their militancy was primarily in support of wage demands. Most of the union leaders, elected as well as officials, had their background in the big firms. The numerous small branches, on the other hand, were not only more vulnerable to closures but were also less effectively represented. The balance of forces was further tilted to their disadvantage at the negotiating table as the Textile Employers' Association tended to be dominated by the big companies that were more prepared to absorb wage demands than the smaller firms, many of which were not even members of the association. Managements in the latter would often, under threats of closure, try to make the local union accept something less than agreed nationally while the national union, in its turn, would insist that the collective agreements should be upheld, even if it led to further retrenchment (cf. Nelco, ZR 1982). Oduatex, the old state-owned company of the former Western Region, had a long record of such conflicts where workers pleaded for the non-implementation of collective agreements because they feared that they would be retrenched (ZR, 1985, 1987, 1988). In 1987 they claimed that "there is no other industry in their locality that can employ them and as such we should allow the management to pay old allowances for one or two years provided nobody will be sacked". On this occasion, the union managed to avoid retrenchment but a year later it could not. Instructions were explicit: "Push for implementation even if some workers were to be retrenched" (ZR, 1988).

The conflict between wage demands and job security, between those retaining their jobs, and those losing theirs, between weak and strong branches, faced the union with a dilemma which was difficult to resolve democratically. It raises issues that go beyond collective bargaining and which relate to the role of the union in the restructuring of the textile industry and in national development policies, issues to which we shall return in the concluding chapter. First, however, we need to address the dramatic events of May 1993 which raised question marks about our findings and conclusions so far.

Chapter 12

Workers against the Union

1. TEXTILE WORKERS' HOUSE ON FIRE!

Our studies of the Nigerian textile union commenced in the mid-1980s and our visits to the union continued on an annual or bi-annual basis until the early 1990s. By 1992 we had completed the field work and processed much of the data relating to the union and by 1993 we were ready to submit chapters for comments to those who had been central in providing the information on the union side. When we arrived at the Secretariat in Lagos in September that year we met a union in deep crisis, having just experienced a major workers' rebellion, with offices burnt and the lives of leaders threatened. The events raised serious questions about the validity of some of our conclusions. This is what happened.

On Friday 21 May 1993, the Textile Workers' House in Kaduna, the headquarters of the union, was sacked by a vast crowd of angry men. Staff were beaten up, the building was pelted with stones, vehicles, furniture and office equipment were wrecked and what could burn was burnt. The proud symbol of union progress and power was put to the torch. The demonstrations had begun in Unitex. Three members of the branch exco reported early Friday morning to headquarters that the workers refused to work. A general meeting had been called by the union the day before to report on the recently concluded agreement with the employers for a major wage increase. Oshiomhole, the General-Secretary, was himself to have addressed the Unitex workers. They waited, but he did not turn up. The rumour went around that the union had cheated the workers and that this was why the GS did not dare to show his face! According to the rumours, the employers had in fact conceded as much as 52 per cent but only 35 per cent was passed on to the workers by the union officials who had pocketed the difference. It was a terrible misunderstanding, said the union. The GS had not been informed about the meeting which had been scheduled at Unitex. In the past, only the workers in the mother company, UNTL, used to be addressed on such occasions. He had gone to Lagos for another meeting. Officials hurried to the factory to explain but when reaching Kakuri, the industrial area, the workers were already out in the streets. At that point there was no easy way to explain anything. These were not just Unitex workers. Those on the war path had mobilized their brothers from other branches. A rapidly growing crowd was now moving from plant to plant, calling out workers, breaking fences when locked, beating up guards and branch officials who tried to resist the venture, causing a stampede and having the plants closed down. What were they up to? The union officials did not know. Certainly, the level of violence came as a total surprise, otherwise the union officials would have left the place before the rioters arrived.

More was to come. Two days later, Lagos was ready for action, spearheaded by militants at Afprint. In Kaduna, the union headquarters is on the outskirts of the industrial area and within easy reach of most of the big textile factories. The industrial locations of Lagos are dispersed over a wide distance from Apapa in the south to Ikeja in the north with some 30 km in between. The Afprint workers began mobilizing late at night in Isolo, marching from factory to factory. They covered most of the Isolo, Ilupeju and Ikeja industrial areas while Ikorodu Road and Apapa, the more outlying ones, were not affected, according to Alahji Shittu, the Senior Deputy GS. They reached the union secretariat in northern Ikeja in the morning. Some branches, like Nichemtex, refused to join, according to Dania, the other Senior Deputy GS, others were intimidated into joining, as in the case of Spintex. In many instances, factory managers sent the workers out in the street, locking the gates behind them in order to prevent damage, or as Dania also suggested, because they did not mind the workers messing up the national union. The first batch of workers caused only some light damage, mostly broken windows. As a second larger and more agitated crowd arrived the police were out in full force dispersing them with teargas (interviews with Bonniface, Dania, Shittu, John Bull, September 1993). The newspapers reported that the textile workers had gone on an indefinite strike, and that they demanded their 52 per cent: "We are armed with the original agreement", they claimed, which showed that they had been cheated (*Punch*, 25 May 1993).

Just as in Kaduna, the Lagos union officials were taken by surprise. The branch leaders had been informed of the content of the new agreement at a well-attended meeting in the secretariat earlier in the week. People had come with their pocket calculators because they were "better educated than in any other union", according to Dania. They expressed satisfaction with the negotiations. They had been told in advance that 25 per cent was the maximum targeted and they got 35!

Why did the workers believe the rumour-mongers? Why did they not check the facts or query their leaders before they went for their blood? The leaders were profoundly shaken and their ability to speak with authority on behalf of the workers in collective bargaining as well as in the sharpening conflict over structural adjustment policies and democratization at the national level was put in the balance. Is that what the rumour-mongers had set out to achieve? There were suspicions of the involvement of state security agents as well as the connivance of some key company managements. Were they out to destroy the union and its leadership? Were the interests of state security linked to the planned abortion of the June 12th presidential election by General Babangida and his clique? Was the aim to destabilize the union movement, or at least the faction most likely to resist another military imposition? Was it a spill-over from factional struggles within the leadership of the Nigeria Labour Congress? But even if there was an element of conspiracy from outside the union, why did the workers allow themselves to be turned into the willing tools of the conspirators? What was the nature of the workers' own grievances?

This is not a full inquiry into the "remote and distant causes" of the rebellion. We can only give tentative answers based on our own understanding of the nature of the organization and its mode of operation. On the May 1993 events we draw primarily on union sources, including official material like the special issue on the crisis of the union organ, *The Textile Workers,* (2:2, 1993), and interviews with senior staff. Union records on developments at the company level gave clues to the local context in which the crisis erupted. Were the events compatible with the notion of the emergence and consolidation of a union-based labour regime, the main thesis of our study? Even if this the case, what do the events add to our understanding of the nature of the regime? Do they throw further light on the questions ventilated intermittently throughout the study: Whose union was it? Whose interests did it serve? Or do they only raise fresh question marks?

2. THE WAGE STRUGGLES OF THE EARLY 1990s

The rebellion was sparked off by what was supposed to have happened at the negotiating table. How had the union performed? In early 1991, it successfully negotiated the implementation of the new minimum wage which the textile leadership had been instrumental in securing, politically, at the national level (cf. Chapter 3.7). The fiscal and monetary policies of the regime, however, were less than ever capable of providing the conditions necessary for preserving these wage gains. An attempted military coup in April 1990 (Orkar's coup), with its almost successful assault on the Dodowan Barracks, the junta headquarters, set the stage for a government spending spree in an attempt to buy political support. This was fuelled by a windfall of oil earnings brought by the Gulf War. The Pius Okigbo Panel inquiring into the affairs of the Central Bank of Nigeria in 1994 suggested that 12.2 billion US dollars disappeared into the special "dedicated accounts" (*West Africa*, 10–16 October 1994).

The rate of inflation reached some 30 per cent in the second half of 1991 and 50 in 1992, according to official figures summarized by the Manufacturers' Association, (MAN, 1992). Inflation was reinforced by another major devaluation in March 1992. For a period, the regime had attempted to compensate for its failure to maintain fiscal and monetary discipline by placing (unofficial) price ceilings on commercial bank bidding at the foreign exchange auctions. The result was a widening gap between official and parallel market rates and massive profiteering by those with access to funds at official rates. The March 1992 "deregulation" aimed at eliminating the gap, in line with World Bank "conditionalities". It was met with popular protests and the unions demanded a reversal. The government was adamant and, as the damage was already done, the NLC turned to a demand for compensation. Meeting with NECA, the employers' central organization, and the government gave no result. The employers insisted that no negotiations should be allowed to take place before current collective agreements expired. This was also the line taken by the textile employers and, unlike in 1991 when they conceded the new minimum wage, they refused to enter into fresh negotiations (NEC, 1992; Oshiomhole, interview 1993). "Appropriate pressure" (selective strikes) was organized by the union at the factory level to make the employers come to the negotiating table. They finally accepted another 50 per cent increase in basic salaries and fringe benefits, including a corresponding revision of the minimum wage (NEC, 1992).

The whole system of orderly, periodic collective bargaining had been disrupted by government policies, causing new waves of inflation that made "nonsense of whatever gain that could have accrued". Proposals for fresh negotiations had to be drafted as soon as an agreement had been signed (NEC, 1992). The textile union was notably successful in the new type of bargaining game. In both 1991 and 1992, it was ahead of other unions both in reaching and implementing agreements and in terms of actual wage gains. The public sector, in particular, was lagging far behind. Many state and local governments, corporations and authorities had not even implemented the 1990 minimum wage agreement and had no cash to compensate their workers for the March 1992 devaluation.

In August 1992, the federal government gave up its resistance to compensation and offered its workers 45 per cent, backdated from 1 June. Struggles to make employers, and public employers not least, to live up to this federal wage offer dominated the labour scene for many months to come. Their failure to do so resulted in a spate of strikes, in some cases, but not always, resulting in the federal government, belatedly, rushing in fresh money to cash-strapped public agencies to allow them to pay their angry workers.

What was the textile union to do in this new situation? It had already achieved a deal with its own employers in May 1992 (effective from 1 May) which was more favourable than the government's August offer. It had agreed not to come back to the employers unless future government offers were superior. Many workers, however, saw the government's August offer in line with earlier government wage awards that had been generalized to the private sector (cf. Forrest, 1993). Did they realize that they had already got theirs—ahead of the others? The retroactive element in the government offer, allowed some workers to bring home substantial sums once their own deals were implemented. The union leaders felt that they had to be able to offer their members something on top of the May 1992 deal, especially as inflation continued to be rampant.

How much could the union ask for? They were likely to meet stiff resistance from the employers, not only because of the recent agreement but also because basic wages were, surprisingly, not part of "normal" collective agreements. This was due to prevailing practice of allowing *ad hoc* —as distinct from regular and scheduled—public sector wage awards to provide the basis for *ad hoc* private sector negotiations. The textile employers could maintain, with some justification, that the May agreement had absolved them from any further responsibilities arising from the government's August offer. The union therefore had to make a "special case". It pitched its argument on the frequent increases in sales prices made by the textile firms. The union's modest "Research Department" was assigned the task of checking company accounts. The findings suggested, according to Oshiomhole, that some companies had raised their prices on 18 occasions since the last collective agreement! So why should not wages also be adjusted more frequently, especially as price inflation was leading the way?!

The Central Working Committee met to discuss the bargaining strategy. The GS said that most members were surprised that the leaders dared to ask for another basic wage hike. They settled on demanding 50 per cent but agreed that they would have reason to congratulate themselves if they got half of that. The union expected fierce resistance and prepared itself for the necessary "industrial action". It went to the negotiations with a team of 27 people representing all the zones. According to the Procedural Agreement, each party was only allowed ten negotiators, but a loophole allowed the 17 "extras" to be classified as "technical advisers". Their presence facilitated consultations over what local pressures to apply at what moment if the employers proved to be difficult. It also served as a means of intimidation, impressing on the employers that the union was serious and prepared to fight (Oshiomhole, interview 1993).

The textile employers grudgingly conceded 35 per cent. The union officials were very pleased and meetings were scheduled in the factories to announce the deal. All the Lagos and Kaduna officials we spoke to claimed that the news had been warmly welcomed by the workers at the factory meetings they had addressed: "Everybody was happy". The officials felt, with some justification, that they had reason to be proud of themselves and their performance: First the swift implementation of the 1990 minimum wage award, then the 50 per cent "compensation" in 1992 which the textile union was the only union to have achieved! And now, in May 1993, another 35 per cent, over and above what others had obtained. So why did it all go sour? Did the workers have cause to think that they had been betrayed? Were they merely deceived? By whom? For what purpose?

3. DISGRUNTLED ELEMENTS AND CONSPIRATORS IN HIGH PLACES

The workers had a strong tradition of challenging and querying the union when they believed that they had been shortchanged. They demanded accounts. In doing so, they would shout down union officials, give them a beating, lock them up, or intimidate them by carrying them shoulder high. The May 1993 riots, however, as the GS saw it, were something quite different. They were a premeditated physical attack which could not be seen merely as the workers' usual rough way of demanding accounts. External forces must have been involved (Oshiomhole, interview 1993). Who were they and what were they up to?

As the immediate villain the union identified Omo, an old unionist stalwart who had played an important role in the formation of the amalgamated union. He had been rewarded with the key position of Financial Controller in the new leadership. In 1989, as mentioned in Chapter 7, Omo was removed together with the National President for having defrauded the union. It was the GS himself who had discovered that a cheque had been tampered with and had insisted that the culprits must go, despite calls for leniency in a spirit of "make up and forgive" or to avoid having the union's "dirty linen washed in public". Omo was a dynamic and generous socializer. According to Dania, he had used union money to build a powerful personal position. "He used to be seen as Father Christmas." He is likely to have retained some of his long-standing friendly networks among the shop-floor leaders in the Kaduna factories even after he had fallen from grace.

Omo was said to have a close relationship, personal and business, to a manager in Unitex, the factory where the crisis started. John Bull, who had been the zonal officer in charge of Unitex, spoke of Omo's frequent visits which had been reported to the union as they were considered a likely source of future trouble. According to Dania, Omo visited the factory and spoke to the workers the day before the outbreak of the crisis, that is, on the fateful day when the GS, his particular antagonist, failed to turn up to talk to the workers. Workers who were interviewed after the events claimed that Omo had told them: "Why are you happy? Management offered 52 per cent and you were only given 35!" The union reported Omo to the police who refused to do anything about it until the union provided written statements from the workers. After some prodding he was picked up by the police for questioning. Alhaji Sani Ismaila, the acting GM of Unitex, Omo's contact, was also heard by the police and later removed from his post (Oshiomhole, John Bull, Dania, Boniface, interviews, 1993).

The union leaders suspected that the police had had a hand in what had happened. Why did they not try to prevent the sacking of the Textile Workers' House? The mood of the crowd, with iron bars, jerry cans and all, could be gauged by them, especially as they were told two hours before the onslaught. A union official (Andrew) who came to alert the police that morning was told that this was the union's internal problem. The police only arrived on the scene after the attackers had finished and left. Even more surprisingly, the Commissioner of Police came to see the GS, advising him to settle with Omo and not pursue the case. What business of the Commissioner's was that? At the Lagos end, it was even claimed that the people from Kaduna who arrived at night were provided with a police escort.

The SSS (State Security Services) also behaved suspiciously. The Assistant Director called one headquarter's member of staff (Lukman) for an interview, trying to figure out on whose side he was—for or against the GS. What was the SSS interest in this? With the Textile Workers' House in ashes, the union had shifted its temporary headquarters to the union guest house. The SSS warned them: Stop operating and stay away, otherwise SSS would not guarantee their safety. In the Nigerian context, such advice cannot be taken as straightforward and well-meaning. The union leaders took it as an attempt to intimidate them into silence. A friendly manager at Arewa Textiles told the union that SSS had asked them: "Why don't you get rid of Adams?", that is, the GS.

