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## Africa after independence

Unpublished draft of article, written in December 1963, for *Revue Africaine*. As Vice-President of the Funds Committee for Afro-Asian Solidarity, El Mehdi Ben Barka had proposed to the African member states the creation of a magazine whose objectives he outlined as follows:

“The idea of the creation of a magazine, the voice of the African National Revolution, is particularly important in the present stage of the struggle for the total liberation of our continent from colonial systems and racial domination, for the consolidation of national independence and the complete economic, social and cultural development of our peoples, because the major part of the fundamental problems being debated today and that will be debated in the near future can be solved only by serious and profound study.

“In Africa, as in other continents, where a national, anti-imperialist struggle is developing, experience has shown that a dangerous gulf exists between the revolutionary structures of the masses and the subjective conditions in which our militants and cadres are working, which sometimes prevent the vanguard political forces from carrying out their historic tasks of organization and leadership.

“This gulf has already caused a regression of the revolutionary movement on certain fronts of the anti-imper-

ialist struggle and if not checked, threatens to postpone the liquidation of the colonial system, to strengthen neocolonialism in all its forms and to obstruct the development of the struggle for true liberation and development.

"Certainly, the Inter-African, Afro-Asian or Latin-American organizations and meetings, especially those that mobilize the popular organizations, have played and still play an important role in the formation of consciousness and in the acceleration of the national liberation movement. In any case, experience shows that because of the different revolutionary levels of the member organizations, they do not always find the most appropriate ways to reduce the risks of regression or dangerous pauses in the revolutionary process.

"At the same time, the need to leave behind the period of spontaneity and improvisation which has characterized most national liberation movements is increasingly recognized by our most advanced cadres and leaders.

"In view of the problems presented by:

- A. The national liberation struggle being carried on in a part of Africa;
- B. The conversion of the methods of struggle against neocolonialism, the disruptor of revolutionary forces, in a second part of the continent which is growing larger each day;
- C. The building of independence and the struggle for economic development and social revolution being carried on in a third part of Africa;

we should define a genuine revolutionary strategy and tactics which would allow us to avoid past errors, to undo the maneuvers of imperialism and its internal allies and in short, to overcome the difficulties and contradictions engendered by independence.

"We cannot do this if our work is not based on precise and complete information, a scientific analysis. We can no longer content ourselves with a pragmatism that relies on the revolutionary reservoir of the people to wipe out all problems and conquer the enemy.

"Today the enemy is changing his tactics. It has become more difficult to discover and isolate him, since behind local or international disguises, he is strengthening or re-establishing himself in the countries that have attained

political independence and which are suffering from the innumerable problems arising from the conversion of colonial and semifeudal economies and structures.

"A theoretical formation and a revolutionary ideological storehouse are absolutely necessary for cadres and militants in order for them to unmask imperialism and its allies in all the forms —frequently subtle— of their activities, to deflate the false ideologies of neoliberalism, pseudosocialism and other artificially created 'ism's' that abound and multiply in the present state of confusion.

"This task of informing, analyzing, explaining and demystifying will be the essential aim of the magazine we have planned during our conversations with leading figures from Tanganyika, Guinea, the United Arab Republic, Algeria and Morocco."

With the decade of the 60's we have entered a new phase in the history of Africa and its struggle for liberty and progress.

Before 1960, only a few countries, mostly in the North, had conquered their right to national existence and participation in international life. In less than two years, most of the countries of western, central and eastern Black Africa and the insane undertaking of Portugal, condemned by history, we can already see drawing near the day on which Africa will have escaped completely from direct domination. This fact by itself is without doubt of capital importance, since it introduces a definite change in the world's strategic and political equilibrium, while at the same time, a more profound change is taking place in the currents of international communication that will undermine the very bases of imperialism.

Now then, it is precisely because this struggle of liberation is near completion that we can attempt to judge it objectively and to understand its guiding lines.

Therefore, we should stop a moment to review the following two points:

1. The contrast offered by the very long time that has been required for the liberation of the countries of Southeast Asia, the Middle East and North Africa and the relatively short time in which the rest of Africa received independent existence.

2. The structural repercussions of this liberation on world imperialism and its basis, capitalism.

It would not be of great interest to resort to the vague ideas of the acceleration of history or the decomposition of colonialism, since this would only be one way to describe the phenomenon without really explaining it.

*The only problem that should be brought up is that of finding out if all these liberations were obtained by means of victories over the colonizer or in collaboration with him.* Obviously, it takes two to agree, even to end a merciless war, but there is a huge difference between an agreement to end an argument and an aid that inspires and directs. We must understand with greater clarity that what was no more than an imperialist trend between the two world wars (the creation of the independent kingdom of Iraq in 1932, for example), has now become a clearly conceived and systematically applied policy.

a. AFTER INDEPENDENCE

But this cannot be reduced to a simple choice in the sphere of foreign policy; it is the expression of a profound change in Western capitalist structures. It is not by chance that liberalism has surged in the colonial policies of the European countries and that this liberalism increases as capitalism becomes more refined and modernized.

