

# The Non-Capitalist Road of Development in Africa

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**A**T a time when there still existed two world systems V. I. Lenin observed that "... the majority movement of the world, originally aimed at national liberation, will turn against capitalism and imperialism."<sup>1</sup>

This conclusion of V. I. Lenin has been confirmed not only by the transition to socialism of the formerly backward areas of the Tsarist empire liberated by the great October Socialist Revolution but also by the course of events in the colonial and dependent world after World War II. The elimination of colonial domination in Vietnam developed into a socialist revolution. In Korea, after the Japanese had been driven out, the socialist system prevailed. The socialist revolution won in the People's Republic of China in 1949. The elimination of the anti-national and pro-imperialist regime in Cuba brought about the victory of socialist forces there.

The elimination of colonialism in Asia and Africa led to the formation of two major groups of states. In some countries—and they are in a majority—the political regimes are creating social and political conditions for the development of capitalism, while in others few in number so far—power has gone to the left forces of the national-liberation movement, which reject capitalism and are providing the development of an anti-capitalist public sector.

Some authors believe that countries like Algeria or Guinea are in fact Socialist countries: while others maintain that there is nothing socialist about them, and that it is state capitalism which is developing in those countries. And, there is a third point of view, according to which these countries are on the road of non-capitalist development, towards socialism.

## **Non-Capitalist Development in Africa**

To follow the first point of view means equating the national liberation movement with socialist revolution, accepting that the victory of socialism can be assured by petty bourgeois-parties—which essentially describes all national liberation movements in Africa. In this case it should be admitted that socialism can win in a country with a very

backward economic and social structure, lacking in fact modern industry and a working class. Such a conception of socialism clearly has nothing to do with Marxism-Leninism. I believe that it would be irresponsible to speak of the victory of socialism in the conditions of Africa today, where 80-90 per cent of the population live in villages and in pre-capitalist relations. A considerable part of the population still lives in big families, or in semi-feudal relations.

The second point of view means that in economically backward countries there exist no revolutionary prospects of a struggle for socialism before they have developed capitalism or state capitalism. But this is likewise a contradiction of Marxism-Leninism, at variance with the experience of revolutionary mass struggle. It is a fact that the African peoples are greatly inclined towards socialism. They are against capitalism. Moreover, experience in the independent countries has shown that capitalism in Africa has proved unable to eliminate economic and social backwardness, and to ensure genuine independence.

What social systems then, most closely corresponds to objective conditions in the African countries today?

I think it can be a system directing the development of society towards socialism, by-passing or terminating capitalism. Economically backward countries of the African continent will require a whole transition epoch—one in which material and technological, social and political conditions will be created for the victory of socialism. Marxist-Leninists call that epoch one of non-capitalist development.

Such a prospect was foreseen by Marx and Engels. After the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution, V. I. Lenin embodied it in a concrete political programme of the party, bringing socialism closer to those peoples of the former Tsarist Empire who were still at pre-capitalist stages of historical development—some at the tribal or feudal stage.

## **Lenin's Foresight**

Speaking at the Second Comintern Congress in 1920, Lenin formulated the idea of the possibility of building socialist society in the countries which

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, (Russian Edition), vol. 44, p.88

in their historical development had not gone through the capitalist stage. He stressed that peasants in semi-feudal dependence could perfectly well understand the idea of Soviet organisation and implement it . . . it was simple, and could be applied not only to proletarian but also to peasant and semi-feudal relations . . . It was the duty of communist parties, and of elements ready to set up communist parties, to expound the ideas of peasants' Soviets, Soviets of working people everywhere, in backward countries and in colonies . . .

Could we accept, he asked, the assertion that the capitalist stage of development of national economy was unavoidable for backward peoples who were now being liberated, and among whom, after the first World War, there was a movement along the road of progress. The reply to this question, should be in the negative.