Who wanted to mess up the union and its leadership and why? Even if Omo was engaged in a private vendetta against the GS, into whose hands was he playing? Who were using him for their own purposes? The union leaders thought it unlikely that police and state security would take such interest if it was merely an internal union quarrel. The GS hinted sombrely at external interests of the highest order. At the end of May 1993, Nigeria's increasingly reckless military dictator, General Babangida, was just about to play his most spectacular trick so far, the nullification of the June 12th presidential elections, opening up for another extension of military rule, that is, his own. This was the much talked of "Hidden Agenda", suspected by some and disputed by others. The nullification appeared to have been well planned. The regime, according to the GS, had ideas about the divisions within the labour leadership which it wanted to exploit for its own purposes. It sought to neutralize the unions by "creating problems in our backyards" (Oshiomhole, interview 1993). We did not ask him to elaborate further. So what follows is our own interpretation.

The Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) of which Adams Oshiomhole was one of two Deputy Presidents was committed to the Social Democratic Party (SDP), one of the two parties that were allowed to contest the 1993 presidential elections. Their presidential ticket (Abiola/Kingibe) was a plausible winner, judging from the trends in the previous elections. The unions were the best organized forces in society that could be expected to fight to uphold the election results, especially if the SDP candidates won. The textile union GS may have been seen as a particular potential threat to the "Hidden Agenda" as he was likely to be identified by the regime as the leader of the least accommodating faction within the NLC leadership, as distinct from the more "accommodationist" President, Paschal Bafyau, who had cultivated close links with the military (cf. Beckman, 1995). Paschal's loyalty to the SDP presidential ticket had already been effectively undermined by his own abortive presidential and vice-presidential aspirations, which were said to have been encouraged by Babangida himself. Having been let down in both instances, Pascal could be expected to be less concerned if his "rivals", Abiola and Kingibe, were disappointed by the military. It would therefore not be unreasonable to imagine that Oshiomhole, with his powerful base in the well-organized and successful textile union, would be targeted for special treatment by the schemers behind the "Hidden Agenda", including the dreaded General Akilu, Babangida's security chief.

Was Babangida the real villain behind the May 1993 crisis? Was Omo merely a tool? Such suspicions were by no means far-fetched in the context of the conspiratorial politics of the day. But was it the most plausible origin of the crisis?

4. DID THE EMPLOYERS WANT TO DESTROY THE UNION?

There were more suspected instigators who were also closer at hand. Omo's link to the Unitex management has already been mentioned. Unitex was a subsidiary of UNTL, the largest conglomerate in the industry, owned by the Chinese Cha Group. Were the employers part of the conspiracy? The union leaders were convinced they were. In an interview with a Lagos daily (*Vanguard*, 10 June 1993), Oshiomhole "blamed the violent destruction on management who want to see our union destroyed". In our interview he spoke of a section of the manufacturers led by UNTL who saw the crisis as an opportunity to deal with the union. As evidence the GS mentioned how the UNTL management kept its factories closed after the riots while simultaneously allowing workers to receive their wages. For the union, this was a deliberate way of prolonging the crisis. The management in Arewa, for instance, which wanted to reopen, reported that it could not as long as UNTL allowed its workers full pay without work. Alhaji Ibrahim, the Ag. GM at KTL, also according to the GS, had spoken of "foreign owners wanting to destroy the union".

Why would a powerful group of manufacturers wish to destroy the union? And why would UNTL play a leading role? Had it not a solid past record of understanding and co-operation with the union? In fact, in our company case studies reported in Chapter 5, UNTL stood out as a shining example of the consolidation of a union-based labour regime, setting a pattern for others. In the Vanguard interview, Oshiomhole suggested that the reason why employers were hostile was that the union had become so strong that they could no longer sack or retrench workers as they liked. In the interview with us, the GS emphasized their resentment of the union's successes at the negotiating table.

Let us recall some of the features of the negotiations which may have particularly galled the employers. In 1991 they had been forced to concede more than what they considered to have been agreed at the national tripartite minimum wage talks. Both government and employers (NECA) had insisted that the new minimum should be calculated on a take-home basis, that is, inclusive of the various allowances and fringe benefits. The unions never accepted this and the textile union showed the way by making its own employers accept that the new minimum was the basic wage, that is, exclusive of those extras, a difference of some 40 per cent to the workers' advantage! Moreover, the textile employers were made to concede that basically the same write-up was to be applied to those above the minimum as well as to most fringe benefits across the board. The union confronted the employers with an ultimatum disregarding government instructions that no agreements signed under duress would be recognized as valid. The textile firms were divided among themselves on where to dig in their heels, not only because of the different carrying capacity of the firms, but also because they had different views on how to handle unions and industrial relations. It was a new situation compared with most of the 1980s when the employers had negotiated from a position of strength either because they were backed by the government's wage freeze policies or because workers were in fear of their jobs and the survival of the industry.

The 1992 negotiations too had aspects that were objectionable to the employers and which may have caused some of them to change their minds about the union. The 50 per cent increase in 1992 was only achieved after the employers had been "intimidated" through selective strikes to abandon their refusal to negotiate before the current agreement had expired, a refusal which was also the official position of NECA and the government. The textile union was the only union which succeeded in forcing its own employers to disown the position which they had reached collectively under NECA auspices. While this may have reflected the relative prosperity of the textile industry at this point in time, it was bound to reinforce resentment against the leaders of a union which kept flexing its muscles. The 35 per cent conceded in the 1993 agreement was something which the employers were forced to accept simply as a consequence of the earlier successes of the union. The textile workers had to be offered something substantial at this point too because other workers were reaping the fall-out from the August 1992 government wage award at a time when inflation had already consumed their own, earlier increase. The way in which the union brought its zonal cadres to the negotiating table, in defiance of the procedural agreement, was another show of force that may have served its purpose of intimidating the employers into making concessions but was also likely to further alienate some.

Many employers failed to cooperate with the union after the May 1993 riots. Had they been keen on a rapid return to order and production, one would have expected them to come out forcefully and explain the content of the agreement just signed to their workers, rather than to allow uncertainties and rumours to linger on. How much of a conspiracy was this? The impression is certainly that some employers took advantage of the situation to teach the union a lesson. Others may simply have sat on the fence, anxious to avoid getting involved on either side in what was seen as an internal struggle within the union, at least not until it was clear who would come out as the winner.

The hostile employers may not have set the ball rolling, but once in motion, they did nothing to stop it. Who told the police to stay out? The police were used to being called upon to intervene at short notice and in full force when workers were out in the streets. The one calling, however, would normally be the factory manager whose life and property was thought to be threatened. The police must have heard from their own sources that the workers were mobilizing. As a matter of routine, would they not have found out from the Unitex managers what was going on? It is not unreasonable to imagine that it was they who told the police: Don't worry, we don't need you, we are not threatened, this is "internal union business".

5. THE REBELS

So far we have looked for instigators and conspirators. What about the rebels themselves, who were they, what were they up to? The workers were told that they had been cheated and made to join the marching crowd. They were unlikely to have been of one mind over what to do when arriving at their destination. Some, according to Dania, only joined "to demand an explanation" (interview 1993). Others had clearly a more advanced, "premeditated" agenda and had provided themselves—or were provided—with tools to break gates and doors and jerricans with fuel. Some claimed that they had been intimidated to join. Boniface, the union president, spoke of activists "going from factory to factory, beating up the branch excos who dared to defend the union" (interview 1993) Once in the streets, the marchers were joined by others, perhaps from the unemployed who were scouting for jobs at the factory gates, people with their own grievances, not necessarily against the textile union and its leaders but ready for their own piece of the action. Demonstrations even with manifestly peaceful intents are easily derailed and turned violent, either by their own composite internal logic or by outside participation. In explaining the level of violence, Dania emphasized the role of "unemployed and criminals" (interview 1993).

The GS was reported to have told a press conference that investigations had shown that people were recruited from outside and that it was unimaginable that violence on this scale could have been perpetrated by members of the union (*New Nigerian*, 10 June 1993). Many branch leaders and shop-stewards who were queried by union officials after the riots, not surprisingly, took the same line. Some union leaders also stuck to this view three months after the events when we did our interviews. Our dominant impression, however, from talking to the unionists was that they had come to accept that what happened was primarily something that their own workers had done to them, even if they had been deceived, incited and assisted by outsiders. Union inquiries pointed to the role played by branch activists, including some branch executives, current or former. According to the GS, the high turnover of branch leaders and intense contestation of office had had as result that "half of the branch activists tended to be aggrieved". He claimed that the union had discovered that a number of ex-branch leaders had participated in the violence (Oshiomhole, interview 1993).

A spate of dismissals and other disciplinary actions underscored that both union and managements had notions of "ringleaders" who should be held responsible for what had occurred (Dania, interview 1993). If it was the right people who were picked is a different matter. In a letter to the Afprint management, the union complained that it had discovered that some workers were terminated, not because of their role in the riots, but because management took advantage of the situation to sack those who they considered "old, lazy, or performing poorly", as well as some regarded as "shoddy characters and former leaders who may create problems in future". The union, interestingly, did not challenge these terminations but insisted merely that full benefits ("final entitlements") should be paid so as to allow the whole series of events to be forgotten (Shittu to PM Afprint 22 September 1993). In a magazine write-up on the Afprint terminations, a former branch chairman, Ayo Adedeji, with 15 years of service, complained that "some innocent people had been frustrated". Why, he asked, had none of the current branch executives been affected if the terminations were due to involvement in the recent action? All the members of his own executive, including himself, had been sacked while many others who were involved went scot-free (*Tell*, 28 June 1993). It was difficult to ascertain who had actually participated, according to John Bull, the zonal officer in charge of Afprint at the time, although recently transferred from Kaduna (interview 1993). Shittu, with the closest experience of Afprint over the years, was certainly not convinced of the non-involvement of the current exco. It had emerged as a coalition of factions that had successfully ousted the incumbents in the branch elections in early 1993. The incumbents originated in a care-taker committee that had been set up with the assistance of the national union after an earlier crisis in the branch (Shittu, interview 1993).

In other factories, the union interviewed shop-stewards, supervisors and managements in order to find out who had participated. Some of the workers identified were interrogated and expelled from the union. In some cases, this also meant that they were terminated by the management but this varied from company to company, according to Shittu, depending on what relationship management had to the union and to the affected workers. The notion of "ringleaders" drawn from the rival shop-floor factions was certainly uppermost in the minds of the union staff that tried to make sense of the rebellion. Dabo reflected interestingly on the growing gap between shop-floor cadres and union officials as a result of the changing composition of the work force. While there had always been local cadres that felt bitter about the way in which union officials exercised authority over them, this had been reinforced in recent years by the inflow of new, better educated workers, often with activist experiences from secondary school. They were more prone to question the allocation of the check-off payments between the branches, which received only 10 per cent, and the national union. They felt, according to Dabo, that the secretariat staff were benefiting too much from union funds (interview 1993).

The organization and logistics of the rebellion need to be understood in the context of the factional power struggles that characterized branch level politics. These divisions were crucial in generating cadres, leadership and lines of communication for the rebellion. Loyalty or hostility to the national union was often a major distinguishing factor in these divisions. National secretariat and zonal staff were dragged in and were likely to be seen as partisan even if their interventions were in "good faith" and designed to protect "proper" industrial relations and union procedure. In fact, such interventions could themselves become focal points in the process whereby factions crystallized and coalesced, defining "loyalists" and "rebels". Historical divisions, as we have seen (Chapters 7, 11) contributed to the tensions, with some branches seeing themselves as "losers" in the forced amalgamation process that led to the establishment of the national union in the late 1970s.

6. AFPRINT: A BRIDGEHEAD FOR REBELLION

Afprint was such a branch. The May rebellion in Lagos, according to Shittu, was all masterminded from there (interview 1993). It was obvious to him why "the outside forces" had chosen the Afprint branch as their point of contact. As discussed in Chapter 11.5, the branch had a record of turbulence, factional violence, and defiance of the national union, going back to the time of house union and its role as a leader of the "radical" camp before the 1978 amalgamation. It may serve as an illustration of the local conditions which provided a breeding ground for the rebellion.

We saw above how the Afprint branch leaders of the late 1980s successfully humiliated not only the national union but also the police and Ministry of Labour by refusing to allow their predecessors who had been chased out of the factory to come back. They could do so because they had a strong militant base on the shop-floor which was prepared to fight, physically, if need be. Fresh complications in the relations between the national union and the branch were introduced by subsequent developments, adding to the groundswell of anti-national union militancy. A new bone of contention was the alleged corruption of the new branch executives who were elected in February 1989 and accused of extorting money from the caterer in the company canteen.

The branch secretary, Friday Kowo, claimed that the Canteen Committee had discovered that meals were being prepared from the previous day's leftovers. It demanded that fresh food should be served which the caterer refused to do. After a protracted argument she locked up the canteen. Moreover, she demanded 5,000 Naira in compensation from the Committee, all according to an affidavit submitted by Kowo to the Lagos State High Court (union file, 1990). This is not what happened, according to Miss Titilayo Abiodun, the caterer, who petitioned the national union. It was the branch exco that had demanded 5,000 Naira from her as a condition for getting the catering contract. She had paid but when they came back demanding another 2,000 Naira some months later she refused to oblige (affidavit by NUTGTWN to the same court, 1990).

The National Secretariat stepped in. The exco members were called and interviewed by senior union officials, including the National President and the General Secretary. The excos behaved arrogantly and dubiously and were suspended pending further investigation by a panel. The allegations were upheld. Kowo, in his submission, claims that the findings were "teleguided" by the General Secretary who had come to Afprint and "to the hearing of everybody stated that the panel was a mere formality as NEC (the national executive of the union) knows what to do in this situation". The National Secretariat asked the exco to resign honourably but it refused. It was therefore dissolved and a caretaker committee was appointed.

The removed exco went underground and kept organizing the workers for their own purposes (Shittu, interview 1993). Not only Afprint was affected by their subversive activities, according to one report which claimed that the members "go around the zone polluting the union before the branches" (Afprint, ZR 1990). When on one occasion the Afprint Industrial Manager was seriously beaten up, management held the old exco members responsible and fired them all. They in their turn had taken the union to court, joining management in the suit, alleging that the exco had been unconstitutionally dissolved. Kowo defiantly used the title "General Secretary", invoking the time when Afprint had its own autonomous house union.

The sacked exco did not get much of a hearing in court. The case kept being adjourned, largely because the Afprint management chose to be represented by Rotimi Williams, a "Senior Advocate of Nigeria" (SAN), with the privilege that goes with that status, to ask for adjournment if unable to attend. The repeated adjournments added to the anger of the faction that supported the ousted and terminated exco members. On two occasions they "engaged themselves in sudden and unwarranted attacks on the Union leaders" outside the court. The "ugly situation" was reported by the union to the Commissioner of Police, copying the Director of SSS (Shittu, letter 12 June 1990). The court case was struck out in 1993.

The zonal reports demonstrate the concern of the National Secretariat with the latent hostility of the Afprint workers. On one occasion, it informed management that it had nothing against it using retrenchment "for clearing out bad eggs" but formal procedure must be upheld otherwise it "will mar and destroy the union's name and image" (union to PM Afprint, 13 February 1990). Intimidation was said to be intense during election time and during the annual bonus struggles. In a release in early 1993, the national union (Shittu, 11 February 1993) urged workers to stop "chanting songs, interrupting production and causing disaffection". They were warned that the union would "not hesitate to disqualify any group" that engages in "chaotic thuggery or any unpleasantness". In another release (Dania, 1 November 1991), the display of intimidating placards during the ongoing bonus negotiations was noted "with dismay". The placards were intended as much for the union as for management: Deliver, or "face the consequences". The union rejected such "hand-twisting" methods. "Enough is enough." "We can't continue to hold meeting under this hostile atmosphere." "We refuse to be blackmailed and will not be held responsible if there is a breakdown of law and order."

The factional struggles in Afprint had a reputation for violence. In his welcome address to the annual New Year Party of the branch in January 1993, the branch chairman, speaking of himself as the "Commander-in-Chief of the Afparian Armed Forces", congratulated the members on the recent elections which he claimed were unique in the history of Afprint because "no chemical weapon was employed and no personality was attacked" (union file). Even if this was an exaggeration of past violence, it reflected a self-image of notoriety.

After the May 1993 demonstrations, the belligerence for the Afprint branch persisted. No union official, according to Shittu, dared to go close to the factories. "We were afraid for our lives" (interview 1993). The workers refused to go back and the company closed down and forced workers to reapply and sign a vow of good behaviour. 269 were terminated, according to a press report (*Tell*, 28 June 1993).