In fact, from the moment that World War II ended, Western Europe has been discarding, because of the Marshall Plan and an increasing interpenetration with the US economy, 19th century structures and adapting itself to the US capitalism described by Schumpeter. It was therefore normal that it likewise adopt the same type of relations that the US has with the world, in one word, that it also create its own "Latin America."

Will Africa be Europe's Latin America? is the true question we must ask today.

But, which Latin America? The one which for more than a century has simultaneously known an intimately connected independence and stagnation; the Latin America which all economists had already discarded before Fidel Castro came on the scene? Or will it be the Latin America that surges forth from national and social revolution vio-

lently provoked by Castro-ism or a revolution cautiously requested by the Alliance for Progress?

Thus, lest independence bring only poverty and misery, lest international recognition fail to guarantee economic and political independence, we must from the start give the word *development* the emotional content that the word *independence* has had. It is necessary that the mystique of the latter replace that of the other, or more exactly, it is necessary to show that the profound truth, hidden up to now, but essential to independence, is development.

The only way to prevent the demobilization of the African masses in the wake of a joyfully-accepted fictitious, conceded independence is to make them understand that independence has a goal, that the value of independence is measured by the use made of it to promote growth and development.

b. THE MEANING OF DEVELOPMENT

However, for the word *development* to become a means of agitation and formation of consciousness, we must first turn it into a concept.

The need for a rigorous concept is shown by the confusion of definitions and especially by their political consequences.

There are countries well endowed with highways, luxury and superluxury hotels, places of recreation and beach resorts, which are presented by some as examples of countries that have passed the threshold of development. Other countries with higher scholarship rates than their neighbors are presented as models of wise and harmonious development. A certain amount of prosperity originating from the cultivation of a single crop could also cause certain illusions.

When we keep in mind only secondary aspects or the effects of development—even when these aspects are important ones such as the standards of living, *per capita* income, etc.—we will obtain a false image of development; and, at the same time, the political consequences based on this false image will be very harmful.

On the other hand, the present state of economic dependence of most of the African countries cannot be eliminated by a purely arithmetical expression of development.

There is a human, social and cultural aspect which is absolutely necessary to keep in mind if we are to make a proper analysis.

For a long time Egypt had fewer hospital beds, fewer kilometers of roads and, in general, living standards that were inferior to those of Morocco. Nevertheless, Egypt has more university graduates, technicians, typists and teachers which makes comparison between both countries much more difficult than we have previously believed.

In addition to being aware of the purely economic shortcomings of development, we must have an overall sociologic understanding if we want to avoid being deceived by the islets of prosperity scattered throughout Africa.

This is by no means an academic controversy. On the contrary, in it lies the essential difference between the technocratic point of view which is more or less ideologically linked to imperialism and the viewpoint of the progressive African. It is only on this basis that we can objectively criticize the different projects for economic association between Europe and Africa.

Possibly, such associations could increase the living standards in certain countries, but this increase would lack a real base and would benefit only a small stratum of African society.

*The objective basis of development is none other than the productivity of human labor in a given society.* Undoubtedly, this is only feasible and measurable by its level of technology and the social consequences. It is only by expanding production and industrial organization and by increasing living standards that such productivity of labor can take place. However, what interests us from the political viewpoint is not to confuse cause with effect, but to prevent this confusion from being used with the aim of ideological subversion, which is what some do when they refer to the well-being of "man" in the abstract.

Without doubt, the ultimate aim of all economic development is to bring well-being and individual happiness, but the way in which this is obtained—supposing that all ways lead to this—is very important. If all the road, port and hydroelectric infrastructures are financed and constructed by foreign technicians, if the prosperity of foreign trade is linked to the sale of products needed by the economy of imperialist countries, if all industrial

development is conceived of as the simple installation of branches of large European companies, we must say, with all objectivity, that independence cannot bring any changes. If the inhabitants of a country are sufficiently homogeneous and small in number so that the prosperity generated by this structure include all strata of society, so much the better. But we must say that this prosperity is essentially dependent on that of the colonizing countries and must necessarily be transitory; even more, this will not happen in all African countries.

The sanest method is that which simultaneously prepares men and things for independent development, and consequently, this is the surest and most transcendental way.

This idea should be made more precise so that the relative success of US experiences in Puerto Rico and the US-European success in Israel cannot be offered as another route to development. This is only a means to sow ideological confusion and to prevent the great majority of underdeveloped countries from taking immediately after obtaining independence, the only true road to development and economic liberation.

