CHAPTER III
TRADE UNION AND POLITICS:
A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The overview of the contemporary trade union situation in Baroda shows that six national federations namely, AITUC, BMS, CITU, HMS, INTUC and NLO play an active role in organizing workers at Baroda. They have emerged as viable organizations, though with varying degrees of strength and influence. In this chapter we will attempt to understand the historico-political forces which shaped the contemporary trade union movement in the city.

The trade union movement of Baroda has passed through four main stages, each stage having its own configuration of historico-political forces. The first stage (from 1928 to 1938) is marked by the beginning of the movement and also of its political polarization in the feudal state of Baroda. At the end of this period legal legitimacy was conferred upon trade union as an organization of workers. The second stage is demarcated by the beginning and the end of the Second World War i.e. from 1939 to 1945. It is characterized by intense inter-union rivalry and spread of unionism. The third phase is from 1946 to 1960. It is marked by the emergence of the influence of national federations namely AITUC, INTUC and HMS and further splits in the movement. During this period Baroda state merged into the Indian union in 1949 and the separate state of Gujarat was formed in 1960. The fourth and the final stage is from 1961 to 1983 (i.e. upto the time of this study), which is characterized by emergence of some more national federations namely...
BUS, CITU and NLO and factions within HMS. Major political and historical developments during this period were: wars with China and Pakistan, split in the Communist Party of India, split in the Congress Party, declaration of internal emergency, formation of Janata Party and restoration of the Congress rule.

However, we are not interested in describing merely the history of the movement. We will rather attempt to describe the continuously changing historically-political context in which these federations organize the workers at the local level. While doing so we will also analyze the process of inter-federation competition and its consequences.

The Emergence of Working Class

Before Independence, Baroda was the capital city of the Baroda State of the Gaekwads. It opened up a wide range of administrative and military services. However, the city was linked with B.B. and C.I. railways in 1861 (Desai 1921:194). By this time the machine technology had already entered into India under the British impact. The development of railways had created a favourable condition for the growth of modern industry. In Baroda city also, one textile mill was established in 1885 and by 1911 there were about seventeen industrial establishments in the city. Encouragement given by the Baroda State motivated many industrial entrepreneurs to start factories in Baroda. As a result, by the 1920s there were five spinning and weaving mills in the city. Besides, a brick and tiles factory, a dyehrome unit, an oil mill, a chemical factory, a glass factory and several soda water factories, coach factories, printing presses, tanneries and flour mills also came into existence around
With increasing industrialization, the class of industrial workers emerged and by the 1920s its number was growing rapidly in Baroda city. Since there were no labour laws to protect these workers, they were subjected to inhuman exploitation and hardships, as has happened almost everywhere at the initial stage of industrialization.

**Early Exploitation and Protests**

The working class was mainly comprised of the textile workers. The real employer of these workers was the jobber or mukadam, who used to hire and fire them. These jobbers in many cases were famous for their muscle power and therefore popularly known as Dadas or Pahelwans (toughies). A worker who questioned the authority of a jobber had to question not only the security of his own job but also the safety of his person.

In the weaving department, blocks of looms were allocated to the jobbers. Each block consisted of four looms and therefore in colloquial Gujarati it was known as chokdi (quadruplet). Each block or chokdi of looms was known through the jobber’s name viz., Kasambhai Pahelwan’s chokdi, Jabbarbhai Pahelwan’s chokdi, Gaffarbhai Pahelwan’s chokdi, Tukdi Dada’s chokdi etc. Similarly the workers were also known through the name of the jobber to whom they belonged, indicating personal (instead of contractual), and therefore, more or less, permanent relationship between the two. In such a situation, if a jobber had to leave a mill for some reason, his workers also would leave along with him and a new jobber would join his own team of workers.
A jobber's duty was to supervise the workers, whom he had employed and for which he was taking a certain percentage of their total earnings, as his commission. Interestingly, many jobbers were absentee supervisors, the fact which never bothered either the owners or the workers. The owners being concerned with production and, more importantly, with profit, did not think it proper to displease the jobbers, who had real control over the workers. On the contrary, by giving occasional baxish (tips) or personal loans to them they were kept happy (and also under their financial control) by the employers and in return got their help to further exploit the workers. Workers could not dare to oppose this alliance between the jobber and the employer for fear of losing their job, and also out of personal fear and/or obligation of the jobber on them. Manhandling of the workers and the use of abusive language, both by jobbers and the management, was so common that everyone accepted it as the normal part of the daily routine and usual technique of getting the work done.

In those days, there was no regulation on working hours and therefore a worker had to work almost from dawn to dusk for about twelve to fourteen hours. The place of work was usually dingy and stuffy. There were no adequate provisions for drinking water, toilets, place to take lunch and so forth. Since the wages were meagre, many workers had to bring their wives and children along with them to earn some additional money. It goes without saying that the women and children were paid much less than the adult males for almost the similar work. There was no provision of creche for keeping the young children out of the work place. There was no provision for
maternity leave. There was no provision for the compensation against accident. And there was no ban on child labour.

In addition to these inhuman work conditions, the wages were very meagre and frequently cut on one pretext or the other. Such wage-cuts were announced only on the payday without giving prior notice or information to the workers. One of the main reasons for a cut in wages was change in the quality of cloth produced. The wages in those days, were paid on the basis of quantity of cloth produced by the worker, which was being measured in terms of its weight, which differed from quality to quality. Generally, the coarse cloth was heavier and therefore, more paying than fine cloth which is also lighter in weight. In order to pay less wages the owners allegedly used frequently to change the quality of cloth especially prior to the payday and, thereby, confuse the workers about the wages due to them.

Another reason for cuts in wages was a fine or penalty. The fine was imposed upon an individual worker for any fault which might have occurred in the cloth woven by him. The fault might be due to a worker's carelessness or also might be due to a technical defect in the loom, or poor quality of yarn supplied to him, or even incorrect humidity. But, the price was paid by the poor worker in terms of a fine or penalty. No wages were paid to the worker, for the faulty cloth, instead that cloth was sold to him in exchange of his wages. In turn the worker used to sell it, naturally at a lesser price, either in the streets of the city on holidays, or to the dealers. This phenomenon was so common, that on the paydays the dealers used to sit and wait at the gates of the mills to bargain with the workers in order to get the faulty cloth at a much lesser
price. The workers in desperate need of money used to sell their cloth at any rate to them. Those who could afford to wait for a few more days could sell the cloth personally to the individual buyers in the city on holidays.

Besides, the mill owners used to impose fines upon workers for being late on duty or on the ground of indiscipline. What was most surprising was that there was a special kind of fine which many mills imposed upon all workers without any personal fault, and it was known as Sarkari dand (literally: government fine). The money collected out of this fine was used in Dharmada (charity) activities such as Sadavrat (free distribution of food to beggars and destitutes) and for some religious activities such as Satyanarayan's Katha (recitation of the story of a Hindu God).

Thus, with all these deductions the actual wages of the workers were very poor and inadequate for even subsistence. From these earnings they had to support their families and pay rents for their rooms, if they did not have their own house in the city or around. Most of them were living in slums. Adequate provision of light, air, ventilation, water, toilets, etc. were unthinkable luxuries for the workers in those days, as they are even now in many cases. Since municipality had only limited functions, and only those who paid house tax were voters, the workers had neither vote-value nor did they have their representation to press for their needs. Others were not concerned about them because they were considered as lowly creatures destined to live a subhuman life.

Thus, on the one hand the workers had intolerable work-conditions and meagre wages, and on the other, inadequate social
and family life. The only source of entertainment to many of them was gambling, or liquor, or expensive social gatherings at the time of marriage, or other such socio-religious occasions. This invariably led to indebtedness, by compelling them to borrow money from professional money lenders or fellow-workers with exhorbitant interest rates. As a result, most of the workers could never break the vicious circle of low wages—indebtedness—and poverty, which kept them busy slogging for survival.

This does not mean that the workers had accepted this predicament. Nor does it mean that this was a healthy and euphoric condition indicating a perfect integration of the social system. As a matter of fact, workers used to express their frustrations and tensions in the workplace in the form of workstoppages. Inadequate provision of drinking water, or too much heat in the plant, or manhandling of some workers used to provoke them, at times, to stop work. Interpersonal rivalry between the jobbers also often resulted in violence and consequent workstoppages. However, in those days any form of workstoppage was known as a Hullad (riot) of the workers by the general public and the neighbouring shopkeepers used to pull their shutters down on such occasions. But, these workstoppages were more like temper tantrums and therefore, sporadic, unorganized and ephemeral.

Sometimes, to protest against heavy wage-cuts also they used to stop work. Especially, when a jobber felt that the wage-cut was too much, he used to quit the workplace along with his workers. Usually, on the occasion of such skirmishes the employer's factotum used to win them over by proposing some pacifying formula
by giving additional four or eight annas (i.e. 1/4 or 1/2 rupee) per worker. Usually after such compromises the jobber and his workers used to resume their work by saying *jay-jaykar* of the Sheth, i.e. hailing the owner of the mill. In some rare cases, to protest against some common cause, economic or non-economic, the workers used to take united action by staging a collective walk-out from the mill. But those were more like secret conspiracies than openly declared strikes. Besides, such walk-outs were poorly organized and instantaneous. Generally such tumultuous protests could last only for some hours, and after some face-saving compromise-formula they used to return to work with their usual *jay-jaykar*. Sometimes sweets were also distributed by the employer to express symbolically the amicable settlement.