7. THE WORKERS' GRIEVANCES: THE VALUE OF MONEY

As we can see, it was not by chance that those who carried the flame of rebellion from Kaduna picked Afprint as their Lagos bridgehead. But the rebellion cannot be adequately explained by focusing on the "notorious", "trouble making" branches alone. That would leave unexplained the wider appeal that the rebellion apparently succeeded in inspiring. This is not to deny that some branches and their "anti-union" activists clearly played a decisive role in shaping the turn of events, including providing openings for outside instigation. But their impact depended on their ability to mobilize a wider group of workers. So, the basic question remains: Why were the workers prepared to listen to these "disgruntled" branch activists, believe what they told them, and ready to join the rebellion?

John Bull, the zonal officer in charge of Unitex where it all started and who also happened to have been transferred to Afprint just before the crisis, was convinced that "20 to 30 people could disorganize 20,000 workers". In his view, there were always those who were ready to believe rumours about workers being cheated by the union. But if that was so, we asked, why was the union not disorganized all the time? This he suggested was because normally the "reasonable" ones would prevail and succeed in isolating the "unreasonable" ones. So why not on this occasion?

The rebellious mood of the workers was more than a sudden flare up and it did not die down simply because they were told that they had been misinformed and misguided. Even if lack of cooperation from the side of the management may have prolonged the crisis, the workers were not easily convinced to go back to work, at least not in Kaduna. In early June the Kaduna workers were out again, barricading the streets and calling for the removal of the General Secretary, who was accused of doublecrossing the workers (*Daily Times*, 4 June 1993). It took a month before a peace settlement was reached. It included the promise of substantial "ex-gratia" payments to placate the workers before they were ready to resume. In Lagos, workers went back to work after only two or three days, except in Afprint where they insisted that they must first be given their 52 per cent. According to a report in *Punch*, a Lagos daily (4 June 1993), "loyal workers" attempted to resume but were forced out by some "disgruntled ones". The company was closed down for two weeks.

What was the substance of the grievances? Nothing suggests that the workers were actually cheated. The Afprint agitators claimed that they had a copy of the "real" agreement which was supposed to have contained the 52 per cent offer. If it existed at all it must have been a poor fabrication, otherwise it would have surfaced as evidence to the press who took a keen interest in the crisis. So why were the workers fooled? A strong possibility is that many expected an increase of a higher order, more in line with the government wage award of 45 per cent, and therefore were genuinely disappointed when they heard of the 35 per cent. The union apparently had difficulties in making them see that they had received "their own 45 per cent", and even more, ahead of other workers and that the total of the two agreements signed by the union (May 1992, May 1993) therefore was superior to what was contained in the government award. Of course, the difference in timing complicated matters. As John Bull pointed out: With inflation moving towards three digit levels, it was not surprising if workers tended to "forget" that they had already been "compensated" for inflation by the May 1992 agreement. An additional source of grievance and confusion was the absence of a lump sum payment of arrears. In the past, most agreements were only reached well after the previous one had expired, making workers entitled to arrears. Not so this time.

The union leaders were genuinely convinced that they had negotiated the best possible deal. The employers resisted more than ever, insisting that the workers had already received their full entitlement. It is clear that textiles, again, were ahead of all other unions in terms of extracting wage concessions from their employers. And yet the textile workers had good reasons to be unhappy: none of these agreements were capable of protecting them from the onslaught of rising inflation. In his 1993 New Year Party Address, referred to above, the Afprint branch chairman Comrade Ayode Adedeji noted that it had been an unusual year. In fact the past two years had been "very, very unusual", with "fantastic salary increases". But "can we honestly say", he asked, "that the living standard of the workers has been improved?" His answer was an emphatic NO:

> In fact, so many of us are now living below poverty level, three square meals have become proverbial in many homes. Transport fare has skyrocketed, house rent is no go area. In fact the rate at which people are dying now is frightening. But where do we put the blame for all these hardships. Is it because Ayo (the speaker) had been bribed and as a result cannot fight for the workers, or that the Management has remained so exploitative that the welfare of the workers is of no concern to it? I think the blame should be placed at the doorstep of SAP (the Structural Adjustment Programme) (Afprint union file, 23 January 1993).

8. MORE GRIEVANCES? CORRUPTION AND "LABOUR ARISTOCRACY"

The allegation that the workers got less than what they were entitled to was combined with a second claim, that the union officials had pocketed the difference. Nothing surfaced in the subsequent months which suggested that this part of the rumours had any substance to it. What credibility was it given by the workers? At the factory level, rumours of undercover deals between individual branch executives, zonal officers and managements were not uncommon (John Bull, interview 1993). This was, of course, also what the Afprint branch chairman hinted at in the address just quoted. Zonal reports make reference to such allegations, usually as part of shop-floor factional struggles and election campaigns. At KTL, for instance, a rumour had it that the workers were given less bonus than in other Kaduna factories because the KTL branch exco had collected the balance for themselves and shared it with the National Secretariat. In one of our interviews, Shittu recalled how rumours had it (this was long ago) that he had received some expensive gifts from a management (interview 1987). At the 1986

National Delegates Conference was debated what to do with former branch officials who spread corruption rumours about the incumbents was debated.

Nigeria has a terrible reputation for corruption. Was it not reasonable to assume that the unions were also corrupt? Of course, some, like the leadership of the transport workers' union had a well established bad name in this respect. Not the textile union, though. The combination of competitive politics at the branch level with outside bureaucratic (zonal) control enhanced the likelihood that corrupt undercover deals with management would be exposed. The workers' readiness to apply their own rough and instant justice was an additional constraining factor. Corrupt transactions at higher levels would be more difficult to ascertain but zonal officers who were tempted to receive gifts from management would also be in danger of being exposed. It was not necessarily a question of higher individual morality. The constraints were basically structural. Union work was premised on underlying conflicts of interests which made such deals risky in the face of a tradition of autonomous shop-floor militancy. This is in sharp contrast to government agencies which lacked an equivalent system of checks and balances. The absence of any means or will to control corruption in public administration had led to widespread cynicism and an acceptance of it as "natural" or inevitable. But more importantly, the giver and the receiver of the bribe would not risk being confronted with a potentially aggrieved and violent constituency with its own direct interest at stake in the transaction.

The collapse of institutional constraints at the level of the state was the main cause of rampant inflation which destroyed the workers' income. However, it also allowed high level political corruption to reach an unprecedented level as a means of reproducing power and control. Having lost most of the legitimacy it may have had on assuming power and badly shaken by Orkar's coup attempt, the Babangida regime tried to neutralize or buy over its opponents by selective favours, or to "settle" them, as it came to be known in popular parlance. Every day, said the textile union's GS, the newspapers were full of suggestions of such "settlements". "No person changes position unless that person has been paid, settled" (Oshiomhole, interview 1993).

Within this generalized perception of "government by settlement", it was not surprising that workers, agonizing over their own deteriorating living standards, were led to suspect that their own leaders had also been "settled", one way or the other, when they seemed to fail to deliver what was hoped or expected from them. It was widely believed, for instance, that the Nigeria Labour Congress leadership had been "settled", explaining why it had become increasingly "soft" on issues of government economic policies and the repeated delays in the return to civil rule. The NLC had recently been given major land allocations in Abuja, the new federal capital, and government loans for a housing project and for a new national headquarters complex. Had the textile leaders a share in this "settlement"? Again, there is a notable absence of such allegations from the rebels which the media would have been expected to publicize. On the contrary, Oshiomhole was widely seen as an alternative source of leadership to the accommodating Paschal Bafyau with his special links to Babangida.

Differences in income and life styles between an ordinary worker and the labour leaders were bound to heighten the antagonism and alienation of sections of the rank and file. Was not the resentment against a "labour aristocracy" a likely contributing factor to the rebellion? In our discussions with the GS, we raised the "labour aristocracy" argument and asked for his comments. He did not deny that he and other senior leaders would be seen as "shining", over and above the rank and file. But was there any evidence, he asked, that this was putting the ordinary workers off? The evidence, he thought, was rather the opposite. The workers *expected* their leaders to shine. This was unlike in the British unions, which he had come to know during his training at Ruskin, where unionists were supposed to have a low profile. In Nigeria, workers want their leaders to appear as powerful as the managers. The pressure is therefore from below, at NEC and NDC meetings, for shop-floor cadres to demand that the leaders should be rewarded (Oshiomhole, interview 1993). Such views, coming from the GS himself, may not on their own be very convincing as evidence that "labour aristocracy" was not an issue in the May 1993 rebellion. John Bull felt that many workers suspected that their leaders were well-off and that they were receiving money from both government and the union. "The majority of the workers", he said, "don't like their leaders to live well", which he regretted. The two sets of observations are of course not mutually exclusive. In trying to figure out the implications for the rebellion, we are impressed, however, by the absence of evidence that such grievances and allegations, of private appropriations, personal corruption, excessive lifestyles etc., played any significant role in the campaign mounted by the "anti-union" forces during their mobilization. This is the more so as we know that the organizers were assisted by people like Omo who would have had a personal interest in exposing the private exploits of his former colleagues, had there been anything substantial to expose. And even if there was nothing tangible, why could it not have been fabricated, just as the 52 per cent deal, if it was thought likely to appeal to workers' resentments? Our provisional conclusion is therefore that, irrespective of whether or not "labour aristocracy" was an issue, such resentment seems not to have been a major factor in the rebellion.

9. CONCLUSIONS: A LABOUR REGIME UNDER STRESS

The labour regime in the Nigerian textile industry had been destabilized by inflation running out of control. This created an opening for "outside instigation", sparking off a chain of events that escalated into a fuly-fledged rebellion. Inflation made it more difficult to sustain the authority of the union among the workers. The credibility of the whole process of collective bargaining was at stake. What were agreements good for when their substance was so easily nullified by inflation? The ability of the workers to make a sound judgement about the performance of their leaders was similarly undermined. What was a good agreement? Was a 35 per cent wage increase a "success" or a mere pittance?

Outside instigation was likely to have acted as a catalyst but it would have been ineffectual had it not been mediated by forces from within. The impact depended on the existence of networks of activists, ready to provide lines of communication and leadership. A potential basis for this existed in shop-floor factionalism, with rival groups competing for branch leadership, and where at least one side would tend to be resentful of the National Secretariat because of its actual or perceived partisanship in local disputes. Such localized resentment did not seem to have added up to any coherent opposition, representing a prospective alternative leadership or "programme", nor did it give voice to any general critique of the existing national leadership. More diffusely, however, the rebellion was in a position to tap the potential antagonism which was inherent in the structure of power and hierarchy of the organization, accentuated by the state-supported monopolistic features of the labour regime. It was not incidental that the bridgehead in Lagos was provided by a branch with a tradition of autonomy and resistance going back to the amalgamation process. We argued in the preceding chapter that the power of the bureaucracy was kept within bounds by the persistence of autonomous shop-floor militancy. Its mode of expression tended to be *ad hoc* and violent. The May 1993 rebellion was a realization at the national level of a potential for localized rebellions which we have shown was latent in many plants. The zonal reports, as we have seen, were rich in evidence suggesting that the zonal officers were aware of this potential and were anxious to avoid provoking it.

How outside was the outside instigation and how much of a conspiracy? An ousted former union leader, well-connected at the level of factional shop-floor politics, probably took advantage of a chance opening and pulled his own strings. It is possible that he and others may have conspired with their friends within management who may have agreed with them that it was time that the union leadership were taught a lesson. If there was such a conspiracy or not, however, seems less important than the apparent hostility towards the union demonstrated by the managements of some major firms, UNTL in particular, after the events. Developments during the 1980s suggested that the textile employers had come to accept the generalization of a union-based labour regime. Had they developed cold feet? Was the implicit social contract between labour and capital cracking up? Clearly, the labour regime was under severe pressure also in this respect. Again, inflation was the principal villain. How was industry expected to respond to the turbulence of a deteriorating macro-economic policy environment? What wage demands were to be deemed reasonable or unreasonable under such volatile conditions? Could employers on their own restrain the inflationary spiral? It is not surprising that companies were divided among themselves over what were appropriate wage policies. Many firms resented being forced by the union to repeated renegotiations of agreements. Their resistance in turn obliged the union to use more militant tactics to bring the employers to the negotiating table. The conflict sharpened.

It was within this context of a heightened conflict between union and employers that the rebellion took place. There is no hard evidence to suggest that management in general played an active role in promoting the rebellion, whatever the role that Omo's Unitex manager friend may have had in allowing his own workers to be deceived. Some of the employers were no doubt pleased to see the union attacked by its own members. Their uncooperative posture, however, does not necessarily suggest that they were party to a conspiracy in a premeditated sense. Was it not more a question of sitting on the fence and watching how the different forces in the union were unfolding themselves? Why should they rally behind the union before the leadership had demonstrated its ability to regain control over its members? The experience suggests that the commitment of the employers to a union-based labour regime is no stronger than the union's own ability to uphold it. The rebellion created an opening for employers who questioned if it was really necessary to subordinate themselves to such a labour regime. It brought a temporary power vacuum, with the possibility of alternative outcomes. It was a contest from which the union came out ruffled but still in shape to reassert its authority vis-à-vis both members and the employers.

What about the other possible conspirators, the state, the police, the SSS? Again, there is no hard evidence to suggest that such forces were involved in staging the rebellion. The passivity of the police certainly enhanced the damage, reflecting its basic class loyalties. Had it been company property and management life that was at stake it is more likely that the police would have been there in time and in full force. The military rulers and the security services may well have had good reasons for intimidating union leaders at a point in time when they were watchful of forces which might obstruct their efforts to prolong their own rule at the national political level. Security operators may have signalled to the local conspirators that they (or their "Big Chief") would not mind if the textile union leaders, a potentially leading force within the NLC, were "neutralized". Even rivals within the NLC itself may have been pleased to see the textile leadership weakened. This does not suggest that they were party to a conspiracy.

Maybe there was not much of a conspiracy, after all, at least not in the trivial sense of people meeting behind closed doors, conspiring. Maybe the conspiracy was more structural and conjunctural, reflecting the growing tensions between workers and employers as well as between the workers and the union. They were the tensions of a labour regime that had come under acute pressure due to deteriorating economic and political conditions. The national crisis was political and institutional as much as economic. It reflected the failure of the military dictatorship to develop and sustain, politically, a credible economic policy regime. It also had repercussions for the labour regime.

Chapter 13

Corporatism, Self-Organization, and Industrialization

1. A UNION-BASED LABOUR REGIME: THE END OF THE ROAD?

At the time when the headquarters of the textile union in Kaduna and Lagos was sacked by angry workers in May 1993 we had completed our field work and much of the write-up. The rebellion obliged us to revisit our provisional conclusions (see, for instance, Andrae and Beckman 1991, 1992). Did it still make sense to speak of the consolidation of a union-based labour regime? Clearly "consolidation" sounded rather out of place in the face of such an upheaval. Had the remarkable achievements recorded over the past decade been negated?

A new round of discussions with the textile unionists was held in Kaduna in November 1995 against a backdrop of deepening national political crisis. This had been exacerbated by the judicial killing of Ken Saro-wiwa and his fellow activists of the Ogoni resistance movement, bringing further threats of international isolation to Nigeria and its disreputable military dictatorship. For the first time, there were signs of disinvestment by major foreign textile manufacturers, with closures and retrenchments, mostly in Lagos, reflecting the particular strain to which that city had been exposed since the annulment of the June 1993 elections and subsequent local political protests. By de-regulating the foreign exchange markets and cutting public deficits and the money supply, government sought to restore some business confidence. Local markets continued to shrink, although traders spoke of a recovery in demand for Nigerian textiles in the wider West African markets. The disruption caused by the devaluation of the CFA Franc had not lasted long as the Naira kept depreciating at an even faster rate. Galloping inflation had forced union and industry into a new pattern of collective bargaining, with more or less continuous reviews of wages and benefits. It was a rear-guard fight in a context of an overall decline in wage employment and in the ability of workers to subsist on their wages. National working class institutions were also in decline as evidenced by the failure of the industrial unions to mount any real resistance when the state dismissed the leadership of the Nigeria Labour Congress in 1994. Would the union-based labour regime of the Nigerian textile industry be able to survive within such an environment of economic, political, and institutional decay? This nobody can tell. What we continued to witness, however, was a remarkable resilience in the face of adversity. Not the least impressive was the physical resurgence of the union after the fire and rampage of May 1993. The union branches had agreed to tax themselves to finance the reconstruction and redecoration of the three-storey headquarters of the union. At our visit in 1995, the work had been completed and the building, like a Phoenix rising from the ashes, stood out as a symbol of resourcefulness and the fighting spirit of the union.

