
Discussion Contributions on:

A Critical Appraisal of the Non-capitalist Path and the National Democratic State in Africa

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For Africa there is perhaps no area of Marxist study in greater need of theoretical elaboration and analysis than the one surrounding the choice of a road for development. Marxists of course do not require convincing that in Africa, as elsewhere, a socialist order is the only just and rational aim, and in this broad sense the word 'choice' presents little difficulty. But when immediate tactics must be considered, the questions (all interrelated) come crowding in.

Does the existing socio-economic base make practical the idea of a socialist order as an immediate perspective? If, compared with the industrial capitalist West, class crystallisation of the two historical antagonists in the struggle for socialism—the bourgeoisie and the proletariat—is still in its formative state, which social force or combination of social forces will pave the way for radical advance to the higher order? What is the special role and character of the state in a situation in which class crystallisation is still inchoate, and in which it is difficult to point to any single class strong and cohesive enough to mould society in its own image? To what extent does the external factor (the world socialist and capitalist sectors) facilitate in the one case and make difficult in the other, a shorter route from predominantly pre-capitalist formations in Africa to socialism? Is it consistent to say at one and the same time that objective conditions for an immediate leap to a socialist order are absent and yet that it is possible for all the countries to by-pass capitalism? If so, what is the character of the transitional political form which can steer such a course successfully? Above all, what is the nature and role of the class struggle during such transitional periods and in particular what independent part is to be played by the emergent working class in the different phases of these periods?

The elaboration of tactics towards the eventual establishment of a socialist order in any given region is the province of indigenous Marxists working in their own specific political and economic

situation. There are, however, a number of basic and interrelated postulates which have a more general relevance. Broadly stated these are: that the construction of socialism pre-supposes the existence of a relatively advanced modern industrial base; that a new state form must be won which will ensure social control of the means of production; that such a state cannot be won except in struggle against external and internal forces whose economic and social interests will impel them to resist the transformation; that such a struggle can only be successfully led by a revolutionary political vanguard guided by scientific socialism; and that none of these objects can be lastingly achieved without overcoming the dependence on the world capitalist economy.

Although these propositions are rarely disputed, much formulation in the discussion on the concept of a non-capitalist path tends to underplay one or other of them and reveals an internal inconsistency with the Marxist doctrine of by-passing capitalism on which the discussion is premised.

All are agreed that in the developing countries of Africa the immediate post-independence socio-economic structure was a hybrid one. Side by side with elements of the early stages of capitalism there co-existed pre-capitalist modes of production and social relations. The majority of the people were operating within the sphere of pre-capitalist formations; but the economy of the colony as a whole was, to a greater or lesser degree, moulded or used to serve imperial needs so that in one sense the pre-capitalist sectors had a link with the local or world capitalist markets which continued into the post-independence period. Engels states:

“The revolution which modern socialism strives to achieve is, briefly, the victory of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie, and the establishment of a new organisation of society by the destruction of all class distinctions. This requires not only a proletariat that carries out this revolution, but also a bourgeoisie in whose hands the productive forces of

society have developed so far that they allow of the final destruction of class distinctions. . . . Only at a certain level of development of the productive forces of society, an even very high level for our modern conditions, does it become possible to raise production to such an extent that the abolition of class distinctions can be a real progress, can be lasting without bringing about stagnation or even decline in the mode of social production."¹

Social formations rarely appear in their pure form. The use by Engels of the words "even a very high level for modern conditions" underlines the difficulty of quantifying the specific level of development which makes a society 'ripe' for an advance to a higher order. But rough as my description of Africa's developing countries may be, it enables us to conclude that in general the internal factors do not on their own correspond with the classical prerequisites for an advance to socialism which the founders of Marxism had in mind. Therefore, the question of a relatively early socialist perspective for Africa involves a consideration of the concept of by-passing capitalism in Marxist theory. This is of relevance to those situations in which capitalist production relations may already exist side by side with pre-capitalist forms but in which the capitalist mode of production is not yet dominant and the development of the productive forces, and with them the social forces, have not yet attained the level referred to by Engels. The fact that even the pre-capitalist sectors may have a connection with the

¹ F. Engels, 'On Social Relations in Russia', *Marx-Engels Selected Works*, Volume 2 (3-volume edition) p. 387.

² Frank's thesis is that the structure as a whole in the underdeveloped and dependent world is essentially capitalist with a simultaneous generation of underdevelopment in some of its parts and of economic development in others. ". . . the capitalist system effectively penetrated even the apparently most isolated sectors of the underdeveloped world and their very underdeveloped state is as much a product of capitalist penetration as the more modern sectors. The so called backward or feudal domestic areas of an underdeveloped country are no less the product of the single historical process of capitalist development than are the so called capitalist institutions of the supposedly more progressive areas." *Latin America: Underdevelopment or Socialist Revolution*, Monthly Review Press 1969 p. 5. See also *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America*, Monthly Review Press 1967. If correct this neat and dove-tailing model would seem to dispose of the whole problem of by-passing capitalism since most of the third world is in any case 'essentially capitalist'. But it is one thing to demonstrate that even the pre-capitalist sectors have a link with the market economy (which is the position even in countries like Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau) and quite another to characterise the economy as essentially capitalist. The latter proposition has meaning in Marxism only when it can be demonstrated that the

market economy does not, in itself, warrant the conclusion that the capitalist mode of production is already dominant, as suggested by A. G. Frank.²

Marx and Engels on By-passing Capitalism

Marx and Engels devoted their researches mainly to the genesis of capitalism in Western Europe and demonstrated the inexorable tendencies for capitalist property to transform itself into social property because capitalism has "itself created the elements of the new economic order by giving the greatest impulse at once to the productive forces of social labour and to the integral development of every individual producer".³

Marx was careful to make clear that this proposition does not imply that all nations are inevitably doomed to experience capitalism's 'pitiless laws', or that he was advancing "an historico-philosophic theory of the general path every people is fated to tread whatever the historical circumstances in which it finds itself".⁴ In what historical circumstances could people move from predominantly pre-capitalist societies to socialist ones? A number of theoretical speculations were posed by the classical Marxist writers, and the 20th century has witnessed a few instances where people living under pre-capitalist patriarchal forms have been integrated into a socialist structure.

Both Marx and Engels dealt with the question intermittently, when their advice was sought by the incipient Narodnik movement in Tsarist Russia. The

mode of production, the relations of production and the property relationship which are at their foundation conform to a determinate pattern. Laclau has dealt very tellingly with this aspect of Frank's thesis in *Feudalism and Capitalism in Latin America*, N.L.R. No. 67, 1971 p.19.