**The First Phase (1928-1933):**

The Origin and Legitimation of Working Class Movement in Baroda

Although, industrialization began in Baroda city by 1885, it took more than forty years to develop an organized labour movement here. This was probably because of the slow growth of industrialization and small size of the working class at the initial stage in the city. But, in addition to this, the absence of local initiatives in organizing the workers of Baroda was also responsible for the slow growth of the labour movement in the city.

**The Role of Najor Mahajan (TLA)**

Those who first thought of organizing workers in Baroda were politically interested non-workers ('outsiders') closely associated with the nationalist movement led by Gandhi and the Congress.
These leaders came from Ahmedabad and belonged to the Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association (TJLA), popularly known as Majoor Mahajan. Thus, they were truly 'outsiders' for Baroda.

**Absence of Local Efforts**

Most of the workers of Baroda, like their counterparts elsewhere in the country, were coming from economically and socially peripheral communities, many of them being migrants, having few chances of alternate employment, either in agriculture or in industry. This may explain why they then appeared too loyal or docile to protest against any injustice. But this does not seem to be the case. Because, in those days there was no complete lack of protest. What was remarkable was the absence of organized protest over real (industrial) issues. A possible explanation of this fact may be that perhaps Baroda being a feudal dynasty it was difficult for the people and especially for the workers to agitate for their rights. Because, the Maharaja himself was one of the employers and he was the one who encouraged other entrepreneurs, by giving financial assistance and political patronage. Therefore, perhaps the state was anxious to provide all types of facilities and concessions, to ensure industrial peace. Besides, the entrepreneurs were also elevated to high status by the state by awarding them titles like "Rajya Mitra" (Friend of the State) or "Rajya Ratna" (Gem of the State). Hence, even the non-worker philanthropists from the city perhaps could not think or dare to organize the workers.

In this context it is not difficult to understand the absence up to the 1930s of any labour legislation in the Baroda State,
which was otherwise known as a progressive State. None of the labour laws of British India such as the Factory Act of 1811, Workmen's Compensation Act of 1923, Trade Union Act of 1926 or any other law was applicable to the Baroda State in the early period. When these laws were not able, fully, to protect the workers in the British India itself due to their inadequate implementation (especially in the case of working hours or child labour) the condition of labour in a feudal state without legal protection can be imagined.

By 1917-18 i.e. by about the end of the first world war, systematic efforts were made in Ahmedabad and elsewhere to organize the working class by some philanthropists or social/political workers on some specific economic issues. The war, on the one hand had, created a golden opportunity for the industrialists in India to reap profits, especially in the field of textile industry, and on the other, had adversely affected the working class and common people due to steep rise in prices which eroded the value of their wages. (Karnik 1978:24-28).

In 1917, Ansuyaben Sarabhai had led a struggle of wipers in Ahmedabad in support of their demand for wage increase (Desai 1957: 20-24). Immediately, afterwards in 1918 the workers of Ahmedabad successfully fought under the leadership of Gandhi for dearness allowance (Nyers and Kannappan 1970:137-138). A need for an organized labour movement was felt in several parts of the country. Madras Labour Union, which is considered as the first systematic attempt to organize the workers with regular membership and dues was founded in 1918 by B.P. Wadia. In the same year seven more unions of a permanent character were formed and in the following year ten
more unions came into existence. The year 1920 witnessed two important developments in the history of Indian labour movement: (i) establishment of Majoor Mahajan (TMA) in Ahmedabad and (ii) the formation of AITUC as the first national federation of trade unions (Karnik 1978:24-37).

In spite of all these developments, at the all-India level, there was no sign of organized labour movement in Baroda State until 1927-28. By this time Majoor Mahajan (TMA) was rooted in Ahmedabad. The leaders of Mahajan (TMA) however, used to face one problem during their struggles and that was the problem of the influx of outside workers to Ahmedabad. Especially, during the strikes these workers from neighbouring areas were used by the industrialists of Ahmedabad to break the strikes by offering them jobs. Besides, the wages and work conditions of workers in Baroda and other neighbouring areas such as Indore were worse than the workers of Ahmedabad. Therefore, the Mahajan (TMA) leaders of Ahmedabad thought of organizing unions both in Baroda and Indore (Vasavda 1968:51-59).

The Early Efforts of Mahajan (TMA) and Formation of a Union

In this connection Gulzarilal Nanda and Khandubhai Desai of Ahmedabad Majoor Mahajan (TMA) came to Baroda some time in 1928. They tried to address the workers near mill gates, and persuade them to form a union, without much success. The employers considered them as the most unwelcome visitors. Therefore, at the gate of the mills they were manhandled by the henchmen of the management (Vasavda 1968:57). This provoked them to organize the workers of Baroda Mills on a permanent basis. As a result in 1929, they posted one of the full-timers of TMA, Akbarkhan Pathan, at Baroda. To help
him, in accomplishing the task, Nanda and Desai also used to frequently visit the city.

Akbarkhan Pathan, originally belonged to Baroda State but was working in one of the mills of Ahmedabad. As a mill worker he came into contact with the Mahajan of Ahmedabad and later on he was taken up as one of its full-timers. He was an old and experienced worker, who had developed some organizing abilities and understanding of the workers' problems. Besides, being a Muslim, he had an additional advantage of mixing with Muslim workers who were in large numbers. Some of the jobbers and/or "dadas" (musclemen) were also Muslims who had considerable command over the workers. Moreover, being a native of Baroda, his presence and activities among the workers of Baroda could not be objected to by the native state, as it was done in the case of other persons who did not belong to the state.

Even then, it was not an easy task to organize the workers in those days. The employers and the management, including the jobbers, had tremendous aversion to the union. They considered union as a defiance to their authority. These feelings are aptly expressed by a Marwari employer, who told one of the union leaders of Baroda: "Mere Mill, Mero Peso, Usmen 'Union' Keso?" ("This is my mill, in which my own money is invested, therefore what on earth has the union to do with it?"). Hence, the workers were dissuaded from becoming the members of the union. Close surveillance was kept on the workers by the employers and their touts. Those who joined the union were punished on one pretext or the other, and those who dared to become union representatives in the mill were victimised. Those who complained against victimization or any other injustice
were insulted or manhandled. In the absence of any legal protection the union was helpless. Therefore many workers were afraid of even talking with the Mahajan (TLA) leaders.

It was in these circumstances that Akbarkhan had to organize the workers of Baroda. However, he started an office for union work in the Panigate area, where the majority of the workers were living. The area was so infamous for its notorious elements that ordinary citizens were afraid of even going there. Near this area the following two mills were situated: (i) The Baroda Spinning and Weaving Mill (also known as Juni (old) mill or Ajabadi Mill, which is now known as P.G. Textile Mill) and (ii) The New Baroda Mill (now known as Shri Yamuna Mills). In these two mills most of the workers were recruited from local communities, traditionally associated with spinning and weaving, such as Tais, Ranas (golás) and Harijans (Vanakars). The Tais were Muslims. The latter two were Hindu communities.

This division of working class into different religious and caste communities complicated the problem of unionizing them. The occupational divisions of the workers made it still more difficult to organize them since the jobbers and their associates had a tacit alliance with the employers and therefore had a vested interest in suppressing the ordinary workers, both economically and socially. Their roles as de-facto employers, supervisors, and in many cases also as money-lenders, helped them to do so. They, therefore, started resisting the efforts of Mahajan (TLA) leaders to disturb the status-quo. This created many problems for Akbarkhan soon after he started his work. His meetings were frequently disrupted and,
at times, he was even assaulted by the hooligans.

Therefore, in order to support and help Akarkhan, the Mahajan (TLA) leaders of Ahmedabad deployed Chimanlal Shah, an energetic and youthful worker of Mahajan (TLA) at Baroda. Chimanlal Shah was an outsider to Baroda State. He was a native of Kheda district and was influenced by the national independence movement. After being graduated from Gujarat Vidyapith in 1925, he joined the Ahmedabad Mahajan (TLA) in 1926 as a full-time worker at the age of twenty-two. He played a crucial role in organizing the workers of Ahmedabad by visiting their Mahallas (neighbourhoods), entertaining them by singing religious songs and narrating religious stories in the evenings. Since Mahajan was espoused to the philosophy of social welfare he was also educating workers at Ahmedabad about the evils of liquor and other habits. This experience qualified him to be selected to work with the old and ailing Akbarkhan at Baroda (Shuklai:ND).

To legitimize his presence in the State, later on, a small piece of land was transferred to his name by one of the supporters of Mahajan (TLA), Bahecharbhai Patel, who also eventually became a full-timer of the Majoor Mahajan.

After Chimanlal Shah's arrival, Akbarkhan decided to concentrate only on Muslim workers. He started mixing with the " notasious" elements by accepting their norms and behaviour patterns, which was quite familiar to him, due to his working-class background. After gaining their confidence he started talking about the common cause of the workers, their exploitation by management and the advantages of being organized.
Meanwhile, Shah started visiting the neighbourhoods of Hindu workers. Sensing their initial indifference, mainly due to the fear and distrust, he started adult literacy classes and Bhajan-mandalis (religious singing groups) in their localities. Slowly and gradually he also encouraged them to join the union.

The continuous efforts of Akbarkhan Pathan and Chimanlal Shah through a house-to-house campaign to educate the workers and encourage them to form a union finally succeeded in forming a viable organization in 1930 (Vasavda 1968:57, Shukla (ND):28).