What general conclusions can be drawn from the experience of the Nigerian textile industry and the textile workers' union? We suggested at the onset that current global conjunctures of adjustment, whether in a post-colonial, post-socialist or post-welfarist context, were likely to cause a shift in the balance of forces detrimental to wage labour, opening up for revisions of labour regimes and the weakening of trade unions. Was the crisis of May 1993 evidence that such a logic had now caught up with the textile union? It cannot be excluded, but the evidence does not suggest that this was the case. On the contrary, our findings which relate to experience of the industry over almost two decades indicate that a fall in employment and wages went hand in hand with the strengthening of the role of the union in the labour regime.

Our study points to a paradoxical, "counter-cyclical" expansion and vitality at all levels of the organization at a time marked by overall economic decline and industrial restructuring. The share of labour in the cost structure of the industry fell sharply, reflecting not only the decline in workers' real income by more than 50 per cent but also the rising costs of other inputs as a result of devaluation. Production was reorganized, with more machines managed by fewer workers ("overloading"), work discipline and labour control were stepped up. The labour force was cut by one-third, in the early years through massive redundancy exercises, later through "natural wastage". All this pointed to a decline in labour's bargaining power, both in the work place and in the labour market. But we also saw the emergence of a smaller, more stable, and more qualified work force, capable, for instance, of handling more machines and more complex production processes. Most notably, however, the upgrading of competence and work discipline went hand in hand with the generalization of collective bargaining. The union assisted management in disciplining labour and raising productivity, but achieved simultaneously the extension of workers' rights in the work place. The union's ability to intervene in, what Burawoy calls, the "political apparatuses of production" at the work-place level, supervising and challenging managerial practices of labour control was enhanced. Work-place despotism and anarchy were weakened and the frontiers of constitutional legality advanced.

The individual bargaining power of the workers, in the labour market and in the work place, declined but their collective bargaining power, through the union, was enhanced. The generalization of collective bargaining at national and company level accelerated the modernization of the industry. Confronted with a powerful union which was recognized and accommodated by all the "big players" in the industry, weak companies were obliged to either restructure themselves in line with industry "standards" or fold up.

We argued in Chapter 10 that unions were constrained by their unavoidable dependence on legislative sanction and recognition by state and employers. We also suggested that union leaders may take advantage of such ambiguous power relations and put themselves up as middlemen in order to advance their own interests as a "labour aristocracy", a privileged class of labour bureaucrats. Such features were not absent in the experience of the Nigerian textile union. Our evidence suggests, however, that the union had a genuine base in the self-organization of the workers. This was partly demonstrated in the union's mode of responding to workers' grievances and what was achieved in these respects. More importantly, however, we base our conclusions on an understanding of the internal political process, and the scope it contained for influence and control from below. We see a strong element of accountability, rooted in the militancy of the cadres at the shop-floor level and their preparedness to challenge and defy the union when feeling shortchanged. The scope for co-optation was constrained by such self-organization and shop-floor militancy. Simultaneously, these features enhanced the capacity of the union to confront the employers and the state and exact genuine concessions on behalf of the workers. Constraints were placed on the ability of state and employers to use the repressive means at their disposal.

The union had to be accommodated. The prevailing conditions of crisis and shifting state policies reinforced the imperatives of accommodation as the firms faced dislocations and shortages and the need to restructure production. While the crisis had undermined the bargaining power of wage labour, it also taxed the managerial capacities of the firms. Rather than risk provoking "spontaneous", unpredictable, and potentially violent forms of labour resistance, they sought to enlist the co-operation of the union in the management of work place relations in the difficult processes of adjusting production to a depressed and unstable market situation and drastic shifts in the policy environment. The balance of forces had created openings for the development of contractual labour relations. Firms had to negotiate the conditions of the subordination of labour with a union which could make genuine claims to represent the workers. It was a union-based labour regime.

2. THE ORIGINS OF UNION POWER

Where did the power of the union come from? How much of it can be credited to each of those who provided it with recognition, accommodation and sanctions, from above as well as from below, that is, the workers, employers, and the state? What was their relative contribution? The power of the union in an individual company or locality cannot be explained in terms of features that were specific to that level. Important aspects of the labour regime were obviously determined higher up, through legislation and the institutions set up for its implementation. But why did this work in favour of the union? Why were the laws and institutions not used for the purpose of suppressing union power?

In concluding our study, we would like to recall our discussion in Chapter 1 where a labour regime was seen, in the terms of regulation theory, as a key aspect of a "mode of social regulation", forming part of an "accumulation regime", a concept which tries to capture not only the prevailing nature of the production system and its markets but also the wider social system which influences its mode of operation. The usefulness of that perspective lies in the way in which it allows us to explain what goes on inside a factory, and in this particular case, its labour relations, in terms of its embeddedness in the political economy. It also allows us to speak of the "politics of production" in a more comprehensive sense, focusing on the interconnectedness of such politics which takes place inside the factory, that is, work-place power relations, conflicts, struggles, and modes of organization, and the politics affecting the regulation of production in the local community as well as at higher levels of state and society. The perspective is also "global" in its concern with the determinants of specific accumulation regimes and modes of social regulation at the level of global developments of production technologies (e.g. conveyor belts, and flexibilization) and trading policies (e.g. "liberalization"). This is, for instance, where much of the Fordism/post-Fordism discussion is situated.

How can the union-based labour regime of the Nigerian textile industry be explained in terms of the nature of the prevailing accumulation regime and its mode of social regulation? Our observations are mostly made at the level of individual companies and places. How can they contribute to an understanding of these higher levels? How can an understanding of what goes on at those levels help us to make sense of our localized and company-specific evidence? Let us summarize our "model" for explaining the nature of the labour regime and union power.

Union power, we suggest, can be traced to the interplay between two key features of the labour regime, state intervention and union autonomy. This may sound contradictory, especially for those groomed in theories of civil society, where high levels of autonomy vis-à-vis the state and high levels of state regulation tend to be seen as mutually exclusive (Diamond, 1994; White, 1994; for a critique see Beckman, 1997). The state was engaged in forms of corporatist regulation as part of a nationalist accumulation regime that was characteristic of much of the post-colonial world. Union autonomy was partly associated with the unions' role as a historical partner in the national development project. Primarily, however, union autonomy was rooted in the self-organization of an unconsolidated working class with origins, escape routes, and means of supplementary income in agrarian and urban self-employment, often with independent access to land. The social embeddedness of the workers was an asset to the union but it was also a problem to the employers. The ability of capital to subordinate labour under these conditions was constrained and collaborating with the union provided a means for controlling and socializing workers into the discipline of wage work. The workers, however, retained a capacity for self-organization which reflected their lack of subordination. The union's bargaining power was boosted by their propensity for militant industrial action. It was also enhanced, however, by the weaknesses of the capitalist institutions themselves, both at the level of the industry and at the level of the state, reflecting the non-consolidation of capitalist relations of production. This weakness became particularly debilitating in a conjuncture of industrial restructuring, reinforcing rather than undermining union power.

This, in short, is our model for explaining the paradox of a consolidating union-based labour regime in the face of economic and political crisis and industrial restructuring. Let us elaborate on the principal components of the model.

3. WHY CORPORATIST REGULATION ENHANCED UNION POWER

State legislation obliged managements to recognize the union and to deduct membership fees from the workers' pay, once a majority of them had decided to join the union. It was an arrangement with strong corporatist features, including monopoly representation by state-sponsored industrial unions which had been amalgamated under state supervision. What was the state's business with the union? We are familiar with corporatist models, from Africa and elsewhere, which deprive unions of autonomy and turn them into vehicles for subordinating the workers, on behalf of employers and the state. This is not what happened in our case. Here, corporatism enhanced union bargaining power. Why was this so?

Corporatism was a child of Nigeria's petroleum-based expansion in the aftermath of the civil war. It had a national developmentalist impetus. The 1978 "labour pact" sought to incorporate labour within a state-led developmental agenda, exchanging expectations of wage constraints and workplace discipline against the prospects of labour unity and assured union funding through state-backed deductions of union dues. From the perspective of the state, a labour pact was urgently needed in order to constrain the inflationary pressures generated by the growth of oil income. The absence of market constraints on wage demands in the dominant public wage sector made state intervention the more important. Periods of wage freezes had alternated with occasional wage hikes in a discontinuous and disruptive manner. However, there was also a wider concern within the state to enroll organized labour into the national development effort, if nothing else, so as to prevent it from being an obstacle to the "national project".

Nigerian corporatism shared important features with the authoritarian developmentalist mode of regulating state–labour relations common in the third world (Malloy, 1977). It was paternalistic rather than outright repressive, seeking to regulate, rationalize, and institutionalize existing labour relations under state guidance and surveyance. Unions were made dependent on state recognition which carried a worrisome prospect of further state intervention to ensure "good behaviour". But it also placed new resources in their hands. The system carried with it most of the active cadres, especially at lower levels, and the organizational experiences from the previous unions. The potentially repressive features of the new regime were constrained by the autonomous logic of the unionism on which it was superimposed.

The corporatist features of the labour regime helped reinforce the generalization of collective bargaining on an industry-wide basis which had long been the aspirations of leading unionists. It accelerated the diffusion of gains from firms with more advanced working conditions and more union-friendly labour relations, especially as such firms, like the UNTL among our case companies, tended to play a leading role in the organizations of the employers. State-backed union monopoly was effectively used to extend union presence and industrial relations legality, penetrating hostile companies (such as NTM in Kano) and localities which had retained more patriarchal and coercive labour regimes. The corporatist pact encouraged industrial restructuring as companies were pressed by their own branch organizations as well as by the union to meet their obligations under collective agreements and the labour laws. In the textile industry this transformation continued throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, despite a deepening crisis of state-union relations at the national level.

The corporatist pact was imposed in an expansionary conjuncture that held scope for mutual benefits. The new context of deepening recession enhanced its conflictual features, especially as the new adjustment policies of the state were biased against wage labour, hitting hard at employment and real wages. Intended to facilitate accommodation in an expansionary context, the corporatist arrangement served to generalize and give an institutional backbone to labour's resistance to government policies in a recessionary phase. The repressive potential of the pact was activated, with the state intervening to establish direct control over the Nigeria Labour Congress, first in 1988 and again in 1994. While the pact was under serious pressure at the national-political level, it continued to provide a helpful framework for the deepening of a union-based labour regime at the industrial level.

In Chapter 1, we referred to Schmitter's distinction between "state corporatism" and "societal corporatism" where the former indicates an authoritarian, top–down relationship of state control while the latter suggests that the interest groups which enter a corporatist relation with the state (state-licensed monopoly representation etc.) have an autonomous power base in society. We also referred to Hashim's (1994) critique, drawing primarily on the experience of African apex bodies (not industrial unions) and the Nigeria Labour Congress in particular. While the formal structures of state-regulated monopoly representation by unions are in place, they cannot be reduced to means of state control, in line with the "state corporatist" model. Nor does Hashim find evidence of the mutual accommodation and policy-participation by unions which is implied in the "societal" variety of the model. He therefore prefers us to speak of two interconnected processes of institutionalization, where the state seeks to regulate capital–labour relations, while the unions promote unionization (Hashim, 1994:225ff). Hashim distinguishes between "bargained" and "subordinated" institutionalism where the latter may be close to Schmitter's "state corporatism" The former, however, differs from the notion of "societal corporatism" in that it does not suggest a corporatist substance (accommodation, policy participation etc.).

Hashim's argument makes good sense, especially when applied to the apex level of the union movement. The picture, however, is different if we shift from the national–political to the industrial–sectoral level. The corporatist literature is preoccupied with the one to one relationship between state and unions, including issues of representation, accommodation and policy participation. It may be an inheritance from pluralist interest group theory, where interest groups are primarily discussed in terms of the demands and claims that they make on the state. However, as unions are primarily constituted in the conflict of interest between workers and employers in individual work places and in sectors of the economy, the issue of corporatism must primarily be addressed within the capital–labour relationship itself.

In the Nigerian case, the 1978 corporatist pact came under serious strain at an early point at the national political level, exacerbated by the politics and policies of structural adjustment. The state sought to use its powers under the pact to suppress labour's resistance to these policies and to undermine the autonomous position of the Nigeria Labour Congress. At the industry level, however, corporatism continued to be a source of union strength, contributing to the diffusion and deepening of a union-based labour regime. At this level, corporatist regulation obliged employers to participate in collective bargaining through unified, industry-wide institutions backed by state legislation, arbitration, and supervision. The system depended on the co-operation of both parties, their willingness to engage in serious negotiations, adhere to mutually agreed procedures, and respect agreements. It was an "industry pact", partly formalized, partly developed through the practices of collective bargaining and in the day to day interaction on the shop-floor. At that level, the formal corporatist features reinforced the "bargained institutionalization", to use Hashim's helpful concept, of a union-based labour regime.

4. UNION AUTONOMY AND WORKERS' SELF-ORGANIZATION IN A POST-COLONIAL ACCUMULATION REGIME

We have traced the sources of union power at the level of the corporatist mode of regulation which was part and parcel of the national, post-colonial accumulation regime. However, and this is central to our argument, such state regulation from above only became a source of union power because it was combined with an equally powerful source from below, the militant self-organization of the workers at the work-place level. Corporatist regulation and workers´ self-organization were the two pillars on which union power was built. The achievement of the Nigerian textile workers' union, its leadership and cadres, lay in the skill with which they drew on this dual source of power, from above and from below, to advance the interest of the union and its members, allowing the two sources to balance each other, partly in the sense of mutual reinforcement, partly by playing off one against the other. Workers' self-organization provided a source which could be tapped by the union when confronting employers and the state, a means for securing material benefits for the workers as well as recognition and influence for the union and its leaders. It was simultaneously a source of accountability, obliging union leaders to respond to work place grievances and aspirations, restraining co-optation and sell-out.

How can this militant self-organization be explained? It contrasts with the stereotypes of submissiveness commonly associated with third world workers, not the least by those in advanced capitalist countries who fear that it will be exploited by transnational capital to the detriment of workers at both ends of the world system. It may also seem at odds with conventional narratives of labour movements where effective organizations are assumed to emerge from the sustained formation of working class identity and consciousness as part of the process of proletarianization. As discussed in Chapter 4, most of the workers in the Nigerian textile industry surveyed by us were first generation workers. Most were migrants with a background in the rural economy. Most had parents who were farmers. Most had notions of "career paths", especially in the early part of the period studied by us, that were not specifically working class, at least not as workers in industry. On the contrary, many saw factory work as a station where skills and/or savings could be acquired that at some point could be invested either in independent production or trade or in further education and an office career. The pattern conforms to the picture of an unconsolidated stratum of wage earners with multiple livelihood strategies which has been documented by studies in Nigeria and other countries with a low level of commodification of production (Freund, 1988). Were such workers likely candidates for militant organization? How could they sustain a contractual, union-based labour regime? How do we handle the paradoxical co-existence of an unconsolidated working class and a consolidated union-based labour regime?

Certain features distinguish the Nigerian industrial work force from the notoriously subordinated workers in the early textile industries of East Asia, who were mostly very young, poorly educated, often women, being subordinated not only at the work place but also by patriarchal control outside it. In the Nigerian case, we meet an overwhelmingly male work force, usually from the most active age groups with family responsibilities, and with a surprisingly high level of education. Almost half of the workers in our survey had commenced, if not completed, secondary education. Their autonomy may partly be explained by their standing in society, and the dignity and respect that they could claim for themselves on such grounds.