If the victorious proletariat carried out systematic propaganda among them, and the Soviet Governments came to their aid with all means at their power, it was wrong to believe that the capitalist stage was essential for backward nationalities . . . With the help of the proletariat in advanced countries, backward peoples could institute the Soviet system and, through certain stages of development arrive at communism, by-passing the capitalist stage of development.<sup>2</sup>

Thus Lenin believed that society could come to socialism not only in the "classical" way, i.e. through proletarian revolution which would overthrow the political and economic domination of the bourgeoisie, but also, in backward countries where the bourgeoisie did not exist or was still very weak, by power passing to the revolutionary people who would ensure the creation of a basis for socialism. This revolutionary theory of the transformation of society opened up the way to struggle for socialism in countries where the proletariat had not yet become a decisive force.

Today we can say from experience that these theoretical conclusions by Lenin have come true. Socialism has been built on the whole territory of the USSR including areas populated before the Revolution by backward nationalities. Assisted by the USSR and other socialist countries, the Mongolian People's Republic is successfully constructing socialism. Yet at the beginning of its movement towards socialism it was completely a peasant country under feudal domination.

### Conclusions

What conclusions can be drawn from this experience? First, that the non-capitalist road of backward peoples towards socialism begins from "above", with transformations in the superstructure, with the establishment of a socio-political system

which ensures the victory of socialist elements in the society. Secondly, that backward peoples who chose the socialist direction in their development need international support and assistance from the socialist countries.

Of course, the nature and forms of such support, and of the non-capitalist road, depend on specific historical conditions. Before World War II the non-capitalist road to socialism was limited to the territories of the USSR and the Mongolian People's Republic. That was a specific historical situation. Now there exists another historical situation, as a result of the Second World War. The position of socialism on the international plane has been strengthened, and that of capitalism weakened. The formation and consolidation of the world socialist system has drastically changed the world situation. The peoples of the new independent states recently liberated from colonialism *all over the world* can now develop not only on capitalist but also on non-capitalist lines.

As a result of these new historical conditions, on one and the same type of social and economic basis there have emerged in Africa, states with different ultimate social and political aims, as already pointed out. It is important to stress that at this stage the differences are expressed not in the economic basis of society but above all in the superstructure, in political institutions and ideology. As to a new socio-economic basis, one can only speak of trends towards its formation in the different development of productive forces determined by the political superstructure.

Some writers assert that all African countries have the same final goals, namely the speediest development of productive forces, development of their own national industries, elimination of the prejudices of colonialism and medieval thinking, agrarian transformations, training of national personnel, development of the education system and science etc. They point out that practically all independent African countries are taking steps for the development of a public sector, and are trying to plan economic development, to control the activities of foreign capital etc.

All this is correct, since all African countries are faced with one major aim: to eliminate age-old backwardness and to occupy a worthy place in the world of today. But we cannot ignore the role of politics and, in general, of superstructure in the historical development of the society of developing countries. Lenin stressed that politics cannot but predominate over economics. To think differently is to forget the ABC of Marxism . . . Without a correct political approach, any given class will not retain its dominant position.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, Collected Works, vol. 41, pp.244-245

<sup>3</sup> V. I. Lenin, Collected Works, vol. 41. pp. 278-279.

### Two Different Policies

And it is in politics and ideology that there are differences of principle among African countries. In the countries with a socialist orientation, social economic and political transformations are subordinated above all, to the strengthening of the public sector which in due course must create the basis for the victory of the socialist system. These countries regard the eventual complete elimination of capitalism and exploitation as their task. The national-capitalist and foreign sectors in these countries are regarded as temporary phenomena, to be eliminated with the growth and strengthening of the anti-capitalist public sector. These countries encourage co-operation among peasants, and carry out deeper democratic transformations in the interests of the working masses. In external policy and external economic relations these countries are increasingly coming closer to the socialist countries. On such issues as the struggle against imperialism, neo-colonialism, and colonialism, the struggle for general and complete disarmament and the maintenance of peace, the dismantling of bases in foreign territories, the positions of these countries and the countries of socialism often coincide or almost coincide. The share of countries with a socialist orientation in the total trade turnover of the USSR with African countries amounts to 80 per cent. Such trends are characteristic for the United Arab Republic, Algeria, Guinea, Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Another group of countries, for example, the Ivory Coast, Senegal, Nigeria, Liberia, Ethiopia, Morocco etc. are trying to follow an entirely different policy and ideology. Their governments regard the public sector as a supplement to the private sector. Their ultimate goal is to direct the development of their countries along the capitalist road to strengthen co-operation with capitalist countries, to open their countries for the activities of foreign capital. Foreign capital already plays a major role in the economy of these countries. They have no other prospects.