Drawing on the Frank thesis, Issa Shivjee (Tanzania, *The Class Struggle Continues*, Discussion paper for Development Studies, University of Dar es Salaam, 1972 p. 14-16) claims that "The capitalist relations in fact constitute the dominant mode of production" (in Africa). His contention is based on the claim that "the nature of the class holding power is . . . decisive in categorising a particular mode of production" and that in every African country including Tanzania "the ruling class are objectively serving the international capitalist system, notwithstanding the moves to disengage from it". His own stimulating analysis of Tanzania demonstrates that these statements are gross over-simplifications. In any case the fact that countries like, say, the oil kingdoms serve the international capitalist system is only one amongst a number of other (perhaps more important) indices of whether they can be regarded as capitalist, feudal or semi-feudal states.

³ Marx to *Otechestvenniye*, November 1877, *Marx-Engels Selected Correspondence*, Progress Publishers, p. 312.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 313.

Narodniks were concerned with whether the remains of communal peasant ownership could serve as a starting point for a popular movement which would leap over the entire capitalist period, and transform Russian peasant communism instantly into a modern socialist system owning communally all the means of production, and enriched with the technical achievements of the capitalist era. Can Russia, asked Marx, "... without undergoing the torments of the (capitalist) system secure all its fruits, while developing her own historical endowments?"⁵

Marx and Engels hinted that it was theoretically conceivable that the Russian commune, if it were not further undermined by the advance of capitalism, could move from its communal base (avoiding the intermediate stage of bourgeois small scale ownership) to a higher socialist form. "But," said Engels, "this could only occur if before the complete break up of communal ownership a proletarian revolution is successfully carried out in Western Europe, creating for the Russian peasants the pre-conditions requisite for such a transition."⁶

This was not to be. The expected proletarian revolution in the West did not take place, and meanwhile, the disintegration of the commune had advanced considerably. The early uncertainties which marked Marx's reflections on this question⁷ were overtaken by events and after his death Engels more emphatically discouraged Narodnik thinking on this question. Russia, he said, could not by-pass capitalism which was a necessary "historical evil which nevertheless brought compensating historical progress". Of the peasant commune Engels said "I am afraid that the institution is doomed".⁸

Lenin's Contribution

Lenin's early writings did not suffer from any ambiguities on this question. With typical fullsome verve he weighed into "Narodnik illusions and anarchist gibberish" which claimed that "Russia, for instance, can by-pass capitalist development, escape from capitalism or skip it in some way other than that of class struggle on the basis and within

the framework of this same capitalism". He laid down the much broader propositions that "Marxism teaches us that at a certain stage of its development a society which is based on commodity production and has commercial intercourse with civilised capitalist nations must inevitably take the road of capitalism", and that "in Russia the working class suffers not so much from capitalism but from the insufficient development of capitalism".⁹

In the article *Democracy and Narodism in China*, Lenin praised the sincerity and democratic enthusiasm which was evident from "every sentence of Sun Yat Sen's platform" yet described him as a "petty bourgeois socialist reactionary". This because he, like the Russian Narodniks, was holding out the possibility that "capitalism can be 'prevented' in China and that 'social revolution' there will be made easier by the country's backwardness". Lenin pointed to the inconsistency of Sun Yat Sen's 'socialist dreams' with his plan for radical agrarian reforms (land nationalisation and the break-up of feudal estates) which was not only possible under capitalism but "represents the purest, most consistent and ideally perfect capitalism".¹⁰

Even in relation to the newly created soviet workers' state, Lenin was at pains to emphasise that the term Socialist Soviet Republic implies the determination of the Soviet Government to achieve the transition to socialism and "not that the present order is a socialist order". The move towards building socialism in Soviet Russia as a whole demanded transitional and intermediate forms because it was a country in which there intermingled different types of socio-economic formations, including pre-capitalist ones which, together with small commodity production, predominated. Only six years before the October Revolution, Lenin described Russia as "one of the most benighted, medieval and shamefully backward of Asian countries".¹¹ To lay the material basis for a socialist order, even within the framework of a political dictatorship of the proletariat, it was necessary to utilise elements of capitalism (even to stimulate its controlled growth) and to direct it into channels of state capitalism as a method of increasing the productive forces in the political control of a workers' regime.¹²

It is important to note that in the context of post-October Russia the concept of by-passing capitalism as an historic stage (using selectively nevertheless

⁵ Engels quoting Marx in *Afterword to the Work on Social Relations in Russia*, Marx-Engels *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 401.

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 395. See also extract from Preface to the new Russian edition of the Communist Manifesto quoted in Marx-Engels *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 404.

⁷ Marx wrote three long drafts of a reply to Vera Zasulich in an attempt to clarify his views on this question, but eventually did not send the letter. The first draft appears in Marx-Engels *Selected Works*, Vol. 3, p. 152. Instead he sent a short and rather open-ended answer which appears in Marx-Engels *Selected Correspondence*, p. 339.

⁸ Engels to N. F. Danielson, October 17, 1893, Marx-Engels *Selected Correspondence*, pp. 464-5.

⁹ *Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution*, *Collected Works*, Vol. 9, Progress Publishers, p. 49.

¹⁰ *Collected Works*, Vol. 18, pp. 166-7.

¹¹ *Collected Works*, Vol. 18, p. 164.

¹² *The Tax in Kind*, *Selected Works*, Vol. 2 (two volumes edition) Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1947, p. 702, 713, 718.

some of its economic forms to lay a basis for socialism) was neither theoretically nor practically conceivable without a dictatorship of the working class. In the absence of this, both agrarian reform (short of socialist collectivisation, which is the end product and rarely the beginning of the process) and the encouragement of state capitalist forms, would undoubtedly generate capitalism economically and politically. This point has a vital bearing on what has been described as the national democratic state in Africa, and the nature of the class struggle there to which I shall return.

In regard to those areas of post-October Russia which were *completely* dominated by patriarchal pre-capitalist forms (such as Bashkiria, Uzbekistan, etc.) I find myself in absolute agreement with Iskenderov, who criticises the "occasional attempts" by analysts to apply this experience to the liberated countries of Asia and Africa.

"forgetting that in the case of these peoples social development took place within the framework of a single state and single economic system under the direction of a single Marxist-Leninist party at the helm of the government. It is one thing to bring a backward people up to the level of advanced peoples within a single state and quite another to effect the transition of countries thousands of miles away from the states of the socialist system and existing in entirely different social conditions. Unfortunately these basic differences have not always been taken into account."¹³

The Comintern Discussions

The first systematic attempt to elaborate some guiding theoretical principles on the question in relation to the colonial world was made at the Second Congress of the Comintern in 1920. In the commission on the national and colonial question, a lively debate took place on whether and to what extent the Communist International and the communist parties should support the broad national movements in the colonial world. The main adversaries in the debate were Lenin, who drafted the main thesis, and the Indian communist leader M. N. Roy. Roy, in a supplementary thesis, counterposed the movement of the workers and peasants to that of the national liberation movements and argued for the rejection of Lenin's proposition that communist parties should help and work with national liberation movements in Eastern countries.¹⁴

In relation to India, Roy maintained that "the masses were not infected with the national spirit"

¹³ *The Third World*, Progress Publishing House, Moscow, 1970, p. 185.