**Early Struggles and Legitimization of Trade Union Movement**

During 1927-28 the nationalist movement was gathering momentum. In 1929, the conference of the Indian National Congress, held in Lahore, passed a resolution for complete independence. In 1930, Gandhi led the Dandi March. On the other hand, working class militancy also increased during this period in the country (Butt 1947: 314-351). This mounting symphony, the nationalist movement and the working class protests had considerable impact in Baroda.

Partly due to this impact, and partly due to Mahajan (TLA) leaders' efforts, the workers of Baroda were organized to some extent by 1930, the fact which was resented by the employers (Rana 1980:2-3). Therefore, they started tightening their grip over the Mahajan (TLA) representatives, by frequently asking for their production reports, and finding faults with them, which was easier in the absence of any well defined rules of production. On one such occasion the workers of the New Baroda Mill were provoked to declare a strike to protest against this kind of harassment. This was the first major and organized strike declared by Major Mahajan (TLA) leaders in Baroda city.
This strike, which took place in 1931, lasted for one and a half months. It ended with an understanding that the workers may be permitted by the employer to join Mahajan (TLA) if they so desire, and the Mahajan representatives need not be harrassed without any concrete reason. Even after this understanding, however, the workers had to be on the defensive for their union involvement.

The Emergence of Communist Influence in Baroda

During this period the Communists also started spreading their influence among the workers in Gujarat. By this time they were successful in organizing workers in Bombay, Calcutta and other places.

In Baroda, Kesaribhai Patel, who was influenced by N.N. Roy, and therefore also known as "K.Roy", can be considered as one of the pioneers of Communist influence. He was at Bombay for some time, and also participated in the non-cooperation movement initiated by Gandhi. During his stay in Bombay he came into contact with the Communist ideology and the Communists engaged in the labour field. After coming to Baroda in the early 1930s he started organizing, on his own, the transport workers and the bhangis (sweepers) of municipality. In this work he was helped by his friend B.P. Pangarkar who was also influenced by the Communist ideology (Anadkat 1967:138).

The presence of the Communists was felt in Baroda in 1934 when the workers of the Baroda Spinning and Weaving Mill went on a strike to protest against the unlimited hours of work and other grievances related to wages. Since the employer refused to yield,
the strike prolonged. To break this prolonged strike the employer brought workers from Bombay and tried to run the mill. At this juncture, Pangarkar started working among the textile workers and addressing their meetings. He was speaking mainly in Marathi and appealing the Bombay workers not to betray the cause of working class reminding them of the radicalism of the workers of Bombay. His powerful speeches influenced many Bombay workers, who refused to enter into the mill. They were given train-fare to go back to Bombay and also a warm send off by the workers of Baroda.

Even so, the strike continued. Therefore, to press the employer to arrive at some compromise, Pangarkar went on fast unto death. This dramatic action taken by him created a stir in the city. The workers of New Baroda Mill also went on a sympathy-strike. All these developments created a strong public opinion in favour of the workers. As a result the State Government had to intervene and the strike ended after more than three months. After this strike the work-hours were reduced from twelve to ten, and wages were decided to be paid on the basis of the length of the cloth woven instead of its weight.

Soon after this strike, Pangarkar led a strike of the sweepers to protest against their grievances. This strike also continued for quite some time, compelling the Municipal officers to take brooms in their hands to clean the streets.

Provoked by his agitations in Baroda, the State Government asked Pangarkar to leave the territory of the State. Pangarkar successfully challenged this order in the court of Law.
By this time (the mid-1930s) the effects of world economic crisis were felt in India. The employers tried to pass on the buck to the workers by resorting to retrenchment and wage-cuts. As a sequel, twenty-five per cent cut in the wages of the textile workers of Baroda was unilaterally imposed by the employers in 1936. This cut naturally enraged the workers who declared a strike to protest against it. The strike lasted for about three months and ended with the acceptance of twelve and a half per cent cut in the wages by the workers. Naturally, the workers found it hard to gulp this bitter dose (Palekar 1941).

The Legitimization of Trade Union in Baroda

However, by now the state Government was impressed by the frequency of industrial conflicts and felt the need to take some legislative measures in this direction. Therefore, the Trade Union Act was passed in 1938 (Shah 1942:147). By this Act official registration of the trade unions was permitted in the Baroda state. Thus the legal right to form unions, which was given in British India by the Trade Union Act of 1926, was ultimately granted in Baroda after twelve years.

The first union registered under the Act in Baroda was affiliated to Majoor Mahajan (TLA). The Communists were working in the labour field but their influence was limited, and they did not have a formal organization. Besides, the state and the employers were alleged to be more favourable to the Mahajan than the Communists (Rana 1950:4).

It is not difficult to explain the prestige enjoyed and the favour won by the Mahajan (TLA). Because, first of all, Gandhi's name
was associated with Mahajan (TLA) which gave it an overwhelming respectability. Many state officials, who were personally launched influenced by Gandhi’s ideology and work, were favourable to Mahajan (TLA) despite their dislike for the ‘unionism’. Secondly, since Gandhi did not want to wage a political war against the native rulers and the British Raj simultaneously, he had advised his followers to avoid any political confrontation with the native states. Therefore, Mahajan (TLA) leaders, unlike the Communists, were considered as politically innocent and harmless to the state. Thirdly, Mahajan (TLA) followed the Gandhian ideology of class amity, trusteeship and industrial peace. Therefore, even to the employers it was acceptable as a ‘lesser evil’, in comparison to the Communists, whose faith in class struggle was unshakable. Fourthly, because of their sincere and dedicated work among the workers, right from the beginning, the Mahajan (TLA) leaders had not only acquired considerable experience and organizational abilities but they had also become popular among the workers. And finally, many important and worthy citizens of Baroda were associated with Mahajan (TLA) as advisers or well-wishers, such as Manilal Desai, Rasulkhan Pathan, Babasaheb Pradhan, Chhotalal Sutaria and others, which gave additional reputation to the Mahajan.

The first President of the Major Mahajan Mandal, Baroda was Manilal Vasanji Desai, an advocate and a prominent citizen of Baroda. At this time a provision was made for a representative of the registered trade unions of Baroda to be incorporated into the then reconstituted Legislative Assembly of the state. Therefore, after becoming the President of the Mahajan (TLA), Desai was elected
in the State Legislative Assembly as a representative of the registered trade unions. Immediately afterwards, he was also appointed as a minister of the state cabinet and thereafter he resigned from the union Presidentship. Actually, he was not actively involved in organizing the workers. But he was close to the leaders of Maha-
jan partly because he was a Cachchian and partly because he was a maternal uncle of Khandubhai Desai, the then Secretary of Ahmedabad Majoor Mahajan (TLA). Besides, another important consideration to elect him as the President was that he was also a personal friend of Sir V.T. Krishnamachari, the then Dewan of the Baroda State.

After Desai's resignation as the President of Majoor Mahajan (TLA) Chimanlal Shah, the then Secretary, took over the President-
ship. By this time Shah's colleague Akbar Khan had died and Yasink-
khan Pathan succeeded Shah as the Secretary. Yasinkhan Pathan was previously at Dabhoi (a town near Baroda) and was doing social work among the Muslims. He had been a Secretary of the Baroda State Muslim Conference since 1932. His organizing abilities impressed Rasulkhan Pathan, a Muslim leader and a legal advisor of Mahajan (TLA). Therefore, on his advice, Yasinkhan Pathan shifted to Baroda in 1933 and joined Mahajan as its Secretary. After Chimanlal Shah left Baroda and went to Ahmedabad, Yasinkhan became the President of Mahajan (TLA) and remained on the same post till his death in 1975.

Before the formal registration of Majoor Mahajan Mandal in Baroda in 1938, the expenses of running the office of Baroda were borne by the head office of Mahajan (TLA) in Ahmedabad. Afterwards, the Baroda unit became more or less self-supporting.
A period of intense inter-union rivalry began around 1939. Because, Mahajan at that time, was the only registered and, therefore, officially recognized union of the workers of Baroda. Initially the Communists were in a microscopic minority. They had a limited influence among the workers. But, by 1939 they started consolidating their position (Anadkat 1967:138-139). Due to the second world war prices were rising and this enabled the employers to harvest huge profits, but the workers did not get any increment to their wages. On the contrary, the twelve and a half per cent cut which was imposed on the workers in 1936 continued. The workers of Ahmedabad and Bombay on the other hand, were getting benefits such as increased DA and/or Bonus through their struggles. Therefore, the Mahajan (TLA) leaders of Baroda put a demand-notice before the employers to remove the cut of twelve and a half per cent, and also to give the D.A. to the workers to compensate against the rising prices. The employers, however, preferred to ignore the notice. Therefore, the workers went on strike in 1940 under the Mahajan's (TLA) leadership. Initially, only the workers of Baroda Spinning and Weaving Mill struck. After twenty six days of this strike the Communists also started mobilizing the workers of the other mills by organizing their meetings, processions, picketings etc. Finally, the workers of all the mills joined the strike. The strike continued for one and a half months and ended ultimately when the dispute was referred to an arbitrator, Motilal Judge, who
incidentally got the credit of becoming the first arbitrator in an industrial dispute of Baroda State.

Nevertheless, the question of the withdrawal of twelve and a half per cent cut in their wages and that of D.A. remained undecided for six months, which created doubts among the workers about the arbitration. Therefore, at the first instance the arbitrator gave an interim award. By this award the employers were asked to start fair-price grain shops and the decision about the removal of the cut, and that of cash payment of D.A. was postponed for next six months (i.e., to be delivered after one year of the strike).