The autonomy was rooted in a political economy dominated by small producers with independent access to land and other means of production. Not only was the level of formal proletarianization low, which is of course true for all early industrializing countries, but also other modes of labour subordination outside the household were weak. This is in contrast to European, Latin American and Asian societies where rural labour was subordinated to land owners and feudal lords and therefore "available" to the new industrial masters in an already subordinated form. They had been deprived of the autonomy, which, in a Nigerian-type context, seems to encourage workers to resist submission to authoritarian factory regimes. Here, the commodification of production relations in agriculture and the concentration of private control over land were still limited. Such processes had not yet reached a point where the loss of independent access to means of production had become a primary motive force behind the demand for wage work. Wage workers were less compelled in this context to stick to factory work, being a small minority in a population which secures its livelihood outside the wage sector.

The militant self-organization of the workers benefited from this "relative autonomy". Workers were weakly socialized into the role expectations associated with factory work, less accustomed to the indignities of authoritarian factory regimes, more prone to defy what they perceived as unacceptable working conditions and offensive managerial practices. In particular, they were more prone to withdraw their labour if offended, either temporarily in some form of industrial action, or by leaving the factory. Society outside the factory gates held prospects of alternative modes of making a living, if not in practice, at least in the world view of the workers. It provided escape routes which made the possible disciplinary consequences of defiance look less intimidating. Union leaders spoke of the mentality of "damning the consequences".

The insertion of industry in a surrounding culture of independent production made the moulding of workers to fit the requirements of factory work more difficult. In that sense, we can speak of an unconsolidated industrial working class. However, the fact that workers had various life-lines to independent production, and mostly came from a peasant background, did not make them into "half-peasants"—another popular stereotype. Their level of education and aspirations had set them on a course of emancipation from the peasantry and factory work was part of that advance. The peasant environment contributed to assigning a high status to factory work and "modern" wage work generally. Again, this is nothing that follows naturally from the insertion of industry in a predominantly agrarian context. Elsewhere, both historically in Europe and contemporarily, for instance in much of South Asia, early industrialization is associated with social degradation, oppressive factory regimes, and human misery.

What explains the higher status of factory work in the African/Nigerian context? The differences between the surrounding agrarian societies just touched upon are only part of the story. We also need to look at differences in the history of wage work and the formation of industry itself. Nigerian factory workers required education to a certain level partly because of the foreign origin of industrial enterprise. Especially in the early plants, managers, technicians, and supervisors were mostly foreigners and they preferred to employ workers who understood English. Even as middle-management and supervisory cadres were indigenized, English remained a natural means of communication in large factories where workers came from different indigenous language groups. Moreover, several years in school served as a preparation for work-place discipline, especially in a context where the culture of factory work was not well developed. In India, in contrast, the formation of both entrepreneurial and working classes was part and parcel of local dynamics, with enterprises and a continuum of labour relations integrating "modern" industry with elements of the "traditional" household economy, e.g. in the use of child labour.

An industry based on an educated, high-status work force, however, was unlikely in Nigeria at his point in time had it not been made economically feasible by an accumulation regime premised on policies of import-substitution where industry was set up to produce for heavily protected domestic markets. In that context, the cost of labour mattered less, at least originally. However, import-substitution was only welded at a late point on to a colonial accumulation regime based on the export of primary commodities, from agriculture, forestry, and mining. This colonial pattern continued to be the backbone of the accumulation regime also in the post-colonial phase with new elements grafted on to it. Import-substituting manufacturing was only one and not the most important new element. The key feature was the reinvestment of the surplus from commodity exports into the expansion of public services. This is also where the rapid growth of a wage-earning class took place. The primary exports-cum-public service nexus was central to the post-colonial accumulation regime. Union power needs to be situated in that context. The arrival of petroleum did little to alter the basic orientation of the model, although the oil boom caused it to implode.

The high-status profile of industrial labour was supported by the dominance of the state as the major employer of wage labour in the economy. A pattern of wage work modelled on the public services was diffused to other "modern" sectors of economic activity, most directly through the role of state ownership in industry too, but also more generally, for instance, in the decisive role of public sector awards for wage setting in the private sector. Trade unions played a key role in this dissemination. The union movement originated largely in the public sector and the movement remained predominantly one of public sector employees. When manufacturing employment grew at a later point, the impetus to unionization was already there, reinforcing models of wage work originating in an expanding public service, the backbone of modernization and nation-state formation. It carried with it expectations of conditions of service, salary scales, promotions and incremental steps rarely found in manufacturing within other accumulation regimes.

The militant self-organization of the workers could therefore be traced to the logic of a post-colonial accumulation regime. It could fall back on a "relative autonomy" which was conditioned by the way that industry was situated, simultaneously, as islands of wage work in a sea of independent producers, and, within the wage economy, as the junior partner to the dominant public service sector. Without the unions, however, this autonomy may as well have generated a mode of work place behaviour marked by individualized strategies of coping and resistance, hidden or otherwise (Cohen, 1980), or more anarchic modes of collective behaviour, including the "rampaging" so often quoted by unionists as the typical "infant disease" of the labour movement. The strength of the union lay in its ability to give organizational cohesion to the forces on the ground. The acceptance of its leadership by the workers, at least most of the time, was assisted by their understanding that unions were natural participants in the organization of the work place, also in striking contrast to other industrializing regions of the world. It was based on expectation derived from already established patterns in the public services, as further reinforced and generalized by the corporatist pact of 1978, and efficiently implemented by competent union leaders.

The unconsolidated nature of the industrial working class reinforced the centrality of union mediation in the labour regime, making the union itself a crucial agency of class consolidation. The process had two sides. On the one hand, it involved the formation and qualification of labour in terms of the requirements of the production process. New workers were instructed about "proper behaviour" in the work place by union cadres. We saw how managers appealed to the union for help when they themselves failed to control unruly workers. On the other hand, the union was an instrument of the development of a collective identity, expectations of rights, and the promotion of collective interests. The two sides went together; rights and duties. In both respects, it involved asserting leadership, enforcing discipline, and providing cohesion in a work force which was readily provoked into outbursts of independent, militant industrial action.

The centrality of the union was reinforced by the extreme strains on industrial relations imposed by the successive crises of the early 1980s and the subsequent changes in economic policy. The combined vulnerability of both labour and capital in this situation created an enhanced dependence on the union as a mediator. To the workers it offered a credible defence in a situation where their bargaining position was extremely weak. To the managers, the union provided an unofficial ally in the difficult process of adjusting the industry and its work force to the drastic changes in markets and production conditions. Their reluctant dependence on the union in this respect boosted its bargaining position. The drastic fall in workers' market bargaining power was therefore partly compensated for by an increase in a collective bargaining power that was asserted in the work place.

State-sanctioned unionization interacted with the autonomous militancy of unsubordinated labour in boosting the work place bargaining power of the workers. Their commitment to collective forms of action was enhanced, offering evidence of working class formation at a time when the class was experiencing decomposition, in terms of declining numbers as well as in its capacity to reproduce itself from wages. The process reflected the logic of industrial adjustment itself, where world market exposure forced not only cuts in employment and wages but also the upgrading of labour, both in terms of skills and in its adjustment to the labour process.

5. THE LOCAL DYNAMICS: THE KADUNA–KANO COMPARISON

Key features of the union-based labour regime of the Nigerian textile industry can be explained as aspects of a post-colonial accumulation regime where the development of manufacturing was subordinated to the dominant dynamics of public service expansion based on commodity exports. How does this model help us to make sense of the variations at the level of individual firms? Our case companies suggest that these variations span a wide range, from a high level of union-orientation in some to open hostility and non-cooperation in others. We also noted strong variations between the two cities where we did most of our field work, the Kaduna companies being more accommodating to the union and the Kano ones more hostile. We saw a change over time, where firms and places that once had been hostile became less so. The variations were explained in Chapter 6, partly in terms of the structural characteristics of the firms, partly with reference to the local environment within which they operated. We saw how the two sets of factors reinforced each other as different localities encouraged the emergence of different types of firms.

How did such local variations relate to the national accumulation regime? In our discussion of the relationship between labour regime and place in Chapter 1, we drew on recent theorizing about the importance of "place" in the constitution of modes of social regulation. We referred to Massey's (1984) work on the "spatial division of labour" and its emphasis on the local level where labour is recruited, reproduced, and socialized and where workers receive the impulses to organize. We also drew on Warde's (1988) contribution to this tradition which we saw as a model for the study of the local politics of production with its focus on the interaction of the spheres of production and reproduction. The results of that type of analysis were fully summarized in Chapter 6 which also concluded the first part of the study and will only be very briefly recalled here. The main challenge at this point is instead to explain how these distinctly local forms of regulation can be situated within our overall understanding of the post-colonial, national, accumulation regime and its mode of social regulation. As frequently emphasized by those theorizing the significance of the local, the local variations are not merely to be observed for their own sake, but for the insights they may offer into the dynamics of the wider social order of which they are part.

The comparison of Kaduna and Kano points to important local variations but also to the homogenizing thrust of a dominant, national labour regime in line with the prevailing post-colonial accumulation regime. The Kaduna factories led the way in institutionalizing a contractual, union-based labour regime. Unions were recognized by managements at an early point, well before the formation of the new, amalgamated union in 1978. Even managers in old and weak plants, like the KTL, were obliged to play by the rules, meeting effective resistance from the workers when trying to side-step the union. This was demonstrated in the crisis of January 1984 which provided the opening scenario for our study. Kano showed a different pattern. The city had a history of bitter fights over unionization and union organizers had in many instances been driven out forcibly, often with the collaboration of the police. In the second half of the 1980s, when we commenced our field work, most Kano managers were still trying to keep the union out, even if the balance of forces had shifted in favour of the union. Branch activists continued to be victimized and they depended on the support of the union zonal office in defending rights which were supposed to be granted by federal legislation. Unlike in Kaduna, the union was not allowed to play any constructive role in industrial restructuring. Towards the end of the decade resistance to unionization weakened. Most firms chose to accept the presence of the union, even if keeping it at arm's length. Most agreed to implement collective agreements, while staying out of the textile employers' association and national negotiations.

How can these differences be explained? Chapter 6 discussed a range of factors which may enter into the explanation and how they reinforced each other. An obvious link was between company size, type of management, and location. Large size, for instance, was associated with impersonal forms of labour recruitment and an anonymous work force, less accessible through personalized forms of labour control. The location of the large, integrated textile plants in Kaduna and not in Kano was not accidental. Kaduna was the show-piece of the state-led industrialization drive of the northern political elites which dominated the federation politically. They used federal power in their effort to redress the historical imbalance between the commercially more advanced south and the more backward north. Kaduna was set for the role as the Manchester of Nigeria and large-scale transnational capital was invited to invest in conjunction with federal and regional financial institutions. Major public investments in infrastructure, generous land allocations for industrial estates, a tradition of spacious and controlled urban planning inherited from the colonial period, and the supremacy of a conservative political elite, all contributed to make Kaduna attractive.

The typical Kano textile firm was smaller in size and with a less complex production and management structure, often owner-operated as part of a family business. Transnational manufacturing capital was marginal and so were the state holdings which, unlike in Kaduna, were primarily local, not federal or regional. Typical owner-operators were local businessmen either from the indigenous merchant class or from the more or less naturalized Lebanese community. Their management style was personalized and labour relations autocratic, sometimes more paternalistic, sometimes outright despotic. Part of the work force was recruited through the personal networks of owners, managers, and overseers, encouraging clientelistic relations of dependence.

Kaduna was situated at the core of the post-colonial, national, accumulation regime, Kano at its periphery. Kaduna was a prime site of public service expansion and of state-sponsored import-substitution based on an alliance of state and transnational capital. It was the natural environment for the new labour regime. The public service sector provided a model of formal labour relations which were adopted in the state-owned factories. Large transnational companies, mostly with state partnership, were next in line in the transmission of the mode of regulation specific to this accumulation regime. Kano, on the other hand, was more marginal to this model. Here a post-colonial public sector economy co-existed with a large local business community with deep roots in a local urban informal economy and integrated into a rural hinterland of mainly peasant based agriculture. The business community had been reinforced from outside by foreign merchants, notably Lebanese. The union oriented labour regime, officially promoted by the institutions of the post-colonial state, had to compete with modes of subordinating labour which were characteristic of this local community, including a heritage of familial and master-servant relations prevailing in crafts and agriculture.

Differences in the constitution of local political power influenced the local reception of the nationally promoted labour regime. Federal state power was prominent in Kaduna and industrialization there was primarily a federally sponsored project. Local state power was in the service of regional ("northern") elites asserting themselves at the national level. The local institutions of the national labour regime, including the Ministry of Labour, the police, and the courts could be expected to be loyal to a national mode of regulation which was well entrenched locally. They could count on the support of the local state in implementing federal policy. Not so in Kano. Here local state power had to accommodate a local power elite with its own projects and ambitions that did not necessarily conform to federal designs. It included a powerful local royalty—the emirate—and a traditional aristocracy which was an integrated part of the local business class, as partners, patrons or clients. Not least the Lebanese businessmen were anxious to secure themselves politically with the traditional rulers, being aliens (even when naturalized) in this environment. Courts, police, and labour officers could not be counted upon to assist the union in claiming its rights under federal law, especially not in the early part of the period studied by us.

The new national, labour regime was increasingly enforced also in Kano, even if it continued to coexist with forms of labour regulation characteristic of the local business community. We noted various blends and half-way houses. The immediate agent of this transformation was the union itself, invoking federal law against unco-operative local employers and state agents. Its clout had been decisively strengthened by the corporatist pact with the federal state, by amalgamation and organizational monopoly, by growing resources, and professionalization, all combining to make its interventions more effective. Also important, however, was the pressure from the leading manufacturers who felt obliged to cooperate with federal regulations and also had a self-interest in avoiding being undercut by non-unionized firms. The Kano industrialists found themselves isolated and ineffectual in their resistance to the new labour regime.

The union-based labour regime rested, we argue, on two pillars, state regulation and workers' self-organization. So what about the second one? We suggested above that self-organization could be explained in terms of the non-subordinated character of the Nigerian working class and its mode of insertion in the peasant economy. Did the local regulation regimes also differ in this respect? Our findings suggest that the Kano workers were more subordinated and therefore had less scope for self-organization. The difference with Kaduna was less in terms of the workers' origins. The bulk of the workers in both places were migrants with limited experience of wage work and with a background in the farming economy. The important difference lay instead with the nature of the regulation culture within the city to which they had migrated and within which they sought to eke out a living. It tended to mould workers' perceptions of the options open to them in local labour markets, and their choice of strategies for relating to both management and the union. Most Kano workers in our survey were recruited through informal, personal channels and both workers and management also cultivated individualized relations on the shop-floor, in line with the prevailing pattern in the pre-industrial economy. In Kaduna, workers were primarily recruited through the labour exchange and the relations to management were more anonymous. The scope for special relations was restricted.

Even more important was the difference in the local labour market and the options it opened. In Kano, the textile factories, entrepreneurs and workers alike, were integrated in a local economy which was dominated by commerce and diversified informal sector activities in close interaction with an agrarian hinterland. Kaduna was dominated by a formal wage economy with less of other local economy to be rooted in. The workers of the two cities tended to adapt to the options available, accommodating to prevailing work place cultures. Kano workers thought more in terms of local options, mediated through personal connections, and hesitated to join collective actions. Kaduna workers were more willing to do so, seeing fewer options in the city outside the factory, and expecting to return to farming if necessary. The Kano workers were more willing to subordinate themselves to local, largely pre-industrial forms of labour regulation as a strategy for protecting their interests both in the work place and in the wider labour market and reproduction sphere. The Kaduna workers had fewer "opportunities" in this respect and were therefore more likely to accommodate to a prevailing, union-based local regulation culture. In that sense they became more "working class" in their collective behaviour, while retaining notions of escape routes back into a role as independent producers on family land. The Kano workers were more subordinated, by the necessities of survival in that city, but also as a deliberate choice of strategy. For the Kaduna workers, choice was more restricted. They were also subordinated, but, unlike in Kano, the mode of subordination contained important "constitutional" rights of voice and representation within the parameters of an officially sanctioned labour regime. Yet, they accepted their subordination only conditionally, keeping escape routes open back into the imagined ultimate security of village life.