¹⁴ The polemic on this question at the Second Congress of the Comintern is summarised by G. Adhikari in *Marxist Miscellany* 1, 1970, Peoples Publishing House, Bombay, India.

and that the revolutionary movement had nothing in common with the national liberation movement. In the result it was Lenin's view which prevailed, although, influenced by the argument about the unreliability of the social forces leading most of the national liberation movements and their growing rapprochement with the bourgeoisie of the exploiting countries, he agreed to amend his draft thesis by substituting the term 'national revolutionary' for the term 'bourgeois democratic' to describe those national movements with whom alliances would advance the workers cause:

"The significance of this change is that we as communists, should and will support bourgeois liberation movements in the colonies only when they are genuinely revolutionary, and when their exponents do not hinder our work of educating and organising in a revolutionary spirit the peasantry and the masses of the exploited."¹⁵

Thus whatever alliances were created it would be the duty of the Communist International "under all circumstances (to) uphold the independence of the proletarian movement *even if it is in its most embryonic form.*" (my emphasis)¹⁶

The Comintern met at a time when a successful workers' revolutionary sweep was expected to spread to most of the advanced countries of Western Europe. Indeed doubt was expressed as to whether, without such a spread, workers' power in Russia could itself long survive. It was against this broad perspective that Lenin's main thesis held out the possibility of a relatively immediate transformation in the colonial countries. These countries could emerge from their present stage of development when the victorious proletariat of the Soviet Republics was in a position to give them support and to extend a helping hand to the "working masses." In the meanwhile, it was the duty of communist parties and of elements prepared to form communist parties "everywhere to conduct propaganda in favour of peasants' soviets and of working people's soviets, this to include backward and colonial countries. Wherever conditions permit, they should at once make attempts to set up soviets of working people".¹⁷ The thesis then turned to the question of whether these backward colonial countries could by-pass capitalism:

"The question was posed as follows: Are we to consider as correct the assertion that the capitalist stage of economic development is inevitable for backward nations now on the road to emancipation

¹⁵ Lenin, Report of the Commission on The National and Colonial Question, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 242.

¹⁶ Lenin, *Draft Thesis on the National and Colonial Questions*, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 150.

¹⁷ Lenin, *Report of Commission, op. cit.*, p. 243.

and among whom a certain advance towards progress is to be seen since the war? We replied in the negative. If the victorious revolutionary proletariat conducts systematic propaganda among them, and the soviet Governments come to their aid with all the means at their disposal—in that event it will be mistaken to assume that the backward peoples must inevitably go through the capitalist stage of development. Not only should we create independent contingents of fighters and party organisations in the colonies and the backward countries, not only at once launch propaganda for the organisation of peasants' soviets and strive to adapt them to the pre-capitalist conditions, but the communist international should advance the proposition, *with the appropriate theoretical grounding*, that with the aid of the proletariat in the advanced countries, backward countries can go over to the soviet system and, through certain stages of development, to communism, without having to pass through the capitalist stage." (my emphasis)¹⁸

This projection which, it must be emphasised, still needed an "appropriate theoretical grounding" stood in contrast to Lenin's above-quoted unequivocal condemnations of the Russian and Chinese Narodniks, who had advanced the possibility in a different form and in quite a different historical context. It partially echoed the tentative comments by Marx and Engels to the effect that insofar as any possibility existed of by-passing capitalism in 19th century Russia it was wholly dependent on the success of a proletarian revolution in the West. But Lenin added a new dimension: the creation of soviets as organs of power suitably adapted to the conditions of a pre-capitalist social system. It was thus not the remains of a pre-capitalist communal system (as in the earlier discussion) which provided one of the foundations for avoiding capitalism, but the success and the strength of proletarian power internationally and the emergence of suitably adapted soviet-type organs in the backward areas. In the event neither of these conditions ripened.

It was at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern in 1928 that the actual term 'non-capitalist road' was used for the first time, and this only in the general discussion. Attention was drawn by O. W. Kuusinen to the fact that there had been "no opportunity to make a serious enough study of the question" in order to accomplish the very important theoretical task set by Lenin namely that of "producing the theoretical substantiation of the possibility of non-capitalist development in the backward countries".¹⁹ Opinions at the Congress differed although there appears to have been wide support for the speakers who maintained that the 'road' was still feasible

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 244.

¹⁹ *VI Kongress Komintern* Records, Issue No. 4, Moscow Leningrad, 1929, p. 6.

only where there was no indigenous bourgeoisie or indigenous bourgeois regime, and that it was certainly out of the question for countries like India and China which were passing through the bourgeois democratic stage of their revolutions.²⁰ That portion of the main thesis of the Sixth Comintern Congress which dealt with the colonies in effect reverted to Roy's 1920 contention that the issue in almost all the colonies was 'class against class', and that one of the chief tasks of the newly created communist parties was to expose the reactionary role of the national bourgeoisie and the 'national reformist character' of the national movements.²¹

Summary of Pre-1960 Approach

When the 81 parties met at the World Conference in 1960 the substantiation of the theoretical framework which Lenin had considered necessary 40 years earlier was still lacking, and this area of Marxist doctrine was still in a most under-developed condition. A number of propositions (at least on my interpretation) seem common cause in the earlier attempts to elaborate the problem and it is useful at this stage to summarise them.

(1) In general both the material conditions which make possible the socialist transformation, and the connected growth of social forces capable of leading the struggle for a new society and directing it along socialist lines, emerge and are created only under capitalism.

(2) In the absence of such a social and material base the prospect of by-passing capitalism and advancing to socialism is vitally bound up with a combination of special internal and external factors. In specific situations in the past it became feasible to project the theoretical possibility of a country or a group of countries by-passing capitalism in circumstances

(a) where, in a country without an advanced capitalist industrial base, and in which communal forms of production still remain intact, a revolutionary upsurge could facilitate the move from archaic forms of communalism to socialist collectivisation. This *may* have been the position at one point in the second half of the 19th century in Tsarist Russia. *But this possibility was in any case made entirely dependent on a successful workers' take-over in the advanced capitalist countries, which would create the material and political preconditions requisite for such an advance.*

(b) where, as in the early twenties, the collapse

²⁰ The debate is referred to briefly by Iskenderov in *The Third World, op. cit.*, p. 176-7.