But the fair price grain shops alone failed to solve the problem of rising prices, which created enormous discontent among the workers who were disillusioned about the arbitration. They were repenting the acceptance of arbitration at the instance of Mahajan (TIA). Therefore, they came closer to the Communists, who always expressed their misgivings about such an arbitration. The Communists formed a union of these workers namely, Mill Kamdar Mandal in 1941. The leaders of this union were Shantaram Subnis, Chandrakant Azad, Murlidhar Ranalkar, and Vasant Joglekar. They decided to lock horns on the issue of the arbitrator's verdict. However, seeing the mood of the workers, the employers had to immediately declare D.A. in cash within a week. Accordingly, it was decided to give Re. 1 and 8 annas (i.e., one and a half rupees) to each worker as D.A. per month. Still, the twelve and a half per cent cut was not withdrawn.
The success of the Communists in winning cash D.A., however, enhanced their influence among the workers on the one hand and alienated the Mahajan (TLA) from the workers, on the other. Therefore, the Mahajan (TLA) leaders started a strong anti-Communist propaganda. Even the state and the employers were also not happy with the increasing popularity of the Communists. Therefore, they too joined the offensive. The state considered the Communists as persona non grata and refused to register their Mill Kamdar Mandal on the pretext that it did not believe in industrial peace. The employers on the other hand, expressed their disapprobation by victimising the supporters of the Mill Kamdar Mandal of the Communists.

All the same, this did not weaken the position of the Communists among the workers, as prices went on spiralling and the actual wages of the workers were further eroded. Thus the advantage of D.A. (Re.1½) was nullified. Mahajan's (TLA) policy of negotiations was not much successful in persuading the employers to give more D.A. and other benefits such as Bonus and the removal of twelve and a half per cent cut. Therefore, the Communists started agitations for these demands. As a result the employers started arriving at negotiated settlements with the Mahajan (TLA). Thus, the Communists were agitating but the settlements were made with Mahajan (TLA). This was because the Mahajan (TLA) was the only registered and recognized union. However, the Communists alleged that, by doing this the employers tried to enhance the prestige of the Mahajan (TLA) and thereby isolate the Communists from the workers.

Despite these obstacles the Communists went on strengthening their position, mainly on the D.A. issue, as the twelve and a half
per cent cut was removed by now, and bonus was also given to the workers. Unlike Ahmedabad, there was no Consumer Price Index in Baroda to adjust D.A. with the increase in prices. Therefore, with every increase in prices, the Ahmedabad workers were automatically getting more D.A., but the Baroda workers had to agitate for it. Because of this chase, the D.A. went on increasing from Rs.1½ to Rs. 3=00 and from Rs.3=00 to Rs.5=00; and from Rs.5=00 to Rs.7=00.

Ultimately in 1942 the Mahajan (TLA) leaders decided to settle the D.A. issue for good, on Ahmedabad basis. The employers were also tired of these strifes and the consequent loss of production, especially when business was profitable. Hence, they responded positively to the Mahajan’s initiative.

Both of them agreed to link the D.A. of Baroda with that of Ahmedabad and decided that 75 per cent of the total D.A. earned by the Ahmedabad workers to be given to their counterparts in Baroda. At this juncture the Communists were demanding for an increase in D.A. from Rs.7=00 to Rs.8=00, but, according to this new formula the workers got Rs.12=00. Therefore, even though they got twenty five per cent less than Ahmedabad workers, they happily accepted the new formula. One of the agreements of this settlement was that the employers would close down the fair price shops opened by them in 1941. However, immediately after this, there was a country-wide shortage of foodgrains. This resulted into an increase in food prices. Thus, what the workers of Baroda gained in cash was lost in terms of kind benefit. As if this was not enough, the Mill owners decided, by the end of war in 1945, to reduce the production and therefore to retrench the workers. Mahajan (TLA) resisted this policy and as a compromise agreed to accept twenty per cent cut
in the wages to avoid retrenchment. But this decision astonished and disgusted the workers as they were already getting twenty-five per cent less D.A. than Ahmedabad workers and this new cut of twenty per cent further diminished their wages which were already eroded due to the rising prices. However, the workers did not realize that because of this settlement many of them were saved from unemployment.

The Mill Kamdar Mandal of the Communists seized this opportunity to encourage the distressed workers and they demanded hundred per cent of the Ahmedabad workers' D.A. for the Baroda workers. This demand was rejected by the employers. Therefore, the Communists started a campaign for it. They mobilized the textile workers of the entire Baroda state and declared a state-wide strike in 1945. This struggle lasted for one month in Baroda city and other places in Baroda State like Kadi, Kalol, Billimora, Petlad etc.

Ultimately, the employers, as usual, started negotiations with Mahajan. Both the Mahajan (TLA) and the employers decided to appoint an arbitration board consisting of Khandubhai Desai, of Mahajan (TLA) as the workers' representative, and the owner of the Navjivan Mill of Kalol as the employers' representative. The board decided to give only eighty-two per cent of the Ahmedabad workers' D.A. to the Baroda workers. But the Communists and their supporters were not prepared to accept less than hundred per cent. The Mahajan (TLA) leaders of Baroda, therefore, persuaded the employers, to give ninety per cent as a compromise. Hence, the board declared its award of ninety per cent D.A. (Rana 1950:6-7, Shukla (NN):33-84).

And the textile workers of Baroda continued to get ninety per cent of Ahmedabad workers' D.A. until 1974, when it was made hundred per cent.
Spread of Unionism Among Other Sections of the Working Class

Until now the working class movement was mainly confined to the textile workers in Baroda. This was because, the bulk of the work-force of the city was employed in the textile mills (Pathak 1939:125).

However, earlier some efforts were made to organize the sweepers of Baroda Municipality and the press and transport workers by the Communists. But they were not very viable organizations. The Communists tried to mobilize the workers of all industries, including the textile, press and municipal workers, around the D.A. issue in 1941, under the banner of Baroda State Kamdar Parishad, without any visible success.

During the later years of the second war however the pinch of rising prices and increasing hardship was felt by the other workers. Besides, the successful encounters of the textile workers also demonstrated to them the usefulness of unity and organization. Consequently the first among the other workers to unite were the railway employees of Gayakwadi Baroda State (G.B.S.) Railways. They formed their union in 1945.

**G.B.S. Railwaymen's Union**

The G.B.S. Railways were in the control of Baroda state since 1921. The total staff, including broad gauge, narrow gauge and locomotives, was around 4000 employees by 1945. But there was no union of railwaymen, nor was there any union of other government servants. The worsening economic situation during the war had aroused them. The B.B. & C.I. Railway workers of British India, with whom the employees of the G.B.S. Railways had to work, had their own union
and also got better salaries and other advantages like grain shops etc. This created a feeling of deprivation among the G.B.S. workers and therefore they decided to organise. The Communist leaders, Shantaram Sabnish, Vasant Joglekar, Bal Potdar, Bhalchandra Trivedi and others who acquired fame for their militancy were contacted for guidance. B.N. Joshi, V.K. Menon and others were the militant railwaymen who took the initiative to form the union. It was almost like a conspiracy. The fear of penalization compelled them to collect union fees very secretly. By this time D.A. was announced for the railwaymen of the British railways, B.B. & C.I. This precipitated action by the G.B.S. Railway employees. They went on a token strike for one day in 1945 to demand D.A. This unexpected and complete strike was a surprise to the General Manager and the top management of the G.B.S. Railways. They rushed to contact the workers and their leaders and promised to settle their demand for D.A. soon. After three months the D.A. was declared. This victory boosted the morale of the workers and the union membership almost reached 100 per cent.

Thus the G.B.S. Railwaymen's Union was formed. But its association with the Communist leadership was feared to bring retribution from the state government (Anadkat 1967:166). Therefore, to give respectability to the union, they selected Basulkhan Pathan, the leading advocate, Mahajan-(TLA)-advisor and a person esteemed by the state (who also was elected to state assembly around 1948), as their President. As the Vice-President they selected H.R. Gokhale, who had started working in public life since 1942 after becoming an Advocate. Formally he was with the Praja Mandal, but ideologically he was closer to the Communists.
The Third Phase (1946-1960):

Spread of Unionism and Further Split in the Movement

Thus, by the end of the second world war, interacting influences of economy and policy were more noticeable on the working class movement. This was because during the war the employers earned huge profits, but the workers lost due to rising prices and the erosion of their real wages. This economic division sharpened the class cleavages and generated social tensions. These tensions were fueled by a new political awakening created by the national independence movement in India. Therefore, the spread of unrest, unionism and intense industrial conflict was more noticeable all over the country during this period. In Baroda too, the teachers, bank employees, electric workers, engineering workers, municipal employees, palace employees, bidi workers and others had formed their unions, and launched their struggles in quick succession (Rana:1950).

In 1946, three hundred postmen went on a hartal for twelve days as a part of the country-wide strike of postal workers declared by the All India Postal Union. In 1947, four thousand employees of G.B.S. Railways went on strike from August 1, in order to press for their demands. The strike was withdrawn on August 15, under the public pressure because the country achieved independence on that day. In 1948, workers of Shree Dinesh Woollen Mills struck work for forty five days for bonus payments. In the same year workers of the New India Mill went on a strike in support of their demands for more wages.

