THE INTERLINKAGE BETWEEN THE
AGRICULTURAL REVOLUTION AND
INDUSTRIALISATION: ALTERNATIVE
STRATEGIES FOR AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT

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This essay starts with the recognition that globally the development strategies implemented in Africa since independence have neither aimed at achieving the priority task of an agricultural revolution, nor really aimed at any significant industrialisation, but basically extended the colonial pattern of integration in the World Capitalist system. The catastrophic results are now obvious; moreover the Western inspired policies of so-called "readjustment" to the new conditions created by the global crisis (through the IMF and World Bank recipes) would only worsen the case. Hence another development, fundamentally based on a popular alliance, is the only acceptable alternative. The priority target of achieving the agricultural revolution requests for sure industrialisation, but a pattern of industrialisation quite different from the conventional one. We have tried to show in this paper in which respects this pattern of needed industrialisation presupposes some form of "delinking" from the system governing the economic global expansion of capitalism. This national and popular content of development, in its turn, can hardly be imagined if no significant change is considered in the direction of a democratisation of the society, allowing for an autonomous expression of the various social forces and creating the basis for a real civil society. Simultaneously, the weakness of African States, to which reference is made in the paper, calls for co-operation and unity without which any national and popular attempt would remain extremely limited and vulnerable.

1. The failure of the "modernisation" strategies

Twenty years ago when most of the African countries were acceding to independence, the view prevailing at that time, even among Africans, attributed underdevelopment on the continent to an historical backwardness which was to be overcome simply by redoubling efforts aimed at progress in a previously defined and known direction. What the national liberation movement, such as it was, was blaming the colonisers for was precisely the fact that they were not up to the task.
African "left" and "right" were hence convinced that independence was a sure guarantee of and a sufficient precondition for the acceleration of modernisation rates. The liberal thesis considered that maintaining a large opening to foreign capital was the means to accelerating growth. The government's role was precisely to create more favourable conditions likely to generate new opportunities for capital investments by accelerating education and training so feared by the colonisers as well as the modernisation of both infrastructure and administration. The socialist thesis of the time, suspicious of foreign capital, was arguing that the government was itself to compensate for the lack of capital, specifically with a view to effectively speeding up the modernisation process. In other words, the socialist thesis was not rejecting either the "modernisation" perspective or that of integration into the international division of labour.

Both theses shared the same basic views concerning the neutrality of technology, i.e. both were arguing that the direction of modernisation could be and was known: a mere glance at both Western and Eastern advanced societies would convince of the similarity of a number of objectives in terms of consumption, organisation of production, administration, education. The "socialists" were probably more sensitive to issues like national independence, which is why they were on their guard against the recourse to foreign capital. They were also probably more sensitive to issues related to income distribution and the priority of collective services. But the "liberals" retorted that capitalism would also solve these problems and moreover, would gradually lead to a democratisation of social and political life. Both these were finally based on the same West-centred and technico-economic view, the common denominator of a popular version of marxism and the best of bourgeois social science.

Only 15 years ago protests were still rare and unwelcome, considered as peasant utopias and culturalist nationalisms. It is true that, because of a lack of sufficient support, the protestors were often guilty of such weaknesses.

The outcome of the real history of the last two decades has been such that the two theses are systematically called into question today. It is this twofold historical "frustration" that gives the thesis of unequal development the strength it is gaining.
The thesis of unequal development began by the affirmation that underdevelopment, far from being a "backwardness", was the result of integration into the world capitalist system as an exploited and dominated periphery, fulfilling specific functions in the process of accumulation at the centre of the system. This integration, contrary to superficial points of view, did not date from the colonial scramble of Africa at the end of the 19th century, but from the very beginning of mercantilism in the 18th century, a period when Africa was "specialised", through the "slave trade", in the supply of labour power which, exploited in America, was to speed up the process of capital accumulation in Atlantic Europe. This "specialisation" which, apart from its horrors, was leading to a regression of local production systems as well as State organisations, and moreover, was to mark the ideology of the societies involved in this shameful trade with features which will remain for a long time was impoverishing Africa.