²¹ Mohit Sen, *Marxist Miscellany, op. cit.*; see also R. Palme Dutt, *The International*, 1964, Lawrence & Wishart, p. 209.

of capitalism in all or most of the advanced capitalist countries was considered imminent. In such event, in the colonially dominated world struggling against imperialism, the creation of peasants' and workers' organs of power—soviets suitably adapted to the pre-capitalist social and economic base—could, with the massive material and political help of the victorious proletariat in the advanced countries, provide a foundation for a move towards socialism. It was implicit in this assumption that the overwhelming victory of world socialism would result in such weakening of imperialism that external resistance to an immediate socialist orientation would not be an insuperable obstacle. Massive aid would help to break the dependence of the colonial areas on the world capitalist market and economy.

(c) where, within the borders of a single state ruled by the working class, there are backward feudal or semi-feudal regimes, they can for obvious reasons be steered into the mainstream of a socialist economy of the country as a whole. This in fact happened in the case of Uzbekistan, etc., and in Mongolia which, although a separate state, comes close to this case because of its geographic contiguity to the Soviet Union which made possible a uniquely intimate economic and political relationship with the socialist state. With some variations the same could be said about some other countries which took the socialist road without a well-developed modern industrial and social base.

The essence of the problem which in Lenin's words needs a theoretical substantiation was not the abstract one (which had been partially answered by history) of whether or not all peoples are fated to tread the same path through a capitalist economic order of the classic West European type. In this sense almost every single socialist country in the world has by-passed capitalism and the fact that most of them did so by the toleration and even the controlled encouragement of capitalist forms for short periods, does not contradict that general proposition. What needed theoretical (and practical?) grounding was the question of whether in a backward pre-capitalist country organs of power could be created with a determination to build socialism, and which could rely on sufficient help from existing socialist countries to enable them to survive and create the foundation on which socialism could be built. It is worth reminding ourselves of what Lenin actually said: "The communist international should advance the proposition, with the appropriate theoretical grounding, that with the aid of the proletariat of the advanced countries, backward

countries can go over to the soviet system and, through certain stages of development, to communism without having to pass through the capitalist stage." (my emphasis)

'Can go over to the soviet system'—that concept, certainly in the twenties, was seen as the first condition to make possible planned transitional stages; without this precondition a choice of path as between capitalism and socialism was regarded neither as practical nor relevant. That is why the issues that dominated discussions in the twenties were: the absolute need to maintain the independence of the working class movement, the relationship between the working class parties (existing and in embryo) and the national movement, and the task of creating mass organisations and setting up soviets suitably adapted to the concrete conditions but clearly dominated or guided by working class parties.

What then is the relevance of all this for today?

The 1960 World Conference

The 1960 statement of the 81 parties uses the formulation 'non-capitalist development' in relation to the newly independent areas; the first time that this term actually appears in any document of the international communist movement. The relevant paragraph reads:

"After winning political independence the people seek solutions to the social problems raised by life and to the problems of reinforcing national independence. Different classes and parties offer different solutions. Which course of development to choose is the internal affair of the peoples themselves. As social contradictions grow the national bourgeoisie inclines more and more to compromising with domestic reaction and imperialism. The people, however, begin to see that the best way to abolish age-long backwardness and improve their living standard is that of non-capitalist development. Only thus can the peoples free themselves from exploitation, poverty and hunger. The working class and the broad peasant masses will play the leading part in solving this basic social problem."²²

A lot of verbal heat has been generated about the suitability of the term 'non-capitalism' to describe even a transitional social system. It inevitably evokes the obvious question: if it's not capitalism what then is it? The negative nature of the term opens the way for an unending Talmudic type debate on the categorisation of state forms, economic formations, etc. which are, so to say, neither fish nor fowl. I shall return to this when I deal with a few of the states in Africa which have from time to time been described as taking the non-capitalist path.

²² Statement of the 81 Communist and Workers Parties, December 1960, published in *The African Communist*, No. 4, 1961, p. 4.

I believe that the above paragraph meant no more than that the newly independent states are not fated historically to go through the full development of capitalism, and that eventually, as a result of the intensification of internal social contradictions, 'the working class and broad peasant masses' will play the primary part in leading the people to a society free of exploitation. It should be emphasised that the document makes no claim about the immediate possibility of the emergence in those areas of worker and peasant dominated power structures able to begin creating conditions for socialism. Such power structures were what provided the basis for a planned advance towards socialism in all the existing socialist states, almost all of whom avoided to a greater or lesser degree the classic historical route via Western type capitalism. And it was the expectation in the early 20's that soviets could be created which made feasible the idea of an analogous process in the colonies.

What the document does say about the immediate possibilities appears in a later paragraph:

"In the present situation, favourable domestic and international conditions arise in many countries for the establishment of an independent national democracy, that is, a state which consistently upholds its political and economic independence, fights against imperialism and its military blocs, against military bases on its territory; a state which fights against the new forms of colonialism and the penetration of imperialist capital; a state which rejects dictatorial and despotic methods of government; a state in which the people are ensured broad democratic rights and freedom (freedom of speech, press, assembly demonstrations, establishment of political parties and of social organisations), the opportunity to work for the enactment of an agrarian reform and other democratic and social changes, and for participation in shaping government policy. The formation and consolidation of national democracies enables the countries concerned to make rapid social progress and play an active part in the people's struggle for peace, against the aggressive policies of the imperialist camp, for the complete abolition of colonial oppression."²³

Unfortunately, a source of much uncertainty and even confusion in some of the discussions since the document was adopted has been the blurring of an important distinction: that between the problem of by-passing capitalism, and the possibilities of building a progressive national democratic state in the post-independence period because of the 'favourable domestic and international conditions'. In the long term there is, of course, a dialectical interconnection between the two problems in the sense that the implementation of the targets set for a national democratic state will result in material and social

progress, and more-or-less favourable conditions for struggle by those forces—basically workers and peasants—without whose state hegemony the completion of the anti-colonial revolution and the eventual creation of a socialist order is not possible.

The National Democratic State

But the distinction I emphasise is of great importance. On the face of it the programme for a national democratic state is not inconsistent with the creation of a relatively progressive capitalist democracy pure and simple. It can indeed become the framework within which capitalism flowers. Upholding political and economic independence, rejecting military bases, fighting against being recolonised and dominated by foreign capital, rejecting despotic and dictatorial methods of government, ensuring broad democratic political rights and other democratic and social changes—these aims are all consistent with the less moribund stages of bourgeois democracy. Agrarian reform usually implies a redistribution of the land, the break-up of feudal and semi-feudal estates or even land nationalisation. It is a catalyst for the creation and multiplication of petty peasant proprietors producing for the market. But it does not necessarily mean socialist development; if anything, it generates small capitalists and petty bourgeois modes of social organisation and petty bourgeois ideology.