Emergence of INTUC and HMS

In 1947 a decision to establish INTUC at the national level
was taken by the Congress leadership. Major Mahajan of Gujarat (TLA) immediately affiliated itself with the INTUC. By this time, about a dozen Socialists had already started the Socialist Party in Baroda under the inspiration of Chhotubhai Purani. In 1948, H.R. Gokhale who was till then in Praja Mandal but ideologically closer to the Communists and therefore working for Red Flag Unions, decided to join the Socialist Party and form the Baroda unit of HMG. The newly formed HMS launched a number of struggles. In 1949, four hundred employees of the Maharaja's household department (Khangi staff) whose service were discontinued due to the merger of the Baroda State, launched an agitation under the inspiration of HMG for alternative employment or adequate compensation. In the same year, electric workers' strike created complete blackout in the city for a number of days. Another event of that year was a general hartal declared by a number of trade unions in support of the Maharaja's Khangik staff's struggle. It was the first ever sympathy strike in the city which led to the creation of the Baroda Bandh (Dhamdhere 1965:18-20).

Thus, the trade union movement had made its inroads into the white collar and non-textile workers too. It may be noted that the influence of the Communist leadership of AITUC and/or the Socialist leadership of HMG was clearly visible in the non-textile and white collar workers. Major Mahajan (TLA) which joined the newly formed INTUC confined its activities mainly to the textile workers. As a result, Mahajan (INTUC) emerged as a major industrial union of textile workers, having very limited influence among the other workers, who were of course, in a minority.
Merger of Baroda State and New Labour Laws

After the merger of Baroda State into the Bombay province in 1949, all the State and the Central Government laws were applicable to it. As far as trade unions were concerned, the following two labour laws may be mentioned here: (i) The Bombay Industrial Relations Act of 1946 (B.I.R. Act) and (ii) The Industrial Disputes Act of 1947 (I.D. Act). The former is the State Government's law and is applicable to the following main industries: cotton textile, silk textile, textile processing, cooperative banks, sugar and electricity industries. The I.D. Act is a Central Government law and is applicable to the rest of industries which are not covered by the former. Both these laws were formulated with a view to avoiding industrial conflict and therefore, provide for an elaborate procedure of conciliation, compulsory adjudication and voluntary arbitration. The major difference between the two is that the B.I.R. Act has a provision of compulsory recognition of the majority unions of the employees and the employers as the sole bargaining agents in the entire industry of the region, whereas the I.D. Act does not have any such provision. It does not even provide for compulsory recognition of a majority union in a single plant. As a result, in the industries not covered by B.I.R. Act, multiplicity of unions has become the rule.

In accordance with the B.I.R. Act, the Bombay Government recognised Najoor Mahajan (INTUC) as the sole bargaining agent, as the representative of workers, and the Federation of Mills and Industries of Gujarat, as a representative of employers in the textile industry of Baroda. This paved the way for peaceful settlement of industrial disputes through negotiations and arbitration at the industry or plant-level in the textile industry of Baroda.
Before the merger of Baroda State, Majoor Mahajan (TLA) leaders were generally trying to settle the disputes through negotiations or arbitration with the employees. Even the settlements between the mill owners and Majoor Mahajan of Ahmedabad (TLA) were implemented at Baroda. For instance, in 1948 the wages of Ahmedabad textile workers were standardized by a court decision. To implement this decision at Baroda, an arbitration board was appointed consisting of Khandubhai Desai and Chimanbhai Shah as the representatives of the Mahajan (INTUC) and Shantilal Mangaldas and Surendra Maganlal as the representatives of the Federation of Mills and industries on it. The board decided, after a detailed discussion, to give ninety per cent of the D.A. of the Ahmedabad textile workers to the textile workers of Baroda (Shukla(ND):83-84). The decision was accepted by all the employers and workers. Such settlements on Ahmedabad-basis were facilitated by the fact that some of the textile mills of Baroda were owned by the mill owners of Ahmedabad on one hand, and on the other Majoor Mahajan (TLA-INTUC) of Baroda was also guided by its head office of Ahmedabad.

Therefore, after the application of this legislation, both the Mahajan and the employers found it more convenient to settle most disputes regarding wages, work conditions, rationalization and other such issues by negotiation. In certain cases, where such settlement was not possible the disputes were referred to compulsory adjudicating machinery, the decisions of which were invariably accepted by all concerned. It may be noted here that not a single dispute has caused strike in the textile industry since the merger. Thus, the B.I.R. Act has contributed in a great measure, to promote industrial harmony in the textile industry of Gujarat in general and
Baroda in particular. Because under this law a strike almost on any issue is made illegal. More importantly inter-union rivalry is not permitted by this law as it recognizes only one union as the sole bargaining agent. All the same, the policy of Majoor Mahajan (TMA-INTUC-NLO) to avoid strikes is also equally responsible for the prevalence of peace in the textile industry of Baroda.

Continued Inter-Federation Competition and Spheres of Influence

After the merger of Baroda State into Bombay province the textile industry remained as the only major industry almost up to 1960. Naturally, therefore, some determined efforts to form rival unions and obtain the status of the sole bargaining agent in this industry were made by other federations during this period.

Alliance of HMS and AITUC Against INTUC

In the early 1950s, the leaders of HMS took up the issue of the night shift workers who were permanently kept on the same shift. This sectional demand based on real interests created a rift between the day and the night shift workers. Nevertheless the HMS leaders won this case and the principle of shift rotation was accepted by all.

Encouraged by this victory and the inroads made into the Majoor Mahajan (INTUC) strong-hold, the Socialists attempted to challenge the status of Majoor Mahajan (INTUC) as the recognised union in the textile industry of Baroda under the B.I.R. Act. They did this by forming a united front of the Socialists and the Communists in 1954. They formed the Swantra Kandar Union. Rao Saheb Harshadrai Mehta, was the President of this union. Vasant Mahendle of Red Flag (AITUC) and Sanat Mehta of HMS were the Vice-Presidents.
Ranalkar, a former Communist and Red Flagger but at that time working in HMS, was one of its Secretaries. They pressured the Government to verify the membership of Mahajan vis-a-vis their Swatantra Kamdar Union by secret ballot in order to decide the majority union. The Swatantra Union lost the poll by a small margin. The leaders of this union attributed their failure to the employers’ favouritism to the Mahajan (INTUC). Shortly after this defeat the united front fizzled out, and the Communists and the Socialists parted company in 1958.

However, another instance of cooperation between the two was on a non-local issue when in 1960 the central government employees declared an all-India strike which was opposed by the Mahajan (INTUC) (Bhrahmbhatt 1966:55-56).

**INTUC, HMS and AITUC: Spheres of Influence**

In this period the Major Mahajan (INTUC) strengthened its position by consolidating its textile union and also by forming new unions in engineering (Jyoti Ltd.) pharmaceutical/chemical (Alembic Chemicals) and in glass (Alembic Glass) industries.

On the other hand the HMS extended its influence in the non-textile industry by forming a number of unions. Out of all these unions, the Chemical Mazdoor Sabha, which organized the workers of the Sarabhai group of industries, became its strongest union. During this period the HMS had successfully faced an organizational crisis created by the exit of its founder leader H.R. Gokhle who was replaced by a collective leadership of Sanat Mehta, Murlidhar Ranaliker and G.G. Paradkar (Dhamdhere 1965:87).
The third federation, AITUC, however, remained confined to a few engineering plants. This was partly because, its leaders, who were also the leaders of the Communist Party, were preoccupied during the later half of the period with the political movement to have a separate state of Gujarat (Anadkat 1967:171-174). Thus, this period ended with the formation of the Gujarat state on May 1, 1960.

**The Fourth Phase (1961 to 1983):**

**Increasing Political Competition and the Consequent Split in the Movement**

Since in 1960 the Gujarat state was formed a new era of state politics began in this region. The Sangram Samitis formed by the Communists who were working in the then existing regional party, Janata Parishad, took up the issue of the revision of the D.A., which enjoyed popular support of the working class in the city and the State, but was opposed by the Mahajan (INTUC). The issue, however, was successfully settled which enhanced the influence of the Samitis. But soon the influence of the Communists was reduced to a cipher due to the Chinese War in 1962. The war led to a crack down on the Party by the Government and finally a split in the Party.

**Emergence of BMS, CITU & NLO And Factions in HMS**

This phase is also marked by the two other wars, one in 1965 and another in 1972, with Pakistan causing great economic strains and resultant politico-industrial unrest. After the debacle in the Chinese war and consequent economic adversities faced by the nation, the popularity of the Congress Party had gone down considerably in the late sixties. By this time the rightist parties, including
the Bhartiya Jan Sangh, were making their mark at all-India level. In order to further strengthen its position, the Jan Sangh decided to extend its influence in trade union movement. Thus, by 1964, Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) was expanded at all-India level. In 1970 there was a split in the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), and the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) was formed as the trade union front of the CPI(M), and the AITUC remained with CPI. In 1972, the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) was split and the National Labour Organization (NLO) came into existence having allegiance to the former Congress(O), as the INTUC preferred to remain loyal to the Congress(R). In the same year some PSP workers decided to join Congress(R) thereby creating a rift in BMS between those who joined Congress(R) and those who opposed it (Karnik:1978). The effects of all these developments were felt in Baroda.