The thesis of unequal development proceeded with its analysis by trying to understand the mechanisms by which capital, dominant on the world scale, was subordinating pre-capitalist modes of production while distorting them. Whereas the ethnological main stream was carrying on its research on the singularities of African societies, trying to isolate them conceptually, the thesis of unequal development was laying stress on the integration of apparently "traditional" rural societies in the process of capital accumulation. It was in this manner that, in the first half of the 1960s, the essential characteristics of the modes of formal domination of capital over the African rural world were defined. It was shown how in the "trade economy", the technical and commercial systems of control were depriving peasant producers of their own control over production means of which they were still the formal owners, in order to extract a surplus of labour, transformed through commodity trade into profit for the capital of the dominating monopolies. It was shown how the driving back of peasants into the intentionally small reserves in South Africa and Zimbabwe was intended to supply cheap labour power to industries, mines and plantations.

These analyses lead to consider the fundamentally different alternative of a development based on popular alliance between workers and peasants.
The way was thus opened for a positive rethinking of all the issues of development: orientations of industrialisation, the question of State and Nation etc... Within this perspective industry is meant to support the technical and social revolution in the rural area. This inversion of priorities also, by the force of circumstances involved fundamental revisions at the level of reflection on consumption models, the articulation of big and small industries, modern techniques and artisanal and traditional techniques etc... A positive content could be given to a strategy of delinking, i.e. of refusal of the imperatives of the international division of labour, heretofore considered as inevitable necessities.

The seed was sowed. But it could not germinate unless it had fallen on fertile soil. For ideas become realities only if they are supported by effective social forces. However, the ground is becoming increasingly solid. The old movement of national liberation, whose objective was political independence, has exhausted its potentials. The 50-State Africa to whose creation is contributed finds itself in a dilemma: a dilemma of economic development whose contrasted effects are ever more explosive: urbanisation and mass unemployment, agricultural stagnation, soil deterioration, famines and massive imports of food products, growing external dependency; a dilemma of national construction; a political dilemma: imitative democracies give way to tyrannies, single parties of national construction give place to military and bureaucratic cliques; an ideological dilemma: capitalist liberalism and bureaucratic socialism do not answer any needs of the popular masses; a cultural dilemma: imitative education shows all its disfunctionality; the imposition of the foreign languages of colonisation is a vehicle of alienation as ineffective as it is unbearable.

The reason is that the old movement of national liberation was in fact a bourgeois movement even though it was able to mobilize peasant masses and even though its petty bourgeois component had given the illusion of a possible socialist prospect. The newly emerging movement will be that of peasants and workers, by the force of circumstances. It will probably inevitably assume populist forms in a first stage while the seed sowed has not yet germinated.
The present crisis of the imperialist system obviously enhances all these contradictions. The solutions offered by the system imposing its "adjustment" policies are no answer to the real questions. There is no alternative to a strategy of national and popular reconstruction, which is self-centered and delinked from the world capitalist system.

2. The top priority: the agricultural revolution, but how?

A critique of the conventional "wisdom" of the World Bank

2.1 The failure of "development" has been more dramatic for Africa as a whole than in any other region. In fact Africa has not yet started its agricultural revolution without which no further stage of development can be considered. The production and productivity per rural family have been almost stagnant for long and might have even started declining in many places. Therefore, the outvillage migration is not the result of a relative surpopulation created by some agricultural progress even if socially unequal, but on the opposite it is a desperate runaway of the whole population to escape from famine. This type of migration generates a monstrous type of urbanisation with no hope of industrial employment, since it does not provide any means of financing new activities. Simultaneously African countries with very few exceptions have not started entering the industrial age from any point of view: neither a minimal network of inter-related industries does exist anywhere or almost, nor a minimal financial and technological capacity is provided to pursue any consistent industrial policy. Elsewhere, in many areas of Latin America and South, South-East and East Asia, such minimal tasks have already been accomplished, even if in chaotic, regionally and socially unequal way, hence inadequate from a national and popular viewpoint.