"Even the redistribution of the whole of the land in favour of the peasants and in accordance with their desires will not destroy capitalism at all but will, on the contrary, give an impetus to its development."²⁴

The creation of state sectors in order to make progress towards setting up a national industry also does not bar capitalism. It can, and in most cases does, become a "peculiar midwife of capitalist relations" and can serve to stimulate capitalist relations via state forms of capitalism.²⁵ The economic measures which are considered necessary to tackle the immediate post-independence task of creating a national industry and advancing the productive forces will, by and large, fertilise and reinforce tendencies towards capitalist rather than socialist development—especially when it is conceded that the young states (whatever path they have proclaimed) remain within the sphere of the world capitalist economy, which restricts both internal and external powers of manoeuvre. For the socialist world is still unable to provide all their development

²⁴ Lenin, *Two Tactics*, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

²⁵ K. Brutens, *Neo-Colonialism and its Socio-Economic Strategy*, *Kommunist* No. 4, 1970, translated and published by *Daily Review*, Novosti Press Agency, April 23, 1970.

²³ *Ibid.*

needs on the scale implicit in the 1920 thesis.²⁶ "The countries of Asia, Africa, Latin America cannot, of course, count that the socialist countries are able to supply all their needs for capital, equipment and technical aid. They have to meet part of their demand through imperialist countries. However, owing to the support of the international system of socialism they can act as an independent and equal partner."²⁷ (Surely, a most unrealistic expectation which has been negated by events.)

On the face of it, therefore, the implementation of the social measures which inform the concept of national democratic states tells us very little more than that a further step has been taken to advance the anti-colonial and anti-feudal revolution; a step which no doubt constitutes an historic advance,²⁸ but which lacks one of the basic ingredients to enable the society to steer even a transitional course towards socialism—the ingredient of workers' power. Without this ingredient there is no reason founded either in theory or experience for us to conclude that the national democratic state is itself a tool or instrument for the avoidance of capitalism, whatever other historically retrogressive formations it may serve to undermine. Yet in much of the writing on this question, that is precisely the status which is accorded to the national democratic state. Here is but one fairly typical example of some of the expositions by Marxist analysts on the question:

"... the state of national democracy is a transitional form of administration. The mission of this state is to pave the way for transition from pre-capitalist relations to socialism, by-passing the

²⁶ Viktor Tyagunenko, *Problems of Contemporary National Liberation Revolutions*, Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1968, p. 48.

²⁷ *National Liberation Movements—Vital Problems*, Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1965, p. 62.

²⁸ The sweeping characterisation of the decolonisation process as a more complete integration of the Third World into the imperialist sphere just does not square with reality. Whilst imperialism has found a new way in an attempt to continue its domination, it has been forced to do so from weakness rather than from strength and the new conditions in which it is forced to operate create problems for imperialism (more or less severe in different countries) which are not so easy to overcome. Despite continued pressures from neo-colonialism it would be utterly pedantic to argue that such pressures have made little difference to the possibilities of independent political expression by the newly liberated areas. Such a view ignores the part played by the socialist world in reinforcing the potential for meaningful anti-imperialist postures. Formulations which argue for the false decolonisation line appear in Franz Fanon, *The Damned, Présence Africaine* 1963, p. 141; Romano Ledda, *Social Classes and Political Struggle*, International Socialist Journal, August 1967, p.p. 561, 577; Arrighi and Saul, *Nationalism and Revolution in Sub-Saharan Africa, The Socialist Register* 1969, p. 173.

stage of capitalist development. Its political groundwork is the united national democratic front comprising all national democratic and progressive forces. The structure of the state of national democracy is determined by its class basis. Essentially and objectively this state is *from the very beginning* (my emphasis) the democratic dictatorship of the revolutionary bloc of the proletariat, peasantry and urban petty bourgeoisie. The state of national democracy cannot fulfil its mission without transcending the framework of bourgeois democracy. A revolutionary anti-imperialist, anti-feudal state of the working people, it is to accomplish the transition to non-capitalist development and the transfer of the revolution by several stages to socialist revolution."²⁹

It is clear from this and many other references to the question that, however transitional it may be, the national democratic state is regarded as something more than a structure reflecting the immediate post-independence situation. As a state form it appears to have already within it the seeds of a future socialist society. Though the process of transformation may eventually involve a number of phases, in the course of tackling the national democratic aims of the current phase the state is seen as laying the socio-economic basis for a transition to a socialist order, and moving closer to the situation from where it can proceed to construct it. The 'mission' of the national democratic state is brought closer to fulfilment as it more and more "transcends the framework of a bourgeois democracy":

"As the national democracy develops through revolution and evolution the state will gradually mould the society, creating the conditions for a step by step transition to a society in which socialist production relations will predominate."³⁰

If this formulation means that the post-independent state forms will eventually be replaced by a different state form under the control of workers and peasants which will in turn begin building socialist production relations, then it cannot be disputed. In this sense the special significance of the national democratic state is simply that within it conditions become more favourable for the working people to prosecute the class struggle. But the debate on the question goes far beyond this, and in a way which reinforces Iskenderov's assertion that "it would be premature to consider all the aspects of this complex problem fully clarified and scientifically substantiated".³¹

Perhaps the most important problem is centred around the question: How is it envisaged that the national democratic state will transcend the frame-

²⁹ *National Liberation Movements—Vital Problems*, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

³⁰ Iskenderov, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

³¹ Iskenderov, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

work of bourgeois democracy, which will, on the face of it, be erected if the political requisites laid down in the 81 Party statement are implemented? It is true that in the situation envisaged the existing or emergent bourgeoisie do not occupy the same dominant position which is typical of the classical capitalist state but the state is not worker-dominated either. The economy as a whole is still dependent on world capitalism and many of the economic measures prescribed (including the very important area of agrarian reform) will tend to generate capitalist forms and ideology. These economic measures—creating a national industry, state control of the basic development plans, state partnership with foreign or private capital, etc—do not in the absence of other factors, decide the issue. We must inevitably come back to the seminal question—the struggle for political power by the only social force capable of making a consistent phased advance towards socialism, the working people.

The Class Struggle

It is especially the question of the character of the class struggle in a national democratic type state which needs clarification and scientific substantiation.

Of the class struggle in these states it has been said:

“But as for countries that have rejected capitalism or have not yet definitely decided which road to take, here the differentiation of social and political forces that invariably follows political independence is not necessarily accompanied by the aggravation of the class struggle. In such countries aggravation of the class struggle comes when any one class attempts to overstep its prerogatives, dominate the other forces and turn the national independence won by the united effort of the people to its own advantage. This can be prevented, however, by an alliance of all progressive forces.