Thus differences between these countries at present involve not the basis, which is for the time being of one and the same type, but the superstructure, the political and ideological orientation. In both cases the superstructure is actively influencing changes in the basis, in some countries transforming it into a socialist basis, and in others into a capitalist basis.

We must stress at the same time that we do not equate socialist orientation with socialism. The need for a transitional stage of non-capitalist development is an objective law of development, necessitated by the fact that the countries in question have not yet the material and technical, social or

political basis for the extended construction of socialism. The African countries still need to develop the productive forces in industry and agriculture, advanced relations of production and to a state of a socialist type. Some socialist countries previously backward in economic respects, did in fact pass through such a transition stage during which the material and political prerequisites for the construction of socialist society were created.

### Non-Capitalist Development Possible

At present we should form conclusions on the non-capitalist road of development in Africa on the basis of an analysis of the practical experience of some African countries in moving along this road. The first conclusion is that the non-capitalist development of liberated countries towards socialism is a practical possibility in all countries which have the necessary pre-requisites, namely, the existence, in them, of a mass revolutionary movement which rejects capitalism, and the existence of a revolutionary democratic party which accepts the principles of scientific socialism and is capable of leading the revolutionary upsurge of the masses into a new society, supported by friendly and equal co-operation with the states of the world socialist system.

In African conditions, where the national liberation movement almost everywhere was headed by the petty bourgeoisie led by revolutionary democrats, the transition to a non-capitalist way of development meant the victory of the left wing in the anti-imperialist movement, its alliance with the broad working masses and first of all with the working class and peasants. This is exactly how the struggle is proceeding in the United Arab Republic, Guinea, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Algeria and some other countries.

Moreover, the national liberation movements in these countries are steadily getting rid of elements who do not accept the road of orientation towards socialism. Parties which have chosen that orientation are steadily moving to the left, towards Marxist-Leninist ideology. Such is the logic of the struggle—and it is a sharp one.

Such states necessarily pursue a policy calculated to stand guard over non-capitalist development, constantly to reflect the interests of the working masses, and to rule out the possibility of privileged classes emerging which could seize power and change the country's social system.

This is a complicated process, and it requires great efforts by the leaders and by all members of revolutionary-democratic parties, in order to counteract the onslaught of reaction. In contrast to capitalism which develops spontaneously, non-capitalist development requires a conscious and scientifically-grounded policy, reckoning with many

economic, social and political factors. In the struggle for a non-capitalist road it is not always the left forces which get the upper hand over the right elements. The defeat of the supporters of the socialist orientation in Ghana shows that the right wing forces, with the support of the neo-colonialists, may change the political system. Therefore great political vigilance on the part of all political parties standing for the non-capitalist way of development, for scientific socialism, is essential.

### Conditions of Success

In the African countries of socialist orientation, plans for economic and social development do not provide for liquidation of private enterprise in the first stages, but only for their restriction especially as regards big and medium properties. Economic plans of these countries, as a rule, provide for the use of foreign capital for the development of the national economy: and only in those cases when foreign capital ignores national interests are the governments forced to nationalise it. This was how the process took place in the UAR, Algeria and Tanzania. I think that this careful policy with regard to foreign capital is the right one. In general it is essential that the plans and political and ideological arrangements should take into consideration the real capacity for and consequences of their fulfilment. Over industrialisation, unprepared enrolling of peasants into co-operative societies, ill-prepared nationalisation of foreign property, may lead to a failure instead of success.

Experience shows that deep socio-economic transformations in agriculture, dispersal of the old colonial apparatus, its replacement by a new machinery of government, control by the revolutionary parties at all levels of the machinery of state, including the army, are all essential. And so is training a skilled personnel, ideologically imbued with the spirit of scientific socialism. Constant control over the activities of reactionary elements and western neo-colonialist agents and their propagandist activity has proved to be indispensable.