This failure has, for sure, deep roots, both precolonial and colonial. But in no way can it be considered that the post-colonial decades have started reversing the negative processes and even involutions.
The task of achieving the agricultural revolution is therefore the priority target for the decades to come. This is a very complex task, obviously multi-dimensional. It has technological dimensions; what types of equipment and other inputs (control of water, use of chemicals etc.) may bring simultaneously significant increases in production per capita and per acre. These technological choices imply the design of adequate supportive economic policies: the choice of price and income systems ensuring the rationality of the choices they induce, the choice of the supportive industrialisation priorities, the pattern of financing etc. These policies in their turn bear complex social and political consequences: how the various types of social control in rural areas (land property and use, rent and wage system, co-operatives of producers of a variety of types, from lower to higher forms etc.) command the direction of change (or make it impossible...) how the types of social control in place are the historical result of social power balances and imbalances (particularly the result of the relation of the State to the rural communities and their components...) and through which political moves they could be changed, how the various types of social control on trade systems and industry (State, basic collectivities, private national capital, transnationals etc...) combine with the need for agricultural changes etc...

On none of these aspects, and less on how they interrelate, are the lessons from the historical experiences - be it that of the developed West, of the East or of Latin American and Asian regions - transferrable as such to Africa today. There are many reasons for this limited possible use of the lessons of history: differences in land disposibility, differences in premodern patterns of social organization and levels of productivities, differences in available industrial technologies etc... Similarly the lessons from other experiences of industrialization, whether conceived in the perspective of the world division of labour or conceived in a way "delinked" from it, whether based on private capital initiative or on State intervention, are of a limited significance in the dramatic case of Africa.

Yet, precisely perhaps because the task is totally new and the challenges too complex, recipes are suggested hurriedly by agencies (notably from the UN family, World Bank and major bilateral agencies). Many of these recipes do not resist the test of experience. Hence the cascade of shortlived "fashions".
Those who, in the name of "immediate efficiency", do not recognize our deep ignorance of what can be done, easily substitute to the need of deeper studies their "theological" beliefs, whether in the market efficiency (as if some minor changes in prices would create *ipso facto* adequate incentives...), or in the State efficiency (without questioning enough the historical, political, cultural dimensions of the State...).

Considered from the global perspective of today's world system, the failure of African development, bears further dramatic consequences. The weakness of the continent, both at economic and financial levels (extreme food, technological and financial dependency) and - perhaps consequently - at political and military levels, encourages cynical attitudes, allowing the powers to give priority to their geo-strategic views without being compelled to pay consideration to local forces and interests. This weakness combined with the global strategies of the powers, creates hence an additional unfavourable set of conditions for internal changes.

2.2. A glaring example of how "theology" is substituted to the scientific analysis of the roots of the African failure to achieve its agricultural revolution is provided by the famous World Bank Report on "Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa".

One expected in that respect the World Bank to come with a critique of local social and economic systems and the world system of the division of labour, responsible for this African failure. One even thought that the Bank would make some sort of self-criticism, since for the past twenty years it has supported most of the basic principles underlying the development system that is now being called into question. Not at all - the Bank attributes the failure entirely to the African governments, who are accused of having held agriculture in contempt and given far too much priority to industry!
Therefore the strategy proposed by the Bank is perfectly summed up as follows: "The internal structural problems and external constraints impeding African economic growth have been exacerbated by domestic policy inadequacies... trade and exchange-rate policies (which) have overprotected industry, held back agriculture... the public sector has become overextended..." Upon which the Bank goes on to suggest a strategy of adjustment to the demands of the world system and based on exports (agricultural and mining commodities), supported mainly by devaluation measures and by resorting to a larger measure of liberalism, these to be accompanied by offering greater scope to private initiative. A carrot, that of doubling external aid in real terms during the eighties, is dangled to bring countries to accept these principles of "healthy" management.

Low agricultural productivity in Africa is a platitude. What the World Bank report does not say is that this low productivity, which goes hand in hand with the land-extensive type of agriculture, was - and still is - economic from the point of view of the world system of the division of labour. It allowed the West to acquire raw materials without having to invest in its colonies. It has been clearly shown that this mechanism is responsible for having impoverished the land and thus brought about poorer yields. The transition to intensive agriculture, a necessity today, implies an increase in the world prices of raw materials, if they are to be exported: land, like oil or water, is no longer an "unlimited" resource, but one that is becoming scarce.