Thus, in this period initially Majoor Mahajan (INTUC), AITUC and BMS were the only competing federations. In 1964 the BMS and in 1970 the CITU also joined the fray. Since both these federations were new, at times, they had to encroach upon the 'territory' of the existing federations; this increased the inter-federation hostilities, and industrial unrest. In 1972 Majoor Mahajan left INTUC to form NLO. Hence the INTUC was completely wiped out of the city. But those PSP workers of Baroda who joined Congress(R) under the leadership of Sanat Mehta (BMS) preferred to retain their ties with BMS instead of affiliating their unions with INTUC. A few Congressmen tried to revive INTUC in the city in the early 1970s. But, until 1975 it could not emerge as a viable organization. And immediately after it made a fresh start, like other new federations,
it tried to extend its influence partly by capturing the unions of other federations and partly by forming unions in public sector units with the explicit or implicit encouragement of the ruling party, as alleged by its rivals. Within HMS also the Sanat Mehta faction (of Congress(R) supporters) and the Paradkar faction (of Socialists) emerged and started competing with each other to control their own unions.

Rise of Congress(R), Change in Political Climate and Increase in Industrial Conflicts

In terms of political support during this period the Majoor Mahajan (INTUC) enjoyed the continuous support of the state Government until 1972. For, at the outset the undivided Congress and later Congress(O), was the ruling party in Gujarat till it was replaced by the Congress(R) in 1972. This helped Mahajan (INTUC), to a great extent, in maintaining its stronghold. Because, until then the decision to refer an industrial dispute to adjudication, under the I.D. Act, was made by the Government. Thus, if at the conciliation level the contesting parties fail to arrive at any settlement the labour ministry of the state Government could use its discretion to make reference to the adjudication machinery. In many cases, therefore, the labour minister at the state, who was invariably until then a representative of Majoor Mahajan (INTUC), could use his offices in favour of the unions of Mahajan (INTUC) and, at times, even against its rivals.

In 1972 when Congress(R) replaced Congress(O) in the state as a ruling party, Sanat Mehta (HMS) of Baroda became the Labour Minister. He, who had still retained his ties with HMS, removed this discriminatory power of the state and made it almost automatic...
for any dispute under I.D. Act to be referred to adjudication, if it failed to be settled at the conciliation level. This measure, along with the loss of political support experienced by the Mahajan, as it separated itself from INTUC to form NLO, loosened its grip particularly in the non-textile industry governed by the I.D. Act. In addition, the Engineering Wage Board's award declared this period further helped the rival federations, to extend their influence in the engineering industry by formulating new charters of demands in view of the award. The AITUC took the maximum advantage of this opportunity in extending its influence in the engineering industry by demanding wage increase in several engineering plants of the city.

Sanat Mehta, as the then Labour Minister of Gujarat State, introduced a few amendments in the B.I.R. Act also. For instance, he abolished the previous provision of the Act whereby the recognized trade union alone had the right to represent a worker's case in the labour courts. Now, with the new amendment a worker also got the right to represent his own case, without the help of the union, if he so desired. Besides, a compulsory provision of the Joint Management Councils, with elected representatives on its Board, was also made applicable for all those industrial establishments employing more than 500 workers. (Mehta:1972). These measures, the Mahajan (NLO) leaders alleged, were taken deliberately by Mehta and his Congress Party(R), to weaken the hold of Mahajan (NLO) in the textile industry. However, the Mahajan (NLO) managed to retain its stronghold.

Another significant feature of this period is the change in the political climate after the formation of Congress(R) under the
leadership of Mrs. Indira Gandhi, who initially took many progressive measures such as abolition of the privy purses of the former Maharajas, nationalization of banks, liberalization of credit facility for the poor, and provision of the compulsory minimum bonus of 8.33 per cent under the slogan of Garibi Hatao. (Remove Poverty). This naturally raised the expectations of the masses in general, and of working class in particular. Therefore this period witnessed an unprecedented increase in the number of strikes even among the white-collar workers such as teachers, bank employees and government servants. The increase in the industrial unrest can be inferred from the fact that between 1961-80, 249 disputes have been registered in the city out of which only 7 per cent (18 out of 249) disputes were registered between 1961-65, while 16 per cent (40 out of 249) between 1966-70, 17 per cent (42 out of 249) between 1971-75 and as many as 60 per cent (149 out of 249) in the last five years of the period, between 1976-80 (Table 2.1).

Emergency and Afterwards: Politics of Trade Unionism

At the national level, however, a number of political developments took place such as the declaration of the internal emergency by Mrs. Gandhi in 1975, resulting in the curtailment of democratic rights, including those of trade unions, and the adoption of strict economic measures such as the Compulsory Deposit Scheme, the withdrawal of the previous benefit of bonus etc. This, on the other hand, led to the unification of some opposition parties in the Janata Party and the formation of the joint front of their trade union federations viz. BMS (anti-Congress (R) faction), BMS, NLO, and CITU against INTUC at the national level.
The AITUC which supported Congress(R) during this period remained aloof but soon joined them in 1977 after the victory of the Janata Party. At Baroda also these federations followed this policy of the national alliances.

Remarkably, the local leadership of INTUC during the emergency period did not oppose the policy of Compulsory Deposit Scheme and reduction in bonus among other measures taken by the Congress(R) government which were interpreted as anti-working class by the rival federations. But immediately after the defeat of the Congress (R) in the 1977 general elections it started agitating against the Janata Party's Government for not fulfilling its election promises and not withdrawing these "draconian" measures.

On the other hand its rival federations, particularly the HMS (Paradkar faction) BMS, CITU, and Majoor Mahajan (NLO) were also put into an awkward position by the Janata Party's indecisiveness in implementing their pro-working class promises given in the election manifesto. This necessitated them to jointly agitate against the Janata Government under the banner of Samyukt Samiti (The Joint Workers' Committee). However, the Majoor Mahajan (NLO), the supporter of Congress(0), remained away from these agitations indicating its difference of opinion from the rest. Later on the tensions further developed between the different constituent units of the Janata Party which finally led to its disintegration in 1980. This necessitated the realignments in the joint fronts of the trade union federations. With the emergence of Bhartiya Janata Party the BMS parted its company from the others. Thus, the latest situation at Baroda is that the AITUC, HMS (Paradkar faction) and
CITU the three radical or the leftist federations collaborate with each other, while the Mahajan (NLO), INTUC and BMS, the three reformist or the rightist federations, have their independent programmes. Thus, national political developments considerably affected the local trade union scene in this period.

**Ideology, Politics And Inter-Federation Relations**

**Some Emerging Trends**

Since all these federations attempt to organise workers, one of the natural consequences is the inter-federation competition. This is further intensified by their varying ideological orientations, rival political allegiances and also by the fact that the status of a federation is generally measured by its numerical strength. One of the commonest tendencies in such a situation is to increase the union membership and to maintain the hold over this membership by resisting the efforts of the rivals to enter into one's own stronghold. This obviously requires continuous efforts to satisfy the workers by setting their grievances. But such efforts, at times, do not succeed without the cooperation of management or in some cases that of Government. Therefore, at times, the rivals succeed in capturing one another's unions and increase their strength.

**Inter-Federation Competition**

In Baroda all federations are locked up in a multicronered battle trying to capture one another's unions, wherever it is possible. For instance, one leader of INTUC said:

"...Once we had declared a strike in Gujarat Construction Company. The employers were not prepared to compromise with us. After sixty days of the strike the AITUC captured our union. This infuriated us. Afterwards we also started capturing AITUC's unions just to retaliate."
This, as the INTUC leader observed, has double purpose. If a federation captures a union of a rival federation it is not only a positive gain for the former, but also a definite loss to the latter, both in terms of numerical strength and prestige.

Some times we find inter-federation defections also. That is, a trade union, affiliated to one federation, may on its own decide to leave the former and join another federation. For example, as a BMS leader said, the union of the workers of the National Machine Manufacturing Company (NMM) was with BMS. But, there were some workers in the union who wanted to remove the canteen manager, who according to them was a Chamche (henchman) of the management. Once they found a lizard in curd supplied in the canteen. This, the BMS leader said, they might even have concocted. But, on this ground they wanted to go on strike. Therefore, they approached the BMS leader, who refused to oblige them. Hence, they defected to AITUC. The leader of AITUC, however, had a different story to tell. According to him, the workers of NMM were discontented with the leadership of BMS as it was alleged to be soft with the management. He further alleged that even the representatives of this Union did not know the details of the contract signed by the BMS with the NMM Management, apart from the fact that the contract was not fully implemented. Hence, according to the AITUC leader, the workers of NMM joined AITUC out of their frustration with BMS. Thus, frustration with a federation caused by (a) its failure in solving their problems or in satisfying their legitimate or illegitimate demands, or by (b) its leadership's attitude or policies provoke workers to join another federation either individually or en masse. In such
defections the ideological considerations do not play any important role.

In the words of an HMS leader:

...Instead of electing a new outside leader through, constitutional procedure, they 'elect' a new federation, and in the process, at times, they lose whatever money they have deposited with the former federation, in the way of subscription or donation. But it speaks about both, the leadership which is often accused, rightly or wrongly, to be too authoritarian and the workers who are generally too ignorant, suspicious and unnecessarily touchy...

As the INTUC leader said, it is easy to welcome a new union coming from another federation but it is difficult to retain it. Both the union and its new federation look at each other with mutual caution and/or suspicion. Because of their past experiences, each one is inclined to believe that one party is trying to use the other as an instrument. Secondly, the pending demands of the union become a liability to their new federation. If these demands are not immediately settled by the new federation, they may go to some other federation.