“On the other hand, of course, it is also possible that a local bourgeoisie, on getting on its feet economically, *might attempt* (my emphasis) with the aid of the state to establish its political dominance over the other classes and social groups and set the country on the capitalist road of development.”³²

Varga is even more explicit:

“The well-to-do sections in the former colonies, including the bourgeoisie, do not experience the same fear of the transition to socialism often encountered among these layers in the old capitalist countries.”³³

There is no basis either in theory or in experience for such an expectation. Theoretical support for it is

³² Iskenderov, *op. cit.*, p. 188-9.

³³ *Politico-Economic Problems of Capitalism*, Progress Publishers, 1968, pp. 98-99.

drawn from Lenin's reference to the possibility of compelling capitalists “to submit peacefully and to come over to socialism in a cultured and organised fashion provided they were paid well”;³⁴ but this relates to a situation in which there was already a workers' dictatorship; and even then, as it turned out, the resistance of the bourgeoisie was both violent and fierce.

The 1969 document of the Communist and Workers' Parties directly noted a tendency towards a sharpened challenge in the newly independent countries by the national bourgeoisie “which are increasingly accepting a deal with imperialism”, and remarked that “the pressing problems of social development of these states are the object not only of sharp struggle between the neo-colonialists and the peoples of these countries, but also of internal social conflicts”.³⁵

The United Democratic Front and the Working Class

The question arises whether, when dealing with some of the states which have a relatively progressive posture towards imperialism, we do not minimise or play down the class struggle by an undifferentiated encouragement of the sort of “alliances” in which independent workers' participation is either swamped or eliminated altogether. It is true that democratic alliances are necessary especially where the fundamental task facing a people is still the need to advance the national democratic revolution. But the ‘united democratic front’ has in almost all cases been expressed through a single party (where it has not been replaced by the army) which emerged during the pre-independence period (as in Ghana) or was created soon after (as in Egypt). It is generally in the control of the petty bourgeois elements with extraordinary powers vested in a single cult figure. The party is more often than not an instrument of the state rather than the reverse and effective workers or peasants participation is either minimal or non-existent. The Sudanese Communist Party in 1970 correctly rejected the idea of a one-party state in the existing Sudanese conditions: “In order that the alliance should stand on a firm basis the independence of the various components must be safeguarded.”³⁶ The Algerian leader, Larbi Bouhali, equally stated: “We are convinced of the need for a broad and powerful anti-imperialist front, but this cannot be active and

³⁴ Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, p. 339.

³⁵ Main document of 1969 meeting, Peace and Socialism Publishers, Prague 1969, p. 28. G. Mirsky has dealt with this tendency in a very useful analysis in *Kommunist* (S.U.) No. 17, 1968, ‘The Nature of the Social Forces in Asia and Africa’. See also K. Brutens, *op. cit.*

³⁶ Quoted by Molefe Mini, *Class Struggle and African Unity*, *The African Communist*, No. 54, 1973.

strong without a party equipped with the working class ideology. In any case, no 'front' can substitute for such a party."³⁷

The unique example in the Sudan of an attempt to give independent expression within the 'front' to the working class, through its mass based Communist Party, ended in a temporary victory for those who resisted it. In practice the form which the front has taken in the independent African states makes it next to impossible for the working class to exercise any sort of independent role. Its advanced elements are not guided by a collective of their own, and tend to get lost and compromised in the state party or state apparatus, as happened in Egypt. Egypt's Communists dissolved their Party in a country which had a reasonably big working class and which today has nine million industrial and urban workers.³⁸ The proportion is bigger than in either the Soviet Union or China at the time of their revolutions. Amongst the reasons given for this step was that it was necessary to lay the foundations of unity among the broad social forces on which the Party depends, "and that the political organisation which is called for at this stage is not the Communist Party".³⁹ . . . Since then its cadres have been in and out of office and in and out of Egypt's jails with almost equal frequency.

Whatever the position may have been in 1969 when the Parties declared that "in a number of states the social role and political activity of the working class have increased . . . (and) Communists are intensifying their activity amongst the peasant masses and are carrying proletarian ideology into their midst", in the Africa of today the picture is less happy. Of the Communist and Workers' Parties who have taken part in the last few conferences of the International Communist Movement, there is not a single one which enjoys legality, and in almost every case its leaders and members experience repression and persecution. In those states which have been variously described as socialist orientated or revolutionary democratic (and Ghana is an example of this) the tendency towards bureaucracy and towards blurring the borderline between party and state has the effect of severely limiting independent participation by the working people.

Even in regard to the trade unions, which in the colonial period made a significant independent contribution to the struggle for liberation, the tendency has been towards institutionalising them, subordinating them to the ruling regime and weakening their independent role as social organisations or as instruments of the class struggle. The

trade union laws of Tanzania fall into this category.⁴⁰ In Ghana too the 1958 Industrial Relations Act made all the trade unions subordinate to the Trade Union Council which was in turn subordinated to the state and the CPP.

The role of the national bourgeoisie (whether incipient or well-developed) also needs a more refined scrutiny. We hop too easily from correct statements that the special character of the non-comprador national bourgeoisie sometimes makes possible at least temporary alliances in relation to the continued threat of imperialist domination, to the inference that this bourgeoisie, unlike anything history has yet seen, is prepared to collaborate in its own destruction as a class. Thus a recent exponent of the theory of the non-capitalist path has said of India that the 'non-monopoly national bourgeoisie' has the objective interest of unity with the working class and non-exploiting peasantry to take the non-capitalist path.⁴¹ And the same writer attributed Nkrumah's downfall to the fact that the commencement of non-capitalist development "was precipitating a class conflict"—not, let me emphasise, between the working class and the bourgeoisie but "within the bourgeoisie between its national and comprador elements",—almost as if the national bourgeoisie were the chief defender of the non-capitalist path to socialism.⁴² Indeed, a recent study has made out a convincing case that in Ghana Nkrumah's attempt to discourage the growth of an indigenous capitalist class led him to prefer partnership between foreign private investment and the Ghana state, which alienated the small non-comprador capitalists and no doubt added to the relative ease with which the regime was destroyed.⁴³

What has been said in relation to the role of classes goes to the very root of the problem of the national democratic state, even as a transitional tool for the advance towards socialist forms. The 1960 document rightly featured the need in the post-independence state to create conditions in which progressive social forces would be able to develop and assert themselves. This was obviously the

⁴⁰ Trades Disputes (Settlement) Act, No. 43 of 1962 which made strikes virtually impossible and the National Union of Tanganyika (NUTA) (establishment) Act, No. 18 of 1964 which put the Trade Union Movement under government control. This aspect and the more recent creation of workers committees is more fully analysed by Issa G. Shivji, *op. cit.* and H. Mapolu, *The Organisation and Participation of Workers in Tanzania*, E.R.B., paper 721.