The most important condition for success in the countries of socialist orientation is the ensuring of economic growth on the base of strict calculation of the interests of all classes, social and ethnic groups, which are the allies of revolutionary democracy, and specially of the interests of the working class, small and medium peasantry and also of the working intelligentsia.

Experience shows that the governments and political parties in the countries of socialist orientation should pay more attention to the propaganda of their economic and social programmes among the working masses, because the first steps are

always linked with economic difficulties and sacrifices for the population.

### Foreign Policy

It may be stated that in the field of foreign policy, the countries of socialist orientation are more consistent in ensuring anti-imperialist solidarity and support of the peoples of Africa struggling against colonialism and racialism. In 1966 for example, when Britain in fact sanctioned the seizure of power in Rhodesia by the white minority, the most firm and consistent attitude was taken up first by the countries of socialist orientation. They broke off relations with Britain. These countries also boycotted the regime of Tshombe. They are the most consistent fighters against racialist and colonial regimes in Africa. They have refused to allow military bases of imperialist powers in their territories or participation in war blocs.

The imperialist powers constantly try to use the economic dependence of the countries of socialist orientation on the world market for political blackmail and pressure on them, launching massive ideological offensives against them—particularly against their state sector, and against their co-operation with socialist countries. But experience has demonstrated that when these countries turn for support to the broad working masses, and to comprehensive co-operation with socialist countries, neo-colonialism does not achieve its objectives.

*Not a single country, those economically underdeveloped especially, can in our time build socialism, or develop on a non-capitalist road, in isolation from the world socialist system.* This factor plays a decisive part for the success of the non-capitalist road of development.

### Variations

The period of non-capitalist development in the various African countries will probably differ in forms and duration. That will depend on the concrete historical situation, the degree of activity of the revolutionary masses, the combination of external and internal factors, etc. Each country developing along the non-capitalist road is contributing its own characteristic national peculiarities. In some countries, the social economic and political changes will be directed, in the main, against feudal elements. In others, main attention will be concentrated on the transformation of the African village community. Concern for the national peculiarities of each people and nationality is the most important condition for successful application of the policy of non-capitalist development.

The elimination of old internal and external economic relations and their replacement by new relations, is a complicated and protracted process, lasting for years. Many objective difficulties must

inevitably be encountered. For example, in order to liquidate one-sided specialisation on the production of certain agricultural raw material (coffee, cocoa) it is necessary to reconstruct the work of many small producers, introduce new crops and new techniques: these must look out for new consumers, a transformed national market etc.

In order to create a national industry, considerable capital investments are required. But in African countries, as a result of colonial conditions, national capital is very small. The level of accumulation is very low. Moreover, the low purchasing capacity and the narrowness of the internal market hamper the creation of modern industrial enterprises requiring mass production and a large market to be profitable. The imperialist policy of "balkanisation" has led to a number of African countries having a small population.

These and many other difficulties hamper the carrying out in African countries of social transformation of these countries on the road of social progress, and even compel them to accept hampering agreements with foreign capital and foreign imperialist aid.

#### **The Correct Road**

However, despite all these difficulties, the Marxist conception of non-capitalist development is the most real alternative for the solution of the problem of backwardness by African countries.

While capitalism provides a certain scope for the development of productive forces, but preserves private property in the means of production, and leads to the creation of a class of owners and a class of deprived people, non-capitalist development solves the problem of developing the productive forces on the basis of social property in the means of production, which excludes the formation of antagonistic classes and polarisation of the society into rich and poor. This is the essence of the alternative ways of socio-political development in Africa.

In the light of these facts and of the historical experience of African peoples themselves, the problem now is not to defend the idea of non-capitalist way of development, which in present conditions opens bigger possibilities for industrialisation and general economic growth, than does capitalism. African reality is a proof that the non-capitalist road to socialism is a real alternative to capitalism. What Marxists-Leninists call for now is active support for, and assistance in, the struggle of this way of development of victory.

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