Yet the Bank has only managed to discover three ills from which Africa suffers: overvalued exchange rates, too high a level of taxation of farmers; and excessive growth in administrative expenditure.

It is clear that if prices in foreign currencies are maintained, devaluation would allow the exporter to obtain more in the local currency. That is a pleonasm. However, one cannot conclude either that devaluation would bring about equilibrium in the balance of payments without control nor that prices in foreign currencies would remain stable if the African countries devalued their own currency. Experience has repeatedly shown that in many Third World countries the whole range of local prices tends to adjust to the import prices and that, therefore, the effect of devaluation both on comparative price
structures and on the balance of payments are cancelled out. The absence of a self-reliant and autonomous economic structure explains this generalized contagion, which reflects the way in which the local systems are dependent on the world price system.

It is true that peasants in Africa are subjected to a considerable degree of "hidden taxation" - the difference between the export price, the real cost of internal marketing deducted, and the price paid to the producer. But where else would the State raise these resources if this margin were abolished and if the country were to give priority in its development to the production of such export commodities as suggested by the Bank? Why not reduce consumer taxes (e.g. on coffee) in the developed countries for the benefit of the African peasant? Clearly, such hidden taxation reflect the local States' "anti-peasant" bias, but this bias is a consequence of the nature of the States' relations with the world system. The anti-peasant feature is not that of the local State alone but that of the global system of exploitation within which this State functions.

By failing to carry the analysis of the system any further, the World Bank condemns itself, on the subject of public expenditure as on others, to distribute advice that is hardly efficient and to suggest ways and means of tinkering with the economy in order to reduce this expenditure (by very little). Such savings are invariably made at the expense of the poor, in contradiction to the fine speeches about "basic needs". Moreover, does not the IMF, a close partner of the World Bank, always impose devaluation, austerity and a reduction in the standard of living of the poorest sections of the population? "Real prices" (world prices being the supreme reference) and the abolition of subsidies for the most basic consumer goods always operate against the interest of peoples.

On the other hand is industry in Africa really "overprotected"? Will not reducing such "overprotectionism" of an industry which is still the most fragile in the world surely reduce even further its already negligible rate of growth?

Wages in Africa are said to be "too high" and those of Bangladesh are held up as a model. Does the World Bank see the future in terms of the bangladeshization of the Third World? And how does one reconcile this statement with that on satisfying "basic needs"? Besides, there is no discussion on industrialisation
strategies and import substitution is considered as by far the superior option (no attention is paid to the fact that this strategy reproduces and reinforces inequalities in income distribution), although it is said to have been "badly applied" in Africa because it too often required State intervention (without which, despite the Bank's pious hopes concerning "entrepreneurs", the rate of industrialization would have been even lower). The Bank also recommends processing mineral resources for export, although it is a known fact that such processing swallows up considerable capital without leading to interaction between the exploitation of the resources and national development. It also recommends light export industries. Have the disasters of the textile industries in Morocco and Tunisia been forgotten which, after having followed such "recommendations", saw the doors of Western market firmly closed to their products? As for the industrialization required to ensure agricultural development, this is one aspect which the Bank is, apparently, quite unaware of.

3. The alternative strategy: autocentered and delinked national and popular development. The need for industrialization to support the agricultural revolution

Instead of the false, and metaphysical, opposition between agriculture and industry, one should look into how they are interlinked in the "modernisation" theory and practices and popular strategy. For the agricultural revolution requests industry to make it possible, but not the type of industries developed (poorly) until now in Africa.

3.1 To try to schematise the opposing autocentered model/extraverted model, a four sector analysis had been proposed: (i) Production of the means of production; (ii) Production of goods for mass consumption; (iii) Luxury production/consumption; (iv) Exports. The "autocentered" model is defined as that which is mainly governed by the interlinkage of sectors (i) and (iii), and the "extraverted" model as that which is mainly determined by the interlinkage of sectors (iv) and (iii). This analysis leads to a major conclusion: in the autocentered model labour remuneration (wages and peasants' incomes) must necessarily increase according
to the rhythm of the progress of productivity. On the other hand, in the extra-
verted model the labour remuneration can be delinked from the productivity growth.