⁴¹ Albert Tshume, *Africa's Revolutionary Way Forward*, *The African Communist*, No. 51, 1972, p. 107.

⁴² Albert Tshume, *The Non-Capitalist Path in Africa*, *The African Communist* No. 52, 1973, p. 55.

⁴³ Judith Marshall, *The Political Economy of Dependence*, Ghana, 1945-66. Thesis for the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, Netherlands, August 1972.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 33.

³⁸ H. Rashid, *Egypt's Workers Fight for Freedom*, *The African Communist*, No. 44, 1971, p. 37.

³⁹ Molefe Mini, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

reason for emphasis on the need to reject dictatorial and despotic systems of government, to ensure democratic rights and freedoms, including the right to form political parties and social organisations which would participate effectively in shaping government policy.

The tendencies have been in the direction of dictatorial and despotic methods of government, with the military playing the dominant role in a good proportion of African countries including some which claim a socialist orientation. Outside the very limited official framework, the right of people to work for social change and to participate in shaping government policy is minimal.

This raises two questions: firstly, in the past decade, a number of countries have been described as national democratic states although there has, in fact, not been a single one in Africa which embraced all the main features set out in the 1960 Document. Has not the concept, therefore, been drained of some of its meaning by allowing one fundamental aspect—a progressive, anti-imperialist policy—to overshadow the others and in particular the equally important aspect of internal political rights for the working people? And secondly, is it in any case, theoretically legitimate to talk of states as tools or instruments for the transition to socialism, when within these states the working class has neither an effective foothold within the state apparatus nor the legal rights to organise itself as an independent political force.

State Autonomy

What adds to our difficulty in trying to place the concepts of national democratic state and non-capitalist path (when they are linked together) within the framework of the Marxist theory of social development is the fact that there seems little, if any, connection between the 'choice of a road' and the character of the socio-economic forces at the time of the choice. The choice is made from 'above' and there appear to be no identifiable differences in the socio-economic bases of these countries which declare for one path or another. As Dr. V. G. Solodovnikov stated: "It is in politics and ideology that there are differences of principle among African countries", and the "differences between these countries at present involved not the basis, which is for the time being of one and the same type, but the superstructure, the political and ideological orientation".⁴⁴

The idea of relative state autonomy is no stranger to Marxism:

"The independence of the state is only found nowadays in those countries where the estates have not yet completely developed into classes, where the

estates, done away with in more advanced countries, still have a part to play, and where there exists a mixture; countries that is to say in which no one section of the population can achieve dominance over the others."⁴⁵

Large areas of Africa began their independent existence in this condition. The special role of the state as a branch of the social division of labour in the African experience needs greater elaboration. Perhaps in this area, more than most, theoretical generalisations are limited by the paucity of detailed Marxist research, analysis and comparative study of the form and content of the developing post-independence state structures in the various parts of Africa. The concept of relative state autonomy as dealt with by Marx and Engels related to the Bonapartist type state before the imperialist era⁴⁶ and the autarchic type administrations of the societies which passed through the Asiatic mode of production.⁴⁷

In the case of Africa there is no relatively closed economic system and, at important levels, both the structure and the superstructure constitute links in a chain of international economic and political relations. To the degree that, at the time of independence, no one section of the population could have achieved dominance over the other, scope existed for opposite subjective choices in countries with broadly similar socio-economic structures. But the problems surrounding the *implementation* of the choice takes us beyond the politics and ideology of the group which inherited the apparatus on Independence Day.

The conflicting interests (including external ones) in the developing socio-economic structure, however difficult they might sometimes be to locate, begin to reflect themselves in the state apparatus. In addition to its administrative role it often becomes a vehicle for the creation of a new privileged social community for whom "the aim of the state becomes (their) private aim, in the form of a race for higher posts, of careerism"⁴⁸ and who, given half a chance, use the state apparatus to launch themselves or their nominees into business.

It is no doubt true that individual charismatic political leaders (like Nkrumah on the one side or Kenyatta on the other) or a popular army man (like Siad Barre) can become the most important factor in determining the proclaimed direction or the main

⁴⁵ Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, International Publishers, p. 59.

⁴⁶ Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Marx-Engels *Selected Works* (in one volume), pp. 169-171. Also *The Civil War in France*, p. 290.

⁴⁷ Marx, *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*, International Publishers, pp. 69-70.

⁴⁸ Marx, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (in *Early Texts* (ed.) David McLellan, Basil Blackwell), p. 69.

⁴⁴ *Marxism Today*, September 1969, p. 280.

“mission” of the state. But more often than not one superstructural ‘accident’ is negated by an opposite superstructural ‘accident’. Ghana is an example of this. I make no special point whatsoever of the fact that Nkrumah was ousted—a defeat for progressive forces whether in Africa or Chile is not in itself proof of the viability or lack of viability of the chosen path. But what is important in relation to our discussion is the fact that in Ghana the masses made hardly a response to a sudden change from a supposedly non-capitalist path to its opposite. What is more, all the main constituents of the state superstructure continued to serve the new group of leaders with almost equal verve and some of them indeed welcomed the change.

If we believe that the reason for this was that the CPP was dominated by a petty bourgeois state bureaucracy and not by the working people or that the state institutions were not sufficiently rooted in workers’ and peasants’ power, or that many of the economic measures were precipitating class conflict which threatened the existence of a state not sufficiently prepared to defend itself, then we must perhaps ask not only what went wrong in Ghana but also what was wrong with our characterisation of Ghana as a national democratic state which had begun to take a non-capitalist path towards socialism. Was Ghana ever near to being a democratic dictatorship of the ‘revolutionary bloc of the proletariat, peasantry and urban petty bourgeoisie’? Were the economic measures, regarded objectively, ‘non-capitalist’ in their essence or were they objectively reinforcing dependency on the world capitalist system?

The national democratic state is too often dealt with in a way which suggests that in Africa it is possible not only to by-pass Capitalism but also to by-pass the class struggle as ordinarily understood in Marxism. In the last resort the State is an instrument and not a regulator of class struggle. Its role as a mediator between contending classes may, at any given moment, have a more or less autonomous character depending upon the special circumstances in which it emerged and operates. But at the end of the day it objectively reflects a class position. Whether it becomes the instrument of this or that class is the result of struggle not merely within the state apparatus but more so within society as a whole. Alliances of “progressive forces” will not prevent any class from “overstepping its prerogative”, nor is it conceivable that a local bourgeoisie will not do all in its power to set a country on the Capitalist road of development.