6. WIDER IMPLICATIONS: INDUSTRY, STATE, AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Kano–Kaduna comparison demonstrates how a post-colonial, national accumulation regime interacted with local modes of regulation that were rooted in local political economies and their specific histories of class and state formation. The comparison draws on analytical perspectives that seek to combine political economy, including of the "regulation theory" variety, with a place-theoretical approach. The comparison serves to demonstrate the importance of the local but is also used as a methodology for identifying the national, both in how the latter structured what went on locally and vice versa. In order to understand the national labour regime we have to trace its roots down to the village. National labour laws had little meaning outside the context of the social practices to which they were supposed to apply. The meaning of those practices, in turn, was bound to remain obscure unless explained in terms of the balance of forces by which they were sustained; by their structural and political determinants at all levels of society.

In the midst of Nigeria's continued profound national and industrial crisis, we witnessed how, in the textile industry, a union-based labour regime was established, extended and deepened, if not consolidated. We have explained this seeming paradox in terms of a post-colonial accumulation regime and its mode of social regulation. The central feature of the labour regime, the persistence of union power, was explained in terms of the mutually reinforcing interaction between national state regulation (the "corporatist pact") and the dynamics of working class formation ("workers' self-organization"), as successfully "mediated" by the union.

What does the experience of the Nigerian textile industry tell us about the prospects for national development and industrialization? The evidence suggests that trade unions may play an important role in overcoming some of the institutional deficiencies that go with the unconsolidated nature of capitalist relations of production. They contribute to the formation of an industrial working class capable of entering into long-term contractual relations with both state and capital. In doing so, they contribute to the formation of capital itself as an agent capable of enrolling labour in productive work. In the process, the unions also become engaged in the struggle over state power. They seek protection from the state against the despotism of capital but they also try to restrain the state when intervening on behalf of the latter. Their engagement with the state contributes to the processes of state formation, disciplining the state from below, adding to the range of social forces that make democratic demands on the state, claiming civic rights for themselves and their members, including rights of organization and the rule of law.

In the particular context of crises and radical policy changes that characterized the Nigerian economy in the 1980s and early 1990s the textile workers' union played an important role in promoting industrial restructuring by obliging less advanced sections of industry to improve efficiency and productivity through the generalization of working conditions and collective bargaining. In its efforts to extend constitutional work place relations throughout the industry, the union entered into relations with the state, seeking to enlist its local institutions in support of work place legality. It obliged the state to develop its own capacity to regulate labour relations, an important precondition for capitalist production. Our findings suggest that the textile union played a constructive and stabilizing role in the development of a more integrated production structure, a more qualified labour force, and a more effectively mediated, participatory labour regime.

It is widely recognized that the constitution of effective and responsive state institutions is conditioned by other processes of institution-building in society, often spoken of in terms of the "growth of civil society". The formation of the union-based labour regime in the Nigerian textile industry is a case in point. State institutions and laws depended on acceptance and enforcement from below by the social groups which were affected. The textile union pressurized the agents of the state into upholding the constitutional legality of the emerging union-based labour regime. But the process also worked the other way. By giving legal recognition to the social forces on the ground the state contributed to the strengthening of the unions as social institutions. The democratic content of the latter was enhanced through the struggles for the rights of organization. The state was under pressure to be more responsive, especially to those institutions which had well grounded claims to represent their members and a capacity to lead them in defiance of an authoritarian state.

Chapter 14

Transition—A Post-Script

1. ECONOMIC LIBERALIZATION AND POLITICAL REPRESSION

Our study has explored the remarkable achievement of the Nigerian textile workers' union in promoting the interests of its members, workers' rights, and industrial restructuring, a feat achieved in the face of prolonged economic crisis and frequent policy changes which put the emerging union-based labour regime to repeated tests. By the mid-1990s, the textile industry was under serious strain as the new military regime under Sani Abacha set out to administer its own adjustment programme, centred on drastic cuts in public expenditure, in the hope of halting price inflation and stabilizing exchange rates. As a result, domestic markets were further deflated and unsold industry stocks were piling up. In 1997, the industry faced an additional challenge as the government took its "guided deregulation" one step further, removing the ban on imported textiles and garments. Was the industry strong enough to survive both domestic recession and world market exposure? What were the implications for the workers and the labour regime? The questions are addressed very tentatively in this post-script on the basis of discussions with industry and union representatives in late 1997 when we took the "final" manuscript to Nigeria for comments.

This post-script, however, deals also with another, more immediate and overriding threat to the union-based labour regime, coming not from the market but from an increasingly repressive state. The union movement as a whole was under siege, no longer because of its opposition to "structural adjustment" but because it constituted one of the remaining pockets of autonomous organized social power, with a potential to resist the authoritarian logic of a militarized state and its own style of "transition to democracy". The assault on union autonomy launched by the Abacha regime accelerated the demise of the developmentalist "labour pact" of the late 1970s, which had given legal backing to the labour regime. Was the Nigeria Labour Congress a spent force? Had it already compromised itself so deeply in collaborating with the Babangida regime that its being placed under a Sole Administrator by the state in 1994 made little difference to the labour movement? With the Congress in disarray, the position taken by leading industrial unions, and by the textile union in particular, was crucial. Was the union able to protect itself and the union-oriented features of the labour regime against state repression? What price did it pay for survival?

2. RECESSION AND LIBERALIZATION: THE END OF INDUSTRY?

The Nigerian textile manufacturers were alarmed by the changing economic policy scene. Although in theory appreciative of exchange rate stabilization they felt threatened by the continued contraction of the domestic market, especially as devaluations of the CFA Franc undermined its main export market. The chairman of NTMA, the Textile Manufacturers' Association, Walid Jibrin of UNTL, warned of the imminent collapse of the industry unless the state came to the rescue (Jibrin, 1993; 1994; 1995). He wanted special foreign exchange allocations, lower taxation, cuts in utility rates, especially for water and electricity, and more state involvement in developing the local raw material supply, both cotton and synthetics. He was particularly disturbed that much of the cotton actually produced was exported by unscrupulous merchants rather than supplied to local industry. Smuggling of cheap Asian textiles should be combated through "market raids, a special anti-smuggling force, hard prison penalty for smugglers, and the re-orientation of the Nigerian people through the National Orientation Agency" so that they abandoned their "blind love for foreign goods" (Jibrin, 1994:6–7).

The logic of the government's "guided deregulation" was, of course, in the opposite direction, that is, towards reduced protection and further liberalization, and the NTMA was on the defensive. At least the ban on textile imports, on which it claimed that the industry had been built, should be allowed to remain. When we visited the NTMA office in Lagos in 1997, J.P. Olarewaju, the Executive Director, was in a sombre mood. The ban had just been lifted in that year's federal budget, justified by the Minister of Industry by the need to reduce prices and contain inflation. Although the impact was yet to be seen, it was as if more stones had been added to the burden that was dragging the industry down. They were not selling, stocks were piling up, and markets were flooded with foreign goods. The Chinese and South East Asians had already established themselves in the neighbouring CFA markets and they were now ready, according to Olarewaju, to invade Nigeria, if they had not already done so, illicitly. NTMA demanded a 80–100 per cent import duty and better monitoring of borders. In his view the downturn had begun in 1993/94, with the political crisis while the subsequent deflation of the economy by the government was seen as the basic problem. Government should as a matter of urgency raise salaries in the public sector and pay its contractors in order to reflate domestic markets. The half-yearly reports of the Manufacturers' Association (MAN) suggested a sharp drop in capacity utilization. While the NTMA chief felt that the MAN figures (based on small, irregular samples) were exaggerated, his own picture was also one of decline, from a peak of 60–70 per cent in 1991–92 to a level as low as 30 per cent by 1997 (Olarewaju, interview, 1997).

The concerns of the industrialists over recession and liberalization were shared by the trade union but the picture of industrial decline was less dramatic. Union leaders felt that the NTMA was exaggerating both in order to extract more concessions from the state and to restrain union wage demands. "Manufacturers keep complaining but continue to make profits", said Oshiomhole, although both he and reports from zonal officers confirmed the shift in the market situation, especially the building up of stocks. The General Secretary noted, that in the past industries had responded to inflation and higher production costs by making their own mark-ups of factory sales prices. Now this avenue seemed to be exhausted for the time being and they were even giving discounts to customers. They were under new pressures to cut costs. He was convinced that much could be done to raise the efficiency of the industry. The failure of individual enterprises, in his view, was due more to inefficiency than to markets (Oshiomhole, interview 1997).

What were the implications for the workers? They were affected by closures and retrenchments, most notably in the cases of President, where over 3,000 workers were involved, Five Stars, and Westex, all in Lagos. Political instability contributed to capital flight. Reports from branches warned that the union had to be vigilant because some capital owners were suspected of emptying companies of their assets to prepare for an escape. Closures and retrenchments, however, had been largely compensated for by the opening of new factories (e.g. Finetex in Kaduna), as well as the restructuring and expansion of some old ones. In KTL, which had been taken over by the Indian-owned Churchgate group, new machines had been brought in and employment had expanded from 2,600 in 1992 to 3,400 in 1997. Abatex, another defunct state mill, had been reconstituted from scratch, also by Churchgate, and employed over 2,000 workers by 1997 (Lukman, interview 1997). Overall employment in the industry had only dropped temporarily since the peak of recovery in the early 1990s. Union membership which was down to 58,500 in 1995 was back at over 62,000 in 1997 (GS Report, 1996; Oshiomhole, interview 1997).

Wage levels had also been kept up, through effective collective bargaining, focusing on raising benefits rather than basic wage. Between 1990 and 1995, "allowances" had grown from some 40 to more than 70 per cent of total gross, take-home pay (NUTGTWN, 1997). While wages were certainly still far below the 1981–82 level, they had kept up with the recovery of the industry. The result of the 1995 and 1997 collective agreements did not suggest any decline in paying capacity. This achievement contrasted starkly with the simultaneous continued downward movement of earnings in the public sector, where most of Nigeria's formal wage employment was to be found. It had important implications for the national labour regime to which we return in the concluding section of this post-script.

The impact of trade liberalization was not clear, especially as it was by no means clear what effect the ban on imports had had in the first place, with all the "informal" trade and the porous borders. Whatever the actual impact, Umaru, the Deputy GS, suggested that the lifting of the ban would weaken the union's bargaining power. Manufacturers would use it to refuse union wage demands. It was already noticeable in a fresh spate of threats of retrenchments and compulsory leave (interview 1997).

The union joined the manufacturers in objecting to the new policy, speaking of unfair competition from child-labour in Asia and the right to protection when building a national industrial base. It pointed to the inconsistency of the policy of the government: If it was serious about attracting foreign investors, these had to be granted the necessary protection as well (Oshiomhole, 1997a). On the whole, however, the union seemed less anxious than the manufacturers' association to appeal to the government for protection and special favours for the textile industry. It seemed convinced that the biggest problem was management inefficiency and that state protection was not going to help. On the contrary, it actively encouraged the take-over of state firms by credible private managements, like Churchgate. The union saw itself as having a stake in increased efficiency and it was therefore also willing to renegotiate working hours on the basis of rotating shifts, including weekends, to allow for the continuous utilisation of plant and machinery—with appropriate compensation for the workers, of course. By 1997 such deals had been agreed in a number of big firms and they were expected to be extended to others (Oshiomhole, interview 1997).

3. DIVIDE AND RULE: SUBORDINATING THE UNIONS

The military regime which emerged in late 1993 under the leadership of General Sani Abacha seemed at first anxious to accommodate some of the political groups which felt cheated by the annulment of the 1993—the June 12th—presidential elections. These included sections of the labour leadership which had joined the winning Social Democratic Party (SDP), one of two parties recognized by the state, after having first been prevented, by the state as well, from forming a political party of its own (Beckman, 1995). The SDP had emerged as the leading party in the elections for state assemblies, state governors, and the national assembly. Its presidential candidate, Abiola, although also sponsored by the regime, was about to win when the military leadership changed its mind or, as many saw it, revealed its "hidden agenda".

By mid-1994 it was clear that the Abacha regime was not prepared to concede any power to the winners of the June 12th elections. The political crisis escalated with demonstrations, protests, and strikes in the face of a major military clamp down, paralysing the country for months. The leadership of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) was dissolved and a "Sole

Administrator" imposed by the state. NUPENG, the petroleum workers' union, which had been most persistent in upholding the strike, suffered the same fate.

Despite widespread domestic opposition and foreign criticism, the Abacha regime succeeded in consolidating itself, relying increasingly on repression. By 1995, the main rivals within the armed forces had been neutralized, including the retired generals Obasanyo and Yaradua, who were charged with treason and jailed. Pro-democracy and human rights activists and critical media voices were harassed and detained and in some cases sentenced to long prison sentences. Extra-judicial intimidation by security agents caused a flight into exile of leading opposition politicians. The crisis was exacerbated by the judicial killing of the Ogoni minority rights activists in late 1995 and the mysterious murder of Kudirat Abiola, the wife of Abiola, the detained winner of the June 1993 elections, in June 1996. The picture of a regime prepared to go to any length in suppressing opposition was reinforced.

It was in this prevailing climate of state terror and political polarization that the regime launched a programme for taking control of Nigeria's trade union movement. An experienced politician of the right, a former Party Secretary and Senator for the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), Uba Ahmed, was appointed Minister of Labour. As a leading NPN politician he had participated in the failed efforts to break the NLC in the early 1980s (Beckman, 1995). On this occasion too, the strategy was one of divide and rule, isolating and removing hostile or independent leaders, and whenever necessary, imposing direct state control over recalcitrant unions in order to prepare the way for a new, more submissive leadership. To this end, the government sought to undercut the powers of the effective national leaders, the appointed General Secretaries and their subsidiary staff ("the full-timers"), and to win over the National Presidents and other elected members of the union leadership ("the part-timers"). National Presidents were invited by the Minister and "encouraged" to assert their authority over "their employees", the full-timers. Only few were willing to co-operate with the Minister.

In 1996, Decree No. 4 was rushed through and backdated by the government to prevent full-timers from standing for elected union office, including the NLC leadership at national and state levels (FRN, 1996a). The textile union had sought to preempt this move by making its own GS an elected post but the government rushed through another decree, No. 26 of 1996, also disqualifying former union officials from elected office and from assuming a "functional role in any of the policy or decision-making organs" of the union, threatening with big fines and/or imprisonment "for a term of five years". Union employees were banned from union membership (FRN, 1996b).

Public attention focused on the government's attempt to prevent certain influential and autonomous individuals, and Adams Oshiomhole in particular, from leading a reconstituted NLC. What was less widely realized, outside the union movement, was the extent to which Decree 26 also contained drastic measures that threatened the entire labour regime, enhancing ministerial control and undercutting the autonomy of collective bargaining. The Minister was given powers to revoke the registration of any union "due to overriding public interest", leading to the immediate cessation of the automatic check-off, the payment of union dues by the employers. A "no strike" clause was to be inserted in collective agreements, creating another means for instant cancellation of due payments and of union registration. Disputes that previously were to be heard by industrial or regular courts were now to be adjudicated by the Minister who arrogated for himself "the combined powers of dissolution, decertification of unions, arbitration and adjudication on labour matters" (Oshiomhole, 1997b).

4. RESISTING THE OBNOXIOUS LABOUR DECREES

The two decrees and the accompanying ministerial "Policy Guidelines" of 2 March 1996 (as published in *New Nigerian*, 27 March 1996) became the focal point in the contestation for control over the labour movement. The textile workers' union was particularly targeted by the state, being one of the remaining centres of organized power in a labour movement which had been demoralized and disorganized, both by direct state intervention as in 1994, and by prolonged economic decline. In particular, the large public sector unions which dominated the labour scene when the NLC was formed in the late 1970s had been severely incapacitated. Public sector wages had been reduced to a fraction of those of the workers in industrial and commercial companies. The textile union had demonstrated its financial strength and cohesion in overcoming the May 1993 crisis and Adams Oshiomhole, its General Secretary, was a credible candidate for the NLC presidency, unless blocked by the state.