### c. THE REALITY OF NEOCOLONIALISM

It is on this basis that we can define neocolonialism with certain precision.

Let us now speak of this policy which:

- on one hand, grants political independence in good faith and if necessary creates fictitious states without a minimum opportunity of exercising real independence. The result is the balkanization of Africa, the creation and aggravation of false inter-African conflicts.
- On the other hand, it proposes a "cooperation" with the aim of creating a supposed prosperity and promises to increase living standards, but with the objective bases of this improvement located outside Africa.

Every political stand, inside or outside Africa, which consciously or unconsciously leads to such results, is, objectively speaking, neocolonialism.

Is neocolonialism a new phenomenon? It had already been, in essence, the definition of imperialism. It had already been, in practice, the policy of the most developed capitalist country in the world.

But in regard to Africa's relations with the European colonial powers, we see a new trend arising to replace direct rule and exploitation and colonization by settlement.

Therefore, we must view, with a fresh outlook, the proposals of the colonial powers and the position of African political leaders, taken either individually or in the name of regional groups or on a continental scale.

*The time when the demand for pure and simple independence was a progressive one has passed. The only revolutionary demand today is that for the real, total and harmonious development of Africa.*

#### d. THE SOCIALIST ROUTE

It would be a mistake to believe that the African masses still fail to take socialism seriously. Socialism needs only to be explained ideologically, since the fact that independence by itself is nothing more than a form in need of content is being understood by a growing number of cadres and militants. Proof of this, in the sphere of consciousness, is the increasingly greater attraction that the Chinese example is arousing in the minds of all African peoples.

This attraction is explained by the fact that the people intuitively feel that the only country to gain its independence from the foreigner after the war and undertake the road to real development is the People's Republic of China, in spite of the fluctuations of its foreign aid and the natural disasters that have occurred since 1960.

Despite natural catastrophes, statistical errors and the sudden departure of Soviet technicians, the facts of China's real development remains for all to see. The important thing to understand is that the raising of living standards is not the core of the matter, rather it is that these standards were raised by Chinese hands and intelligence, by Chinese labor and technology.

Success in this sphere alone has great meaning when we compare it to other experiments that have failed.

The Chinese system did not surge out of nothing, that is, unadulterated feudalism. It took place over a period of fifteen years during which China's stagnation cannot be explained only by the hostility and voracity of Japan and England or by the corruption, incapacity and immorality of the Kuo Ming Tang which had to be annihilated with firm perseverance; instead, this stagnation was due to almost congenital, internal reasons. This truth is becoming clearer as other experiments fail to materialize the promises that inspired them.

#### e. A SINGLE PROBLEM: ACCUMULATION

If increasing living standards by means of association with more developed countries is not a true solution, if the only way is self-development, the only problem therefore is that of primitive accumulation and the possibilities open to all social layers to achieve this. True, the economic policy of the Soviet Union during the first ten years of its revolution was oriented to this type of accumulation, but the political and military situation of Tsarist Russia and the relative development of the European part of Russia conceal this fact. What apparently makes the Chinese example so attractive is the fact of having started from zero which is where most African countries are today.

After fifteen years of total disintegration, as evidenced by the incapacity of the Kuo Min Tang, the present leadership of China has been able to mobilize all the country's forces needed for the development "take-off."

On the other hand, many of the experiments that have taken place in the underdeveloped independent countries have been unable to rally the needed forces, since these forces are not moved by an authentically popular and progressive revolutionary leadership. The success of Cuba and Algeria are new examples which are being studied carefully, along with those of Ghana and the United Arab Republic after 1961.

Referring to India, Bettelheim said: "Its drama lies in the fact that its efforts at industrialization are not based on a sound economy because of the lack of agricultural progress... This lack of agricultural advance makes it impossible for the subsequent flourishing of industry... *The root of this situation is India's social situation.*"

It is within this framework that the importance of revolutionary agrarian policy becomes evident: an agrarian reform in countries whose feudal or capitalist-colonial structures must be destroyed, a collective organization in countries whose low population densities do not permit really stable land exploitation.

Imperialism is compelled, on a strictly tecnico-economic basis, to admit the need for an agrarian reform based on an accelerated development, as demonstrated by the theory of the Alliance for Progress. But at the same time it fears the means to attain this. It opposes such a reform from the moment it is revolutionarily undertaken, since it clearly sees that such a reform would endanger its political positions in the same measure that it would affect its natural allies and most solid pillars of support.

*In Africa, all policies that do not call for the radical destruction of feudal and colonial-capitalist structures can only play into the hands of neocolonialism, in spite of any pretensions at industrialization and planning, since all these projects would be merely castles in the air.*

The case of Egypt is a good example. Up until very recently its leaders were incapable of building the foundations for an efficient industrialization, until Egypt began to definitively attack the foreign monopolies and their local allies.