As a matter of fact in some cases, the unions have gone from one federation to the other and again gone back to the previous one or joined still another federation. In an extreme case of the union of Shri Dinesh Mills the workers were originally organized by Majoor Mahajan (TLU). Then in the late 1940s, Murlidhar Ranalkar who was at that time with the Communist Party captured it. Afterwards, when he joined HMS in 1950 the union of the Dinesh Mill workers also followed him and joined the HMS. However, in the middle 1950s the union went back to Majoor Mahajan (INTUC). After a long period of
association with Mahajan, the members of the union revolted against it in the 1970s. Since then they changed their loyalties quite frequently. For instance, first they accepted the leadership of the Workers' Committees of the Communist League. In the meanwhile they explored the possibility of joining the BMS. Then they accepted Sanat Mehta of the BMS as their leader. After a brief honeymoon with him they deserted him. Then they contemplated, for a while, to accept the leadership of Lalitchandra M. Patel a local businessman and a Congress leader of the city who actually had nothing to do with the trade union movement. Perhaps his only qualification was that he was the Mayor of the city and an important Congress leader, having the caste-tie with their employer. But soon they changed their mind and decided to go back to Major Mahajan (NLO). Still undecided, some of them joined INTUC. Finally, they were divided between Mahajan (NLO) and INTUC. Of course, this is a very unusual example of so frequent about-turns. But it is indeed a telling incident since the members of the union were certainly not greenhorns in trade unionism. It not only illustrates the tendency of some workers to join a federation/leader depending upon their assessment of its/his capacity to deliver the goods without regard to their explicit ideology, but also shows that the latter are not always fastidious enough to counteract this tendency.

It must be noted, in passing, that this type of competition between these federations is chiefly confined to the non-textile industry. In the textile industry for the reasons discussed earlier Major Mahajan (NLO) has almost complete monopoly over the workers, which is seldom ever successfully challenged by other federations.
Inter-Federation Competition And Rivalry: Some Strategies And Consequences

This kind of inter-federation competition generates rivalry, leading to several strategies adopted by the competing federations to protect, and, if possible, to enhance their membership.

One of the strategies is to develop multiplex bonds with the members. However, it is adopted, to some extent, by only two federations namely Majoor Mahajan (INTUC-NLO) and HVS. They have tried to, so mainly by forming cooperatives. Majoor Mahajan has formed about ten credit and consumer cooperative societies. The HVS has formed two industrial cooperatives, one of bidi workers and another of furniture polish workers. The Majoor Mahajan (INTUC-NLO) also undertakes a few more welfare programmes for its members. Such as running libraries, balwadis, sewing classes family welfare programmes etc. While HVS had organized housing cooperative societies and a few social gatherings for the workers and their family members. But this strategy has not become a dominant form of activity in either of the two federations.

It requires additional staff to undertake such activities. But most of the federations except Majoor Mahajan face the problem of the scarcity of resources, both human and material, therefore they say that they are unable to undertake such activities.

In such a situation, survival becomes the main goal. And one of the commonest strategies in this regard is to maintain the hold over the existing unions. For this purpose they adopt various tactics. One of the tactics in this regard is to keep workers dependent upon the federation leadership, by keeping as much control as
possible on the crucial information, particularly when the leaders of a federation suspect that the workers for whom they fight are likely to defect to a rival federation. For instance they do not divulge many details of the contract signed with the management or the details of their disputes, including the registration number of their case in the industrial tribunal/court. Because, if the workers do not know their case number or other details of the dispute it becomes difficult for them to transfer it to the other federation. Many federation leaders complain against one another for following this practice. But, it seems this tactic can be effective only with the less educated workers.

Another tactic, sometimes adopted, is to outmaneuver the rival federation by giving a jolt to it in the plant with the help of an obliging management. For example, the BMS leader alleged that when he formed a rival trade union in Jyoti Ltd., an elite engineering plant, against the union of Mahajan (INTUC) the news of the registration of his union reached the leaders of Mahajan (INTUC), who immediately informed the management. As a result, two active supporters of the new union were immediately dismissed by the management. The workers then went on fast unto death. They were reinstated after a few days. But a number of active supporters of the union were subsequently transferred to other departments resulting in the loss of about fifty rupees each in their monthly emoluments, due to the loss of certain privileges such as over-time.

According to this leader, the influence of Major Mahajan (INTUC) in the Labour Commissioner's office of the State, due to its Congress-connection, was so much that till early 1970s the Government
officers themselves used to pass on the news of the registration of a rival union to the main office of Mahajan in Ahmedabad, who in turn used to transmit the news to the concerned branch offices for necessary action.

Just as a federation enjoying political support of the ruling party can win some favours both from the Government and from the management of private as well as public sector units, the federations who do not enjoy such support are compelled to adopt an agitational approach. It is, therefore, not difficult to understand why even BMS and INTUC, who believe in the ideology of industrial peace do not hesitate to declare strike and launch agitations as and when they found it necessary.

**Functional and Dysfunctional Consequences of the Inter-Federation Competition**

This type of competition, however has both functions and dysfunctions. One of the functions of the inter-federation competition is that more and more workers become organized. Secondly, it also increases awareness among workers about various working class problems through propaganda and counter-propaganda of these federations. However, it has its own dysfunctions too. For example, in such a situation of acute rivalry each federation is anxious to see that its workers/unions do not defect to their rivals. But their overconcern with such possible defections compels them to protect their irresponsible supporters who indulge in gross indiscipline. One HMS leader said that they had to protect some of their union members in the Daroda Dairy, knowing fully well that they were involved in a theft and that they were the defaulters. There are
number of such instances in almost every federation.

Further, this competition, at times, also leads to propaganda against the rival federations to create distrust or confusion among the workers about the federation with which they have been affiliated. Sometimes, it also amounts to spreading rumours or character assassination by alleging that certain federation leaders have been bought up by the management or that they are hand-in-glove with the latter or that they have misappropriated the union funds and so on. This, at times, creates not only distrust about one particular federation or its leadership but also about all the federations, as most of them make similar allegations and counter-allegations against each other. Thus, the distrust is generalized and despondency is diffused. For instance, it is not uncommon to hear some workers saying "Yeh Sub Chor Hai" (all these people are cheats).

Thus, the inter-federation competition has been partly responsible for the creation of a trade union culture which is not quite conductive to healthy trade unionism.

Inter-Federation Cooperation: The Politics of Alliances

In spite of the competition, these federations often cooperate also. Because ultimately they share a common concern about the working class. But, interestingly, never in the recent history of Baroda have all federations united on a common working class issue. Then the trade union movement was in its embryonic stage, the Communists and the Mahajan leaders united on one or two issues, against the employers. But many a times some federations unite against their rivals. Generally, for instance, AITUC, CITU, HMS and BMS unite against Majoor Mahajan (INTUC-NLO) and/or INTUC. In the earliest
instance of such cooperation discussed above, HMS and AITUC had
joined hands in the early 1950s to challenge the status of the recog-
nised union enjoyed by the Mahajan (INTUC) in the textile industry.
But the move failed and fizzled out.

On some occasions, though infrequently, they also unite for some
large cause. For example, Samyukta Kambdar Samiti of Baroda was formed
in the 1970s in Baroda under which AITUC, BMS, HMS and CITU organised
several programmes and agitations on the issues of common interest
such as to protest against Bhootlingam Committee, Industrial Rela-
tions Bill, Compulsory Deposit Scheme, and reduction in bonus. But
in such protests also the target generally is the ruling party and
its trade union federation. Interestingly, INTUC and Majoor Mahajan
(NLO) have never formed such united fronts with each other though
ideologically they are very close. Majoor Mahajan (NLO) however had
once formed a joint front with BMS, CITU and HMS when all these
federations, along with their patron political parties, had united
at national level to challenge Congress(R) in the 1977 general ele-
cctions, held immediately after the withdrawal of internal emergency.
However, since AITUC, along with CPI, supported the Congress(R)
and its emergency rule it remained away from this alliance. But
after the defeat of Congress(R) in the elections, it joined hands
with BMS, CITU and HMS.

Thus, these instances of cooperation or joint fronts are no more
than strategic alliances based on political considerations. Generally,
the federations associated with the opposition parties find it ex-
pedient to unite with one another against that of the ruling party,
without regard to their ideological considerations. In fact, change
In political equations, at times, compells them to change their politics also. As in the case of INTUC, the change in their stand on labour problems, immediately after the defeat of the Congress Party(R) in 1977 general elections, was based on political considerations rather than ideological convictions. The same is true about AITUC's support to Congress(R) during the emergency and its alliance against INTUC and Congress(R) after 1977 elections.

Besides, since these alliances are politically motivated, there is always a feeling of uneasiness among the allies due to their conflicting political ambitions. There is always an undercurrent of mutual suspicion and distrust. For instance, it is not uncommon to hear one federation leader complaining against the another for not mobilising all his members in full strength in processions and meetings jointly organised by all of them. As one CITU leader said:

They (the leaders of the other federations)
want to share the platform but do not want
to share the workers. They are afraid that
their members would be influenced by the leaders
of the rival federations.

A noteworthy feature, however, emerging out of these alliances is that AITUC, CITU and BMS the three leftist federations frequently align with one another in organising the joint fronts. But, the three rightist federations BMS, INTUC and Majoor Mahajan (NLO) have never joined hands among themselves, not withstanding their ideological affinity. INTUC being associated with the ruling party has always been the target of attack not only from the leftists but also from the other two rightist federations.