The textile union took the lead in organizing the resistance. In the absence of the NLC, it initiated a series of national seminars where the industrial unions were invited to oppose the obnoxious decrees, citing international declarations on human rights as well as ILO conventions on trade union rights. The seminars were primarily funded from union sources but were also able to draw on ILO support. The Minister struck back, funding his own rival seminars, although with a much more limited and fractious participation. A labour correspondent, Chris Nwachuku, reported on two such rival meetings in April 1996. One, bankrolled by the government, was held at Ikeja Airport Hotel with only five of the 29 State Councils of the NLC in attendance, despite the generous "allowances" reportedly paid out. The other was organized by the Kaduna State Council and the textile union at

Kaduna and was described "like a full conference of the NLC" with 23 National Presidents and 25 State Councils present. The Lagos meeting passed a resolution in support of Decree 4, while the Kaduna one condemned it. Participants in Kaduna spoke of the Lagos meeting as "divide and rule strategy", as an attempt by the state "to disorganise us" (*Thisday,* 18 April 1996).

The government had been humiliated and it resorted to even cruder methods. Another broadly based labour meeting held at Gateway Hotel, Ota, on May 3rd 1996, ironically, to discuss "the role of labour in national reconciliation", was violently broken up by thugs who stormed the venue with placards in support of Decree 4 and the Minister ("Uba Ahmed is Our Man") (*Daily Champion,* 10 May 1996; *Thisday,* 21 May 1996). After the Ota meeting, the textile GS was picked up by plain clothes security agents who broke into the union's guest house in Ikeja. He was taken to the headquarters of military intelligence (DMI), kept waiting and intimidated ("tell everything you know, don't allow them to torture you, one always speaks in the end") before he was interrogated and confronted with a man who claimed that Oshiomhole had conspired to "organize a general strike with the purpose of destabilizing and overthrowing the regime". The person was clearly mentally derailed and the GS told the interrogating officer that "if he, Adams, wanted to organize a general strike, he would discuss it with his colleagues in the unions, not with a lunatic" (Oshiomhole, interview 1997). The frame-up was too crude and unprofessional to be pursued and the GS was released, although made to report daily (see also press reports, *Guardian*, 6 May 1996; *Daily Champion*, 8 May 1996).

The harassment, however, continued. Another major meeting on "Labour, Economy and Society", sponsored jointly by the textile union and a research institute, Claude Ake's CASS, that was held at the University of Lagos on 26 September 1996, was similarly violently broken up by some 30 armed thugs who seized the microphones, claimed that they had the authority of the Minister of Labour to stop the seminar, took documents, notes and personal belongings and beat up some participants (NUTGTWN, 3 January 1996, letter to Human Rights Commission).

The textile union protested in an open letter to the Chief Inspector of Police which it also published as a paid advertisement in the press (refused by some papers, accepted by others). It wrote to the Human Rights Commission, a body of unclear standing set up by the government, but which at least also served as a channel for exposing the harassment. The Minister of Labour was accused of having "orchestrated attempts to undermine the rights of the trade unions", of "deliberate sponsoring of factionalised trade union meetings", and of violently disrupting lawful assembly. The union appealed to the Commission to call on the Government to discipline the Minister, review Decree No 4, and withdraw the "Policy Guidelines" (NUTGTWN, 3 October 1996, as above).

The Minister had apparently overreached himself and direct physical harassment was stopped for the time being. The battle over the control of the labour movement, however, continued. The textile union and its allies continued to organize their seminars, protesting the "obnoxious decrees", and the Minister for his part sought to build up his own constituency with the help of collaborators in the unions. A new confrontation took place over the May Day celebrations of 1997 which the Minister wanted to turn into a manifestation of union submission to the state. Each union was expected to send two representatives to Abuja, the federal capital, for the occasion. State Councils were provided with ready-made speeches to be read to the workers where it said that "labour in Nigeria will continue to be grateful to the Federal Military Government for promulgating Decrees Nos. 4 and 26 of 1996 as part of government's sincere efforts to democratise the Nigerian labour movement". They were also assigned slogans, such as "Well done General Sani Abacha!", to be painted on the placards for the May Day parade (see letter in textile union files from Godwin B.Wokeh, National President of the Medical and Health Workers' union, to NLC Cross River State Council, 29 April 1997, with enclosures).

5. UNION VICTORY? AT WHAT PRICE?

As we (BB) entered the office of the General Secretary of the textile workers' union in Kaduna in November 1997 there was a cautious celebratory atmosphere and visitors were served tea sweetened with honey. That very morning it had been announced on the radio that the Labour Minister, Uba Ahmed, the architect of the "obnoxious decrees", had been removed as part of a general government reshuffle. Had he fallen from grace? Had the union succeeded in its attempt to convince the Head of State that the Minister's mode of operation was counterproductive from the point of view of the interest of the state itself? The union may be excused for believing that this was the case, especially as the Head of State, announced later in the month that he had accepted all the recommendations in the report of the Vision 2010 committee (see below), which included a call for the revocation of Decrees 4 and 26 of 1996 as well as other "anti-labour" decrees.

The caution was justified as it turned out that the Minister was returned to his post. The immediate threat to the autonomy of the unions and to the system of collective bargaining, however, seemed to have been averted for the time being. The textile union sought to exploit possible divisions within the state itself. The Minister's mode of operation made him trespass on the territory of others, including the police, the various state and military security agencies, and perhaps the office of the Head of State himself. The use of thugs to break up union meeting, for instance, was interpreted by the union as failure on the part of the Minister to secure the cooperation of "normal" state security agents in preventing the meetings from being held

(See NUTGTWN letter to Human Rights Commission, 3 October 1996). The union played on a possible conflict of interests between the Minister and the Head of State who was less likely to hold strong views on the labour regime as such, the methods of collective bargaining, or the relation between full-timers and part-timers in the unions. Once the General could feel assured that the unions posed no immediate threat to his own political programme, the continued confrontation between his Minister and the unions over the decrees may well have been seen as counterproductive. Union strategy was to make the Minister and his decrees appear as a liability, rather than as an asset to the regime. The decrees, the union argued, were "not in the government's own best interest" because they put the government in "bad light" as if it had adopted "a punitive attitude towards the unions" (draft memo in textile union files, July / August 1997).

The strategy of isolating the Minister from the centre of state power may have succeeded, at least to some extent, but only at a political cost. It was deemed opportune to demonstrate the union's loyalty to the General and his political agenda. In the submission to the Human Rights Commission (3 October 1996), the textile union argued that "our patriotic disposition contrasts distinctly with the thuggery and disruptive activities of the Minister and his hired men". It enclosed resolutions in support of the "transition programme" to prove its point.

From late 1995, as the political threat to the unions was building up, union resolutions contained ritual declarations of loyalty before any substantive issues of dissent were raised. The communiqué of a seminar organized by the Kaduna State Council of NLC on the 1996 Budget and the Democratisation Process (11 April 1996), for instance, showed a typical blend of pro-government" and "anti-Minister" positions; on the one hand, support for the "transition programme", local government elections, the annual budget as well as condemnations of "the unpatriotic campaigns of some groups under the guise of human rights and pro-democracy"; and, on the other hand, pleas that government should "disregard efforts by some of its functionaries aimed at falsely portraying trade unions and unionists as security threats and agents of destabilisation". The Minister was accused of being "obsessed with tactics of applying intrigues, blackmail and misinformation", creating the "false impression that the Federal Military Government is at war with the trade unions".

After a similar communiqué by a forum of 30 State Councils in Kano (17 April 1996), a *New Nigerian* editorial (18 April 1996) approvingly took note of the unions' new, positive disposition towards the government which it thought "accords with the current trends of labour world-wide, where the emphasis is on co-operation rather than confrontation in the attainment of national objectives". As "a reward", this staunchly pro-government Kaduna based paper suggested the "need to reconsider possible areas of disagreement in relevant legislations". Oshiomhole allowed himself to be interviewed repeatedly by this paper, distancing himself from calls for sanctions, boycott of elections, and the political opposition in exile, while expressing support for the transition programme (*New Nigerian,* 2 December 1995; 1, 12 and 31 March 1996). Courting the New Nigerian was one of many ways of signalling to the government that the unions were not as hostile as they may have seemed during the 1994 crisis: If you leave us alone, we will leave you alone.

Once the "obnoxious decrees" and the accompanying "Policy Guidelines" had been issued, the unions appealed directly to the Head of State, asking for an audience so that they could explain their positions, accusing the Minister of destroying "cordial relations" and "industrial harmony", while simultaneously saluting the General's "unprecedented efforts in successfully halting the drift of the past" (eight northern State Councils to Head of State, 29 October 1996).

6. ACCOMMODATION OR SUBMISSION?

What were the political implications of such ritualized declarations of loyalty to the state, its military head, and his spurious "transition programme"? Judgements would differ depending on one's views of the options open to Nigerian political groups. To the opposition in exile and its local and international supporters, for instance, the union's line was bound to be unacceptable. Union leaders argued that it was a case of priorities between struggles on many fronts, long-term and short-term. In their view, they had to protect the unions against the immediate threat to their survival and autonomy at a time when they were pitched in a direct battle with the regime. They were not caving in to the regime, they argued, but fighting vigorously against its assault on the unions.

The fact that union leaders felt obliged to make these concessions, however, reflected a shift in the balance of forces in Nigerian society, including a sharp decline in the capacity of the trade unions to act as an autonomous political force. They argued that the pressure from union cadres had been for more accommodation, not less, in order not to provoke the hostility of the state, a point which seems to be supported by reports of heated discussions at a National Executive Committee meeting in Benin City in March 1996 (Aremu, Oshiomhole, Umaru, interviews 1997). How vulnerable was the union? According to Issa Aremu, the Head of the Education and Research Department, and an old student union activist, the textile union may have demonstrated a remarkable capacity, as we argued in Chapter 12 above, to overcome the crisis of May 1993 when the headquarters and union leaders were attacked by rioting workers. But that traumatic event pointed simultaneously, he argued, to the scope for disrupting and perhaps destroying the union. It was a frightening, even life-threatening experience at a personal level too. Since that time, the general political situation had made the unions even more vulnerable, faced with a regime which ruthlessly suppressed all opposition (interview 1997).

A conspicuous sign of accommodation was the General Secretary's participation in the "Vision 2010" committee, an exercise which was clearly intended to enhance the political legitimacy of the regime and its efforts to prolong its stay in power. How did he justify it? He and Sylvester Ejiofor of the Civil Service Technical Union, another credible force in the labour movement, had been invited, as the only unionists, to join the 192 member committee with its heavy business and employer participation (Oshiomhole, 1997c). According to Oshiomhole, the arguments for and against joining had been discussed with the unions with which they worked. They were advised to join, especially as this was at a time when the Minister of Labour pushed the line that the general secretaries were employees and therefore had no right to represent the unions. The invitation seemed to offer an "official" refutation of this position. The committee opened possibilities for alliances with the business community against the anti-union forces in the regime. The basis for such alliances, according to the GS, lay in a common interest in "rational macro-economic policies, rule of law, and human rights". Nigerian businessmen, he said, "don't want to be treated like pariahs in the international community" (interview 1997). "Vision 2010", in his view, provided a platform not only for the campaign against the obnoxious decrees but for advancing labour causes generally (Oshiomhole, interview 1997).

7. END OF MONOPOLY? A LABOUR REGIME IN TRANSITION

We have argued that the union-based labour regime was premised on a particular historically and structurally determined balance between a national-developmentalist, corporatist form of regulation from above and the autonomous self-organization of the workers. The success of the textile workers' union lay in its ability to manoeuvre within the space generated by these countervailing forces while negotiating and mediating the relations between workers and employers in the work place. State repression threatened to overturn the balance of forces that originally sustained the national labour pact which was negotiated in the late 1970s, making unions more dependent on the granting and withholding of recognition by the state. This, in turn, threatened to undercut the autonomous basis of the union leadership in the working class while, simultaneously, making unions more vulnerable to attempts by the employers to undermine the labour regime at industry level.

The employers were encouraged by the anti-union posture of the state to strengthen their own position vis-à-vis organized labour. Union rights, including the right to strike, as discussed in Chapters 8 and 9, were not something that was constitutionally given but were defined, politically, in actual practice, depending on the balance of political forces at a particular conjuncture and in a particular location. In 1997, the textile employers maintained that the existing collective agreement should not be renegotiated but merely extended in view of the threat posed by the liberalization of imports. The union insisted that the workers were entitled to be compensated for inflation. When the employers sent a low-level negotiating team, indicating that they were not prepared to make any concessions, the union delegation walked out, insisting that the employers should send their top delegates otherwise "the union will not be responsible for what follows", that is, threatening to go on strike. In the end, the union got its new agreement and the workers got their compensation (Oshiomhole, interview 1997).

The same logic could be observed in local negotiations where some employers felt emboldened by what they presumed to be a shift in the balance of political forces to the detriment of the union. Similarly, local officers of the Ministry of Labour felt free to side with the employers in view of this assumed shift. In the case of Steep, a new Lagos factory, management seemed confident of the support of the state when dismissing the union branch leaders and obstructing unionization. The local police collaborated and arrested a senior union leader who sought to intervene. The local Ministry of Labour officer told the GS that the union should settle with management "or government will deal with you". The union, however, was not deterred but picketed the factory, mobilizing workers from the whole zone, while also petitioning the Commissioner of Police against the infringements of union rights by the local police command. In the end, the management caved in (Oshiomhole, interview 1997; NUTGTWN to Commissioner of Police, Lagos State, 26 August 1997).

The labour regime was contested at all levels, the national, the sectoral, and the local. The most obvious challenge was the demise of the national labour federation, the NLC. But there were also signs of changing positions within the labour movement itself. During our visit to Lagos in November 1997 we attended a national trade union function, the Kolabode Memorial Lecture, where Adams Oshiomhole, the textile union GS, acted as a discussant. He made a lengthy contribution and the audience was with him almost to the end. At that point they seemed disturbed by an unexpected challenge to the prevailing orthodoxy within the movement. The speaker had come to realize, he said, that the state-backed organizational monopoly was the root cause of the crisis in Nigeria's labour movement. Why do we have to depend on the state to grant a statutory monopoly? Why, he asked, can we not trust the workers to organize their own national federation, or federations, for that matter?

Key actors in Nigeria's labour movement were ready to jettison the corporatist labour pact which some of them had been able to put to good use in building a union-based labour regime. The pact had also helped in providing an effective national political platform, at least during the first decade. The shift may be explained by experience since 1988 when the state had increasingly used it to enhance its control over the labour movement. The intensified repression and state intervention during the Abacha regime had convinced these unionists that the disadvantages of the pact had come to outweigh the advantages.

Equally important for the demise of the national labour pact, however, were the changes in the composition of Nigeria's working class caused by decades of economic crisis and restructuring. This had broken the neck of the once powerful public service unions which had dominated the NLC at the time the pact was instituted in the late 1970s. "Structural adjustment" had shifted the balance of forces within the labour movement away from the public sector to the producers of commodities and commercial services, changing simultaneously the stake of unions in the corporatist pact. As long as the public service unions dominated, there was a strong impetus towards using the NLC as a basis for pressurizing the state directly for general public sector wage awards and for a national minimum wage. There was an interest in centralization, ensuring that each unit of the state adhered to centrally agreed wage levels and conditions of service. Unions in the commercial and commodity producing sectors, on the contrary, were compelled to operate within the "carrying capacity" of firms as determined by market forces. They had less of a stake in the political centre, at least as long as the rules of collective bargaining and union rights were respected.

The rise of the textile workers' union to the position of the shining light of Nigeria's union movement reflects this shift. Its willingness to reconsider the national labour pact was reinforced by its own achievements in negotiating and managing a union-based labour regime in the textile industry during a period of exceptional hardship.

Appendix

Tables and Methodological Notes

Table 3:1. *Background data on workers in Kano and Kaduna* (per cent within each city)

	Kano	Kaduna
Age		
21–25	36	11
26–30	37	38
31–35	16	25
36 +	11	24
uncertain		2
Religion		
Muslim	45	8
Christian	51	83
Other and uncertain	4	8
Education		
Koranic only	8	3
Primary	32	57
Post-primary	56	27
Uncertain	4	2
*Home-town by region**		
Same state	21	28
Other North	22	10
Middle Belt	39	49
South	16	11
Uncertain	2	2
Employed in this factory		
Before 1976	5	39
1976–80	17	35
1981–85	50	19
1985–	24	2
Uncertain	4	5

* Definition of regions: see methodological notes.
Note: Totals of more or less than 100 per cent are due to rounding.
Source: Own survey, 1987.