Therefore:

(i) the development of a country from the contemporary Third World

cannot be achieved through the adjustment of its economy to the requirements

of the international division of labour, but on the contrary, through the
delinking of this economy as opposed to the international division of labour;

(ii) this delinking is a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for an

autocentered development which remains impossible if it is not intended
for the people (that is, if the benefits of the productivity rise do not

go straight to the greater majority);

(iii) on the other hand, a growth, the benefits of which are chiefly

assigned to a minority, not only is possible on the basis of an "extra-
verted" development (not always and everywhere possible), but also calls

for such a development, more effective for this objective than an "auto-

centered" model.

In the contemporary Third World, there is synonymy between autocentered
development and a national and popular content to it.

It is now possible to see that the policies implemented in Africa during
the sixties and seventies have been mainly "extraverted". Bearing in mind the

contrasts and differences one could at least recall that in this vast continent,

which has known different political regimes and numerous changes, there have been

four sets of experience:

(a) The "stagnation" cases, associated with a lack of natural resources

and/or a stagnant world demand for these resources.

(b) The "stagnation" cases, in spite of the existence of such resources

either potential (but well-known), or even exploited (and at times on a

large scale).
(c) The cases of "relatively marked growth", at times even high, associated with the exploitation of these resources, either by the multinationals or by the national State.

(d) The cases of "marked growth", in spite of the fact that the exploited resources (then often agricultural rather than mining resources) are "moderate", due in general to an extensive opening to the exterior; this "marked growth" being associated with an uneven distribution of its benefits.

In that frame of the conventional economic analysis one identifies some driving activities of the effective growth when it has existed: (i) oil and mines first; (ii) export agriculture (relatively rich - coffee, cocoa - or poor - groundnut); (iii) light consumption industries managed in an acceptable way, established by multinationals or the State, modern in their techniques, responding to the internal market (import substitution); (iv) a lively building sector (linked to the accelerated urbanisation and to "prosperity"); (v) administrative expenditure conceived in very classical terms, miming the West in its form and to one degree or another, so-called "social" (education first), growing at a sustained rhythm; (vi) tertiary activities (trade, finance...), nearly always also more vivid in their growth than the other sectors.

When the global growth has been slight - or zero, or negative - it seems attributed to an insufficient dynamism of (i) and (ii) and/or to a doubtful character of (iii). If, in addition, (v) and (vi) have been pushed, then the linked double crisis of public finances and balance of payments, ineluctably worsen the situation. The lack of dynamism of (i), (ii) and (iii) is attributed either to the evident shortcomings of the country or to its lofty "nationalism" which refuses foreign capital, a "rare" factor. It is, or can be, aggravated by the unconcern of the "elite", its "corruption" etc.

A steadily backward agriculture almost always stagnant (except in the products of the export sector) is incapable of releasing a marketed food surplus up to the standard of the urban effective demand. In the most extreme cases,
it becomes increasingly difficult for the rural world to feed itself. These disasters or shortages are easily attributed to the climate (drought) or to the careless administrative bureaucracy of the rural world. We rarely get into the analysis of the draining policies on the rural world which these conventional global strategies of growth imply necessarily.

In these experiences, industry has been hardly ever the driving force of the growth, but widely the product of a response of adjustment to the latter, whose chain effects are limited: (i) upstream, through the basic industries shortage and the weak inter-industrial integration; (ii) downstream, through the uneven character of the incomes it distributes. If the industry restricts itself to a definite number of production units in position of quasi-monopoly on a small market, and that these units provide consumption goods for middle classes: this industry, even if efficiently managed - that is without need for subsidies and with prices competitive with those of imports - is derived, and is not a driving force.

3.2 The alternative option of a national and popular "autocentered strategy" rests first on the principle of distribution of income as even as possible, especially between rural and urban sectors, between the modern sectors with higher productivity and the backward ones. The surplus of the production over the remuneration of labour thus equalized constitutes an excess which, if it is national and retained for the accumulation, permits guaranteeing a marked growth and a parallel and even progression of the popular consumption. The structure of demand, constituted in this way, would show priority in basic needs and orient the productive system towards the satisfaction of the latter.