At the end it may be said that the inter-federation competition and cooperation are determined more by the political exigencies than by ideological commitments. Nevertheless, the movement at
the local level acquires political overtones, because of these processes.

**Concluding Remarks**

In this chapter we analysed the environment in which the federations attempt to organize the workers. Examining this environment in a historical perspective we saw that the interacting influences of (i) inter-federation competition (ii) state's politics and its legal framework and (iii) larger politics shape the local trade union movement.

The above events illustrate the systemic relationship between the trade union movement and the state. So long as the state did not consider the trade union as a legal institution the trade union activities were considered as "antisocial", "illegal" and "conspirational" and, therefore, were held in low esteem. Nevertheless, when the working class was unionized and its militancy increased, the legitimacy was conferred upon the movement by passing the following labour laws in the Baroda State: (i) The Factories Act was passed in 1930 and revised in 1940. (ii) The Trade Union Act was passed in 1938. (iii) The Bombay Payment of Wages Act of 1936 was made applicable to the territories of the state in 1940. (v) The Workmen's Compensation Act was passed in 1940. (vi) Maternity Benefit Act was passed in 1940. (vi) Trade Disputes Act was also passed by the Baroda State (Shah 1942:147).

It may be noted, however, that Baroda was one of the few exceptional native states like Mysore, Hyderanad and Gwalior, where legal protection was provided to the workers so soon. In the other states the workers were not permitted to organize unions or agitate until they were integrated in the Indian union.
Yet, the feudal state of Baroda did not give full autonomy to the movement, since it refused legal recognition to the Red Flag Unions of the Communists. As a result the Majoor Mahajan (TLA) acquired the monopoly of legal right to settle the disputes with the employers in the textile industry, which was the main industry in that period.

Historically, the Majoor Mahajan (TLA) believing in the Gandhian ideology of class collaboration and industrial peace, and the Communists espoused to the Marxist ideology of class conflict have been pitted against each other almost from the inception of the movement. The Mahajan (TLA), believes in peaceful settlement of disputes through arbitration and adjudication which was one of the reasons why it was acceptable to the employers and the state in the pre-independence period. After independence and after joining INTUC it continued to adhere to the same policy. Rather, Majoor Mahajan's (TLA) policy became the national policy, after the formation of INTUC, to which Mahajan (TLA) was the main source of strength. This policy, and the political support of Congress Party, helped Mahajan (INTUC) to fortify its position further in the post-independence period. Yet, its gain was not without a loss. Because, many a time it had to support the Congress Government against any agitation launched by its opponents on genuine working class demands. For instance, when the central Government employees declared a nationwide strike in 1960 it was supported by AITUC and HMS at local as well as national level. But Mahajan (INTUC) opposed it, expressing its solidarity with the Congress Government. Likewise, when the Communists launched the movement under the banner of Sangram
Saraitis in the early 1960s, it was opposed by Majoor Mahajan (INTUC). Thus, in the process it became the target of criticism from the opponents.

On the other hand, the Communists, who have accepted the policy of class conflict, do not hesitate in declaring strikes. This was one of the reasons why they were not acceptable to the feudal Government of Baroda State. While the Baroda State did not confer legal legitimacy upon the Red Flag Unions of the Communists, the Congress Government in the independent India followed the policy of repression. However, as the feudal Government of Baroda could not eliminate the communists from the trade union field, the repressive measures of Congress Government also did not yield much dividends. For instance, the Communists were temporarily eliminated from the trade union field in 1948-49 due to their nationwide arrests under the Defence of India Act. But they re-emerged as a force in the early sixties with Sangram Samitis. Again in the 1960s the Communist Party of India faced another crisis after the Chinese War. But the indomitable Communists did manage to survive and spread their influence in the trade union movement. At present AITUC is a formidable force in the non-textile industries in Baroda, particularly with a great command in the engineering industry, which is the major industry of the city in terms of its labour force.

The legal framework adopted by the Congress Government in the independent India also considerably influenced the local movement at Baroda. Two major labour laws to be taken note of, in this context, are the Bombay Industrial Relations (BIR) Act and the Industrial Disputes(ID) Act. Both these acts are intended to discourage strikes
in favour of peaceful settlement of disputes through compulsory adjudication. But the BIR Act, which is applicable to the textile industry, among a few other industries, has a provision for compulsory recognition of a union as the industry-wide sole-bargaining agent. While the ID Act, which is applicable to most of the other industries does not have such a provision.

Under the umbrella of the BIR Act, Majoor Mahajan (INTUC-NLO) has acquired the status of the sole bargaining agent in the textile industry of entire Gujarat, including Baroda, right from the early fifties which is never successfully challenged by other federations. This, in addition to the policy of Majoor Mahajan, has been greatly responsible for the peaceful industrial relations in the textile industry.

Nonetheless, the proportion of the disputes, as mentioned above, has consistently increased over a period of time. This is because, the arena of conflict has now shifted to the non-textile industry, mainly covered under the ID Act. The ID Act has been greatly responsible for the multiplicity of trade unions in most of the non-textile industries, as it does not make any compulsory provision for a recognized bargaining agent. This, along with the emergence of so many federations, competing to organize workers at Baroda, has considerably contributed to the recent increase in the industrial conflicts in the city.

Thus, the effects of all the three strategies adopted by the Congress Party, as pointed out by Weiner (1962), to control the rising industrial unrest in independent India are visible at the local level: (i) the strategy of managing the protest by forming
its own federation INTUC (ii) the strategy of restraint and coercion and by suppressing the radicals like the Communists and (iii) the strategy of evolving a legal framework to facilitate peaceful settlement of the industrial disputes. But, corroborating Weiner (1962:4-7) it may be said that these strategies have failed in achieving their objective as indicated by the fact of continuously rising unrest.

As the analysis of the post-war period shows, the trade union movement of Baroda is increasingly influenced by the national political developments, with the spread of the influence of national federations in the city and with the emergence of a number of new federations. This resulted into increasing political polarization and splits which further intensified the already existing trade union rivalry.

Each federation is competing with the other to extend its influence among the workers. This competition is further intensified by the fact (i) that each federation is associated with a political party and (ii) that the status of a federation partly depends upon its numerical strength. But, as we observed in the foregoing analysis, the inter-federation competition has been responsible for many consequences which do not seem to be compatible with healthy trade unionism. Besides, in the process of competition, the ideological commitments are overshadowed by the political calculations. Inter-federation alliances are mainly based on political exigencies rather than ideological considerations. These uneasy alliances, determined by political equations, are largely guided by the principle of: "enemy's enemy is a friend". Nearness or distance from the locus of political power either in the State or in the Centre inspire them.
to unite or oppose. For instance the AITUC, BMS, CITU and HMS have been associated with the political parties which have been generally away from political power both in the State and the Centre. Therefore, they generally join hands with one another against INTUC and its patron party Congress. When Mahajan (NLO) dissociated itself from INTUC and Congress(R), it also joined hands with them, against INTUC, without regard to the fundamental ideological differences among the allies. Interestingly, the three leftist federations (AITUC, CITU and HMS) unite more frequently than the three rightist federations (BMS, INTUC and NLO).

This inter-federation competition, however, has some functional consequences also, in the sense that the unionism increasingly spreads. The workers, who were living in almost subhuman conditions in the early period now are becoming more and more conscious of their human rights and also of the usefulness of unity, because of the competitive efforts made by the different federations to unionize them, as reflected in the increase in the number of unions and the number of disputes. The entry of the white-collar workers in the field of unionism has further strengthened this trend of the class-based consciousness.

It may be noted that early efforts to unionise the workers could succeed in Baroda only when the efforts were made to approach them on religious and community basis. In other words, the trade union movement, which is essentially a modern class-based phenomenon, could make inroads among the traditionally unorganized workers, only when it appealed to the traditional community consciousness. This corroborates Sheth (1960) who also found this element of community consciousness in the early trade unionism.
Another noteworthy fact is that the trade union movement in Baroda was dominated by the outside leadership, of course, a typical feature of Indian trade union movement. However, the distinguishing feature of Baroda is that the initial efforts to organize the workers here were not made from within but by the persons from outside the state. The Gandhian trade union leaders of TLA from the neighbouring Ahmedabad, belonging to the British India came to Baroda to organize the workers.

Moreover at the initial stage when the trade union movement was not fully established, to give respectability to the union, and thereby to make it acceptable to the state and the employers, the symbolic heads of the unions were selected from among the professional politicians, who were not actually involved in organizing the workers. But, later on, the professional trade union leaders not only acquired their legitimate status in the movement, but also could acquire prestige in the society at large. For instance, a leader of Majoor Mahajan (INTUC-NLO) could become a syndicate member of the prestigious M.S. University of Baroda and a leader of IMS could become a minister in the state cabinet.

The leaders of these federations, who are generally politically-oriented outsiders would, however, like to work for the long-term goals as reflected in the ideologies of their respective federations. But the workers, as we saw, are generally interested in their short-term goals. Hence, the leaders of different federations try to extend their influence first by taking up the immediate and real interests of the workers, as it is amply evident from the foregoing analysis. And then try to translate these temporary movements into
permanent assets. But this process actually takes place at the plant level. Therefore in order to understand this process and also to understand the influence of the larger political forces, discussed above, at the plant level, in the following chapter we will examine a specific instance of an industrial conflict.