Table 3:2. *Indicators of workers' agro-links and rural orientation in Kano and Kaduna* (per cent within each city)

	Kano	Kaduna
Own land at home		
enough to live on	71	70
some but not enough to live on	16	17
Only farming as previous work	28	46
Will farm if retrenched		
yes	41	64
only as last resort	28	19
Farming in city	12	31
*Farming at home**		
by own work	3	3
by paid work	8	17
Perceived alternative work options		
in rural area	45	75

*Smaller sample of larger interviews: see methodological notes.
Source: Own survey, 1987.

Table 3:3. *Indicators of workers' wage-work and urban orientation in Kano and Kaduna* (per cent within each city)

	Kano	Kaduna
Post-primary education	56	32
Other wage-work before this	31	22
including wage work	14	9
Employed in present factory		
before 1981	22	73
Has extra urban income		
non-farming	33	26
Will never go back to farming	22	26
Perceived alternative work options		
in the city	36	11
including wage work	7	1

Source: Own survey, 1987.

Table 5:1. *Structure of case companies 1980*

	Establ. year	Numbers employed[1] 1980	1985	Process	Majority Owner
Kaduna					
KTL	1957	4,000[2]	2,650	Spin, Weave, Print	State
UNTL	1965	7,500	5,950	Spin, Weave, Print	MNC (Chinese)
Chellco	1980	200	130	Weave	MNC (Indian)
Kano					
NTM	1962	1,400	350	(Spin), Weave	MNC (French)
Bagauda	1972	150	180	(Spin), Weave	Nig. private
Gaskiya	1985	-		Spin, Weave, Print	Nig. private

[1] approximately
[2] estimated figure
Source: Own management interviews, 1985.

Table 5:2. *KTL: Cost of sales* (per cent by year)

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Raw materials	52	54	43	38	31	30	26
Direct labour	25	26	33	34	43	42	50
Overheads	23	20	24	28	26	28	24
Total cost	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: AWC, 1983:23, who note that "1979 is probably not correct".

Table 5:3. *KTL: Raw Cotton purchases according to source*

Budget year	NCB allocation bales	Imports bales	per cent of total	Total bales
1979	21,624			21,624
1980	23,782			23,782
1981	13,200	8,590	39	21,790
1982	5,800	2,270	28	8,070
1983	2,600	9,227	78	11,827
1984	3,021	9,010	75	12,031
1985	2,820	15,602	85	18,422

Source: Managing Director, KTL, 1987.

Table 5:4. *Background data on workers in six case companies*
(per cent of workers in each category by factory)

	Kaduna				Kano	
	UNTL	KTL	CHELLCO	NTM	BAG	GASKIYA
Age						
under 25	3	11	19	33	39	60
under 30	39	55	59	57	74	90
Religion						
Muslim	9	8	15	86	49	34
Christian	82	83	82	10	45	64
Education						
Koranic ed. only	2	6	0	33	7	0
Primary	60	60	63	33	32	17
Post-primary	26	21	26	33	61	83
*Home-town by region**						
Same state	17	41	35	33	19	17
O. North	8	12	12	29	16	19
Middle Belt	61	39	46	33	29	57
South	13	6	8	5	36	6
NA	2	2				
Number of workers interviewed	114	100	27	21	31	47

*For definition of regions see methodological notes.
Source: Own survey, 1987.

Table 5:5. *Indicators of workers' agro-links and rural orientation in case companies* (Per cent of workers in each category by factory)

	Kaduna			Kano		
	UNTL	KTL	CHELLCO	NTM	BAG	GASKIYA
Own land at home						
enough to live on	70	72	81	62	84	68
some but not enough to live on	17	15	15	14	10	19
Only farming as previous work experience	40	41	50	24	29	17
Will farm if retrenched						
yes	70	80	81	52	23	46
only as a last resort	18	16	12	19	23	38
Farming in city	16	40	62	38	10	9

Source: Own survey, 1987.

Table 5:6. *Indicators of workers' wage-work and urban orientation in case companies* (per cent of workers in each category by factory)

	Kaduna			Kano		
	UNTL	KTL	CHELLCO	NTM	BAG	GASKIYA
Post-primary education	26	21	26	33	61	83
Other wage work before this	11	13	31	33	29	34
including textile industry	7	7	30	19	7	19
Employed in textile factory before 1981	86	80	68	68	13	2
Has extra urban income	18	35	39	10	61	26
Will never go back to farming	1	8	19	19	52	13

Source: Own survey, 1987.

Table 5:7. *UNTL: Methods of termination 1977–85*

	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
retrenched	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
dismissed	163	189	226	205	318	267	139	58	15
resigned	184	172	158	151	215	113	319	246	138
terminated*	21	18	29	42	56	91	106	84	63
newly employed	336	209	144	91	49	27	18	13	9
re-employed	37	13	8	13	6	2	0	1	3

* with benefits
Source: UNTL Personnel Office, 1987.

Table 5:8. *Chellco: Employment development 1980–1986*

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Retrenched	0	0	0	0	90	21	0
Dismissed	75	144	55	25	15	7	2
Resigned	3	28	13	6	5	6	4
Terminated	61	28	37	44	17	2	3
Newly employed	79	149	111	65	10	0	1
Tot employed	196	266	284	277	165	132	120

Source: Chellco Personnel Office, 1987.

Table 5:9. *Bagauda: Employment development 1975–1986*

1975	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*
370	417	342	321	360	140
1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
133	134	129	113	184	184

Source: Bagauda Personnel office, 1987.

Table 7:1. *Membership of the 20 largest industrial unions (out of a total of 42) in 1988, in order of size*

Name of Union	Numbers
1. Nigeria Union of Pensioners	286,000
2. Non-Academic Staff Union of Educational and Associated Institutions	260,000
3. Nigeria Union of Teachers	250,000
4. Nigeria Union of Local Government Employees	245,800
5. Nigeria Civil Service Union	205,397
6. Civil Service Technical Workers' Union of Nigeria	109,457
7. Radio, Television and Theatre Workers' Union	80,000
8. National Union of Banks, Insurance and Financial Institutions Employees	69,613
9. Nigeria Union of Construction and Civil Engineering Workers	58,644
10. Agricultural and Allied Workers' Union of Nigeria	50,000
11. National Association of Nigeria Nurses and Midwives	50,000
12. National Union of Food, Beverage and Tobacco Employees	44,045
13. National Union of Textile, Garments and Tailoring Workers	41,312
14. Medical and Health Workers' Union of Nigeria	41,000
15. National Union of Hotel and Personal Service Workers	30,000
16. National Union of Road Transport Workers	30,000
17. National Union of Postal and Telecommunication Employees	29,000
18. National Union of Public Corporation Employees	26,000
19. National Union of Gas and Electricity Workers	25,893
20. Nigeria Union of Railwaymen	20,634
Total for 20 largest industrial unions	1,952,795
Total for other 18 industrial unions	227,168
Total for 38 unions	2,179,963

Source: Ogunkoya, 1989:151–152 and 70–71, based on returns submitted by the unions themselves and/or the Registrar of Trade Unions of latest available figures.
Note: Figures missing for four unions.

METHODOLOGICAL NOTES ON SURVEYS OF INDUSTRIES AND WORKERS

Industrial survey

Interviews were held in six factories each in Kaduna and Kano, selected by product type, size and ownership, and of course by our success in obtaining access to the management. They were semi-structured talks to representatives of the management usually held on repeated occasions in 1985 and 1987 and concerned the history and structure of the firm and their experience of and adjustment to the current economic developments. They further consisted of talks with the personnel officers on the labour force and on union matters. Whatever company statistics that could be made available were sought, and used as relevant in the text according to quality, which was uneven. Of the twelve factories covered, three in each city were later selected as the case factories discussed in Chapter 5. For factories covered see below. Most factory data are accounted for in the text on the cases in Chapter 5. Some data relating to the cases are also presented in table form in this Appendix.

Survey of workers

A survey of workers was made in the same twelve factories (with emphasis on ten of them, as indicated below). Unstructured interviews with some ten union branch officials in 1985 were followed by extensive structured interviews with 220 workers held in 1987. The latter interviews were supplemented in the same year with shorter interviews containing selected questions from the more extensive survey, to cover altogether 465 workers, 153 in Kano and 312 in Kaduna. Of these, 100 interviews in Kano and 241 in Kaduna, were held in the companies selected for the case studies. The survey was carried out with the support of the national union, NUTGTWN, which was crucial both in terms of actual assistance with the interviews and as backing in relation to the interviewed workers. In particular, a large number of the shorter interviews in the Kaduna factories were administered by the research officer of the national union.

The twelve factories covered and the number of workers interviewed in each were as follows:

In Kaduna:

— Case factories: KTL: 100, Chellco: 27, UNTL: 114
— Other factories: Arewa: 50, Unitex: 17, Supertex: 4

In Kano:
— Case factories: NTM: 21, Bagauda: 31, Gaskiya: 47
— Other factories: KTP: 4, Terrytex: 21, KTIL: 29

The share of larger interviews of the total done in each city was 41 per cent in Kaduna and 49 per cent in Kano.

All worker interviews were done in cooperation with the executive officers of the union branches in the factories who helped select the workers. Although a balanced selection of age, education and origin was actively striven for, the union link is likely to have given a bias towards active union members. Representativeness is certainly not perfect. Cross-checks with other data, e.g. from a few of the factory managements, show however great agreement. It is obvious that in Chellco, Bagauda and particularly NTM the samples are very small. The analysis for these must of course be cautious.

Our questions probed the structure and behaviour of workers, their own perceptions of the possibilities, in the labour market and for supplementary income, and the way they viewed different options. Concerning data on their basic structure in terms of religion and regional origin the likelihood of a skewed sample makes for caution in their use. Our quantitative analysis is based on the narrower range of questions asked of all the 465 workers interviewed, while the added information in the 220 longer interviews has been used for more qualitative insights.

TABLED PRESENTATION OF DATA

Tables of survey data appear both in the text and in this Appendix and have all been numbered in running order with reference to the chapter where they have been primarily discussed. See List of Tables. The data collected from all the twelve factories covered are presented as aggregated by the two cities. In the tables in this Appendix that relate to Chapter 3 our primary interest in these data is to show the overall structures, perceived options and strategies of the workers in general. In the discussion in Chapter 4 our emphasis is on the comparison between the two cities, drawing on the tables in this Appendix referred to in Chapter 3 but supplemented with some summary tables in the text in Chapter 4. Relating to the discussion in Chapter 5 summary data from the six more thoroughly studied case factories are presented in the Appendix for reference.

In Tables 3:1 and 5:4 the definition of regions of origin of the workers has been done rather pragmatically, by states, as delimited in 1987, and ordered as follows: ”Same state” refers to the state where the factories concerned are located. ”The Middle Belt” is defined very narrowly as Plateau and Benue States. The ”Other North” contains the remaining states of the previous Northern Region of Nigeria, while ”The South” is the remaining states. See also Map 4:1.

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Textile and Garment Worker, Official Journal of NUTGTWN, 1980– (occasional).
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Thisday, daily, Lagos.
Vanguard, daily, Lagos.
West Africa, weekly, London.

Interviews

The place and the year of the interviews are indicated. The positions were those at the time when the interviews were conducted, in the case of repeated interviews over many years we may not always be up to date on promotions and other changes in status. We appologize to those concerned. Where no other organization is mentioned, all are NUTGTWN officers.

Managements and union branch officials in the twelve factories in Kano and Kaduna interviewed in 1985 and 1987 as part of the surveys, as indicated in Appendix (Methodological notes), have not been listed below.

Abubakar, M., Managing Director, KTL, Kaduna (Kaduna, 1985, 1987).
Agwu, Robert, National Treasurer, NUTGTWN, and State Secretary, NLC, Kaduna (Kaduna, 1987).
Aisagbonhi, Andrew, Principal Assistant General Secretary, Oki Zone, Lagos (Lagos, 1987).
Alu, Patrick, Zonal Chairman, Igalu Zone, Lagos (Lagos, 1987).
Aremu, Issa, Principal Assistant General Secretary, Head, Education and Research Department (Kaduna and Lagos, 1995, 1997).
Auwalu Ilo, President, Kano State Chambers of Commerce (Kano, 1987, 1991, 1993, 1995).
Bello, Issa Ishola, Chief Organising Secretary, Oki Zone, Lagos (Lagos, 1987).
Bonniface Isiguzoro, President NUTGTWN, (Kaduna, Lagos, 1993, 1995).
Dabo, Patrick, as Senior and Chief Organising Secretary and Assistant GS (Kano, Kaduna, and Lagos, 1985, 1987, 1990, 1991,1993, 1995, 1997).
Dania, A.B., Deputy General Secretary (later Senior DGS), (Lagos and Kaduna, 1987, 1993, 1997).
Eburajolo, Victor, first as Executive Secretary, NTGTEA, later as Executive Director, NTMA (Kaduna and Lagos, 1985, 1987, 1990, 1991, 1993).
Egbe, Raphael, Principal Assistant General Secretary (Lagos, 1987).
Ene, Ugochukwu, Education & Research Officer, NUTGTWN (Kaduna, 1987).
John Bull Ojo, Chief Organising Secretary (later Assistant GS) (Kaduna and Lagos, 1990, 1993, 1995, 1997).
Jibrin, Walid, Industrial Relations Manager, UNTL, Kaduna, President, NTGTEA, later NTMA (Kaduna, 1985, 1987, 1990).
Lawal, Nosiru A., President NUTGTWN (Lagos, 1997).
Lukman, Salihu, Executive Officer (Education and Research) (Kaduna, 1993, 1995, 1997).

Modibbo, Ahmed, Executive Director, NTMA (Lagos, 1990).
Okeke, Assistant Director, Manufacturers' Association of Nigeria (Lagos, 1987, 1990).
Olaleke, E.A., former General Secretary (Kaduna, 1987).
Olanitori, Matthew, Zonal Chairman, Isolo, Trustee, (Kaduna, 1987).
Olarewaju, J.P. Executive Director, NTMA and NTGTEA (Lagos, 1997).
Oshinusi, Tunde, Company Secretary, Arewa Textiles (Kaduna, 1990).
Oshiomhole, Adams, General Secretary (Kano, Kaduna and Lagos, 1987, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1995, 1997).
Shittu, Alhaji L.O., Deputy General Secretary (later Senior DGS) (Lagos, 1987, 1990, 1993, 1997).
Samson Omoruan, Assistant General Secretary (Kaduna and Lagos, 1987 1997).
Suleiman, A.D., President NUTGTWN (Kaduna, 1987).
Umaru Mohammed, Principal Assistant General Secretary (later Deputy GS) (Kano and Kaduna, 1987, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1995, 1997).
Wemimo, Michael, Branch Chairman, NTM, Lagos (Lagos 1987).
Young-Itiye, D., Executive Secretary, NTMA (Lagos, 1985).

Note on Union Sources

Many references in the text refer to union documents which are not listed in the references. Some are letters from union files which are specified in terms of sender, recipient and date. Further information on the source can often be obtained from the text preceeding the reference. Others are speeches, addresses, petitions, and reports prepared by individual officers on behalf of the union.

The most important of these are the General Secretary's reports (reference: GS report and year) submitted to the National Delegates Conference, after having first been examined and approved by NEC, the National Executive Committee. They give an account of developments in the union since the previous NDC.

The most frequent references are to Zonal Reports (ZR), a unique and invaluable source of documentation produced by union zonal officers, most commonly on a quarterly basis but also half-yearly and annually. We use them sometimes to make references to developments in the zone as a whole. But in most instances we refer to individual companies. To avoid cumbersome references in the text we do not in such cases specify the zone but simply state ZR and the name of the company, unless it is already mentioned in the text, as well as the year. Any one wishing to follow up on such a reference would therefore have to call for all the reports for the zone in which the company found itself that particular year. Zones were redefined, both divided up and merged, during the period studied by us and companies can therefore not be listed against a particular zone for the period as a whole.

Some information on developments in individual companies do not refer to zonal reports but the the separate files on that company, which have been read by us either at the union branch or in the zonal office.