In Africa the class struggle continues and will become more intense as social contradictions grow. The contradictions cannot be absorbed by an administration which may temporarily reflect a balance of power. It is harmful and misleading to

over-emphasise the potential for change from above (what “cleaner” method is there than the coup?) and to project the post-independence hybrid state form as having the mission and the capacity to take a country through ordered stages to socialism. Such an approach encourages the African revolutionary to substitute conspiracy at the top for mass organisation down below. It disarms him and the class he represents by reinforcing the illusion that it can all be left to the leaders operating through a state bureaucracy.

Conclusion

(1) The Leninist theoretical concept that it is possible for countries without an adequate socio-economic base to by-pass capitalism assumes the existence of a specific combination of external and internal factors, amongst which the most important are:

- (a) the emergence of a state form in which *real power rests in the working people*, whether it be a dictatorship of the proletariat or a revolutionary dictatorship of workers and peasants, or some other form suitably adapted to local conditions;
- (b) the existence of a socialist sector in the world which is materially advanced enough and in a position to ‘come to their aid with all means at their disposal’. For contemporary Africa this must mean that a combination of internal power and socialist aid would enable such countries to break imperialism’s political and economic grip and to eliminate their overwhelming dependence on the world capitalist market and the world capitalist economy.⁴⁹

(2) None of these factors has, so far, been present in a sufficient measure. Particularly;

- (a) there has never been nor is there now a single state in Africa in which real power rests in the working people.
- (b) the economies of all the newly-independent states have remained within the sphere of operation of the objective economic laws of the world capitalist economy,⁵⁰ and the post-independence aim of building a balanced national economy has to a greater or lesser

⁴⁹ Nkrumah showed an awareness of the limitations of the concept of self-reliance when he addressed the opening conference of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU): “No independent African state by itself has a chance to follow an independent course of economic development. Many of us who have tried to do this have been almost ruined or have had to return to the fold of the former colonial rulers. . . .” Quoted by Molefi Mini, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-18. His solution—a united Africa which could establish its own giant industrial complexes—was politically unreal as an immediate perspective.

⁵⁰ Tyagunenko, *Socialism, Theory and Practice*, Sept., 1973, pp. 123.

degree been pursued by a resort to imperialist aid in a form and on a scale which increases rather than diminishes dependence on Western capitalism.⁵¹

(c) It is a self-defeating proposition to describe, as has been done, a country whose economy is by and large dependent on the laws of the world capitalist system, as taking the non-capitalist (or any other) path to socialism.

(3) The emergence of independent states in post-war Africa constitutes an important advance in the anti-colonial revolution. They have become a positive force in the world's struggle against imperialism and in this struggle they can and have, on balance, played a significantly progressive role. Internally, in many of the more progressive states positive achievements can be chalked up in the direction of constructing the beginning of a national economy, despite the fact that the attempts have been hampered by factors already mentioned.

(4) The relative progressive character of these states does not, however, detract from the fact that the concepts of the non-capitalist path and the national democratic state (especially when linked together) have proved to be extremely elusive and unwieldy as theoretical propositions either to describe existing structures or as a guide to Marxist revolutionary groups or individuals in the continent of Africa. More particularly, the projection of this state form as something which becomes a regulator rather than an instrument of class struggle, and which is considered to have the potential within it of taking a country through ordered stages to socialism, has negative implications.

In practice, as we have experienced in Africa, even in those states which have opted for socialism as an ultimate goal, existing and incipient independent expressions of Marxist revolutionary parties have been stifled or lost in the front or the state bureaucracy. Similarly, the spread of socialist ideas is usually restricted to an "official" theory which is often committed to the untenable view that the social homogeneity of African society stemming from communal traditions diminishes the importance of class struggle as a motive force for social change in Africa.⁵²

(5) There is no convincing reason to believe that the emerging national bourgeoisie in Africa will commit suicide as a class or that it will collaborate in creating conditions for its elimination as a class 'in the national interest'. This does not, of course, mean that there can be no basis for forming alliances with those sections of the national bourgeoisie who,

whether motivated by the national interest or by a desire to line their pockets, are in given conditions prepared to play a positive role against foreign political and economic domination. But unless we plan for accidents we can have no expectation that a state in which power is shared with this class will be able to steer the country towards socialism.

(6) In Africa the antithesis between bourgeois and proletarian revolution is not the only one that exists. There are many states in which the possibility of achieving workers' power is still some distance away, and at the same time the superstructure is not dominated by the local bourgeoisie, because (like the proletariat) it is insufficiently developed as an economic class to exercise exclusive power. This gives the state apparatus a relatively autonomous character. In such a situation it is obvious that the state apparatus can itself become a significant factor in taking the anti-feudal, anti-colonial revolution a stage further. It can be pressured into pursuing development strategies and implementing social policies which resist neo-colonial plans, favour the working people and facilitate their struggle for immediate rights and for their eventual assumption of power.

The degree to which such a state (whatever name we give it) facilitates or obstructs not its own mission but that of the working class to abolish exploitation, is not so much determined by action from 'above' but by the eventual outcome of the social conflict from below. And it is only when this conflict is resolved in favour of the working people that a new state will have been won in the struggle. Such a state based on workers' and peasants' power will have the capacity to move towards a socialist order, whatever transitional economic and social strategies the specific conditions would then demand. As yet no such state has been won in Africa.

There can be no all-embracing recipe for winning it. But the attempt to do it from above, to transform society by an army or by edict usually places those attempting it (however genuine and committed they are to the cause of real socialism) in an unsolvable dilemma:

"The worst thing that can befall a leader of an extreme party is to be compelled to take over a government in an epoch when the movement is not yet ripe for the domination of the class which he represents, and for the realising of the measures which that domination implies."⁵³

(7) The struggle for socialism in Africa needs a revolutionary party based on Marxism-Leninism and with real roots among the working people. Such a force cannot be conjured up out of the air. Each country constitutes a special situation which can

⁵¹ In relation to Ghana see Marshall, *op. cit.*

⁵² This point is well made by P. Manchka, *Africa on the New Road*, Novosti Press, Agency Publishing House, Moscow, 1972, pp. 72-3.

⁵³ Engels, *The Peasant was in Germany*, Progress Publishers, p. 138.

only be built upon by indigenous radicals, not in terms of some mechanical formula but based on local realities. I am not arguing for some schematic call for the formation of bodies calling themselves communist parties but whose claim to a vanguard role may have no more than verbal significance. The strength and size of the proletariat is one obviously relevant factor. Another may be whether potential exists to transform an existing official party, which is programmatically dedicated to move towards socialism, into a force which draws its

strength from the working people not merely in rhetoric but in fact.

But whatever practical approach a local situation calls for, revolutionaries cannot but base themselves on the premise that without such an instrument there can be no successful road to socialism. Any policy which frustrates its growth or which results in alliances which demand the elimination of independent working class expression (actual or potential) is, together with the other factors mentioned, a sure recipe for taking Africa along the road to capitalism.