On the other hand, we should keep in mind that all these countries, Nationalist China, India and Egypt, are countries with a very strong national cultural and administrative tradition, and that the bourgeoisie in these countries has created an industrial embryo, particularly in textiles. However, these fledgling national industries have been seriously conceived. They have remained on the margin of the overall economic structure.

It is evident that the route chosen by this bourgeoisie was a liberal one which they have not been able to maintain for a long time since they have been compelled to appeal to State control when liberalism's inferiority to western, more developed and solidly entrenched capitalism has been shown.

It is impossible to avoid coming to the following conclusion: the failure of this policy is also the failure of the national bourgeoisie.

Proof of this is that development everywhere is being taken over by the State, although we should remember that

the State is not always the representative of the working masses and is frequently dependent on foreign and domestic groups of interests.

But while the national bourgeoisie has failed in its attempts at promoting development via liberalism in the countries with solid traditions, then with much more reason will it fail in those countries where the bourgeoisie is still in the process of being born.

#### f. CONTENT OF SOCIALISM

Up to now the question of socialism has been dealt with in a negative way, either as a total or partial failure, on one hand, and as a success, on the other. The need for socialism has been shown by the absurd.

However, we still have to explain why China has been successful, why Algeria, from the beginning, has great opportunities of succeeding. What is the exact content of the word *socialism*, since where development is not really defined socialist experience is spoken of.

This is not the moment to go into detail on the techniques of socialist development. The only criterion is to find the means to mobilize national resources in order to accumulate the necessary amount of capital.

Undoubtedly, it will be said that in an abstract way, this mobilization could be obtained by using the appropriate techniques and that there is no reason why we should prefer socialist techniques to capitalist ones, since in a great number of matters, the Keynesian theoreticians, for example, coincide with the Marxists.

However, still valid is the fact that, in practice, only socialism has been able to achieve a really efficient mobilization, and that each time the word socialism is used as an ideological stimulus, without applying its content, the results are disheartening.

There is no doubt that in a certain stage, planning techniques approach and even fuse into each other, that a certain degree of state capitalism can make us forget the need for socialism, but, nevertheless, the objective results are always there to prove that this is no more than a stop-gap, accepted only when the popular forces see the impossibility—or have

let the ripe moment pass by— of imposing their will. Therefore, the problem of power must be correctly solved before we can seriously undertake the building of a socialist society.

#### g. CONCLUSIONS

From all this we can deduce that it is absolutely necessary to combat the deviations and mystifications that exist in regard to socialism, just as we combatted those existing around independence.

It is more important to build the bases of socialism without naming it as such, than it is to speak of socialism while at the same time we serve neocolonial interests. Socialism as a label has no meaning, since it could very well conceal a semifascist regime, a feudal state or an imperialist tool.

In the present stage of the anti-imperialist struggle, the content of socialism is characterized, in general, and in our opinion, as follows:

- a) by the correct solution to the problem of power and by organizing the people under the form of political institutions which would give them —the masses— democratic control of the state apparatus, of the distribution of resources and the national product;
- b) by an economic structure that uproots the bases of economic rule of the imperialists and of the national bourgeoisie as the leading class of the economy;
- c) by a social and political organization which will organize and educate the masses, with the aim of mobilizing all the national resources needed for accumulation.

We need all this plus an adequate growth rate.

In today's Africa only he who clearly works to reach these goals can be called a socialist. He who uses the word *socialism* empty of its content or who puts forth national glory, the happiness of man or the satisfaction of his essential needs in the abstract is really favoring the by-now obvious designs of neocolonialism and condemning Africa to the same stagnation and misery in which the countries of Latin America have lived for more than a century.

In this context, we should say something about the prospects of the African unity which has begun to take shape since the creation of the OAU in Addis Ababa.

This watchword of unity is common to all African States—in spite of their different degrees of independence from imperialist interests—for the total elimination of the traditional colonial system and the racist policies in all the continent. At the same time, the slogan of unity provides us with an efficient vehicle to solve inter-African problems, particularly those concerning borders, which are left-overs from colonial rule and exploited by neocolonialism to aggravate division and consummate the balkanization of Africa.

However, much more important is giving this slogan a positive role in the building of economic development. First, by giving each African state, taken individually, a feeling of self-confidence which will enable it to carry forth its economic liberation and escape the maneuvers of neocolonialism. Later, by creating a spokesman for the entire continent to deal with foreign economic blocs which will thus be compelled, in defense of their own interests, to take into account the imperatives of development and the construction of African nations.

It is up to the revolutionary forces, then to make sure, after formal independence is granted. That the voice of Africa be an expression of the true desire of Africans for liberation, prosperity and progress.