Without entering into an illusory description of concrete details of measures to be taken to implement a development pattern of this type, one can assume that:

(a) It not only implies declaration of the "agricultural priority", but also its effective implementation. This priority requires that other activities with higher productivity should not be an opportunity for the distribution of incomes which exceed those distributed in agriculture. The reason for this being
that the demand is structured in such a way that the satisfaction of the needs expressed by the privileged would necessarily absorb an essential part of the means affected to the accumulation at the sacrifice of agriculture.

(b) It implies that industrialisation be first conceived to maintain the progress of productivity in agriculture: production of adequate inputs (fertilizers, equipment etc...), infrastructural works (irrigation, transports...), preserving and processing of the produce, etc... It then ensues that this industry satisfies the non-food consumption needs of the rural and urban population, on a basis as egalitarian as possible. It is understood that we cannot give up this national industry in substituting it through imports. Because imports have to be paid for through exports, and the comparative advantages are those which result from the price and income system of the world order, in conflicting with the political coherence outlined above. Import must, therefore, at each step, be reduced to the strict minimum.

(c) It implies therefore national and popular forms of social organisation of the production: the control of peasants over agricultural projects, real co-operatives (which should not be a way of draining the rural areas, depriving the peasants of their hold on production), institutions of collective bargaining of agricultural prices, the national control of industries, a national wage policy, the redistribution of the financing means on a country scale etc... It is difficult to imagine how for instance the multinationals would find a place in this organisational pattern, except to provide, in time and under the strict national control, some limited models as to production or organisation.

(d) It implies that a relation to technology be not reduced to its "transfer". It is in fact a question of creating an inventive capacity, not for reasons of cultural nationalism, but simply because the available techniques, especially the more advanced ones, are not neutral with regard to the range of products, the structure of demand to be satisfied (Western patterns), the price and income structures which control the profitability of these techniques, etc...
(c) It implies that limited external relations which are radically different from those derived from the various industrialisation strategies, import substitution, or export industrialisation. The import substitution is based on an already actual demand, in a structure of income distribution characterised through its very strong inequality; and on this basis respects the principles of the profitability (with at most some arguments of "moderate protection of infantile industries" during a brief transition). Therefore, it cannot but displace imports towards the intermediate goods (the industrial apparatus remaining non-integrated), and sophisticated capital goods (as the demand to be satisfied, in competition with the imports reproduces the Western capital exacting consumption model). It thus remains "extraverted". On the other hand, national and popular "autocentered" industry is not built in response to a pre-existing demand; but is created on the basis of the satisfaction of peoples' needs (incomes policy) and intermediate and derived capital needs. The import, which subsists, aims at filling the gaps, in the range of these derived needs, reducing progressively their relative importance (but not necessarily their absolute bulk). It binds, therefore, the external relations to the logic of internal accumulation. As for export industry, it is, by its very definition, extraverted. More especially as, forced to compete with the industry of advanced countries on their own homeland, it must import advanced technology extensively. This explains why the NICs, which are the most advanced in that direction, are also the most indebted: the export industry does not alleviate the situation of the foreign balance (contrary to the argument put forward to that effect, by the World Bank in particular); it aggravates it.

It implies the building up of a national structure of interdependence price/financing means which is in conflict with the very principles of the criterion of micro-economic profitability. In fact, the autocentered industry, if it must comply with the peoples' needs, must accept the juxtaposition of the very uneven productive units - modern industries, semi-mechanised manufactures, handicrafts manufactures. The unit of labour remuneration and that of prices entail thus unequal surplus. It must be redistributed so as to avoid the polarisation of progress in the modern units; and, on the contrary, to finance the progressive
modernisation of the backward sectors with the surplus of the modern sectors. This is hardly possible on a vast scale without large public property: the private national enterprise and a fortiori the multinational subcompany cannot accept at this level to detach itself from profitability. As we know, they act in a directly opposite sense: in destroying the non-competitive cottage industry, they have contributed in increasing unemployment and at the same time depriving the population of useful products.