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THE PROBLEMS OF TRANSITION AND THEIR
THEORETICAL SOLUTION

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The change from the dependent underdeveloped development model (based on the major link 1-3) to the true autonomous and self-centred development model (based on the link 2-4) constitutes the main content of the problems of transition. The integration into the world system of the countries which have become underdeveloped is at the roots of a specific contradiction of this system which tends to become its major contradiction : on the one hand, it has created the objective conditions of a need for development felt as such by the peoples of the periphery, but on the other, it has barred, for these countries, the way to a full capitalist development which was the historical response to the problem of accumulation, a pre-condition for socialism. That is why this specific contradiction has become the major contradiction, the one which reflects a turning point in direction leading to the superseding of this system.

This is nothing more than another expression of the law of uneven development according to which systems are first destroyed and superseded not in their central core, but rather from the peripheries, which are the weak links of the chain and areas in which contradictions of maximum intensity are reflected. Striking evidence of this general law can be found in history, particularly in the history of the Mediterranean and European world: the oldest civilizations of the East (Egypt, Mesopotamia etc.) were overtaken from the Graeco-Roman periphery just as in its turn the classical ancient civilization was destroyed and superseded by its barbarian periphery, in which the civilization of Feudal Europe⁽¹⁾ in the Christian era was constituted more freely and fully. For the record, we should specify that the major contradiction is not the basic contradiction of the system, which remains the contradiction between the level of development of the productive forces and the restrictive nature of the forms of social

organization. The major contradiction would not extent without the basic one. The former only explains the turning-point; the latter shows the essence of the system in the last resort.

This superseding of the system spreads over a more or less long, historical period, one which is never negligible since, it is precisely the transition period. It is the lapse of time between capitalism and full socialism. In order to pursue our historical comparison, we shall similarly consider the first centuries of the Christian era as a transition period, between the social formations of Mediterranean antiquity and those of the European feudal Middle Ages.

The Criteria and the Strategies of the Transition: the general and the particular.

Transition is thus defined as the gradual passage, under given specific historical conditions - those of today's periphery, already integrated into the world system and shaped as a dependent periphery - from the dependent capitalist development model to a self-centred national development model culminating in a socialism which supersedes capitalism.

Although the historical experience of Soviet Russia - like every historical experience - teaches useful lessons, it could not be transposed to the present under developed world. Not for "ideological" reasons : for instance, because the results obtained, that is the national economic, social and political structures of present-day Russia, are regarded as "non socialist" and it is desired to "avoid" similar "deviations" from a socialist project defined in a different way. If, in fact, the construction of an independent national society such as the present society in Russia were possible in the under-developed world today, powerful objective forces would come into play, to make it,

perhaps, an "objective historical necessity". We think that nothing of the sort applies, a target of this nature being objectively impossible for the developing countries of the last third of the twentieth century.

At the beginning of this century, Russia was not a peripheral country but rather a country with a backward central capitalist system. Its structures differed from those of underdeveloped countries, that is, from those of dependent capitalism : it had no "marginalization", for instance. Consequently, the Revolution of 1917 led to the acceleration of the accumulation process without altering fundamentally the model of capitalist accumulation. The abolition of private ownership of the means of production in favours of State ownership was the precondition for this acceleration. History has shown that under the conditions obtaining in Russia, it was possible to accomplish the task of accumulation as capitalism would have done, but with different forms of ownership. The reflection of this possibility is found in the Soviet theory of the socialist revolution reduced to an upheaval of forms of ownership which makes it possible - by the abolition of private property - to adjust these forms to the development level of the productive forces (potential forces, that is corresponding to the industrialization target reached). This theory leads to an economic ideology of transition, formulated in well-known terms : the priority of heavy industry over light, that of industry over agriculture, the unrestricted imitation of western technologies, the definition of consumption models with reference to those of the West, etc... in short all the dogmas summed up in the ambiguous formula "to catch up with the production of the advanced countries in every field".

Since England was the original home of industrial capitalism, all other countries now developed have been in one way or the other "backward" compared with it. But none of these countries had ever been peripheral in the sense in which we have defined it. With a time lag, continental Europe and North America caught up with England (the United

States and Germany overtaking it) in forms rather similar to those of the British model. Japan has finally attained the same model of full capitalism of the first order, but here already, the forms taken by the transition period presented some interesting features, the central role of the State in particular. Russia was the last experiment of a similar accumulation model, its only originality lying the fact that state ownership has not only been a transitional form, but rather its definitive form i.e. probably irreversible. Herein lies the ambiguity stemming from its origins (the socialist revolution) and the peculiarity of its advanced system of national State capitalism.

At any rate, in all these models, the transition period was marked by the submission of the masses who, reduced to the passive role of a labour reserve, were gradually transferred to the "modern" sector in the process of constitution, which then expanded, until it had, absorbed, the whole of society. This function was fulfilled by the Kolkhoz and by administrative oppression, just as it had been fulfilled by the Enclosure Acts and the Poor Laws in the English model.

But this path is not open to the countries of the present periphery owing to the already advanced stage of the "marginalization" processes, to the considerable and ever increasing gap between the modern technology brought into use by dominant capital and the need for the immediate improvement of the lot of the masses etc... The alternative here is: either a dependent development according to the model described above, or a necessarily original self-centred development compared with that of present developed countries. We find here again the law of uneven development of civilizations : the periphery is forced to supersede the capitalist model (even State capitalism); it cannot "catch up" with it.

The periphery is in fact forced, on account of the specific imbalances engendered by its integration into the world system (these being reflected in "marginalization") to review radically the capitalist model of resources allocation. It is constrained to reject the rules of profitability. In fact, the choices based on profitability in the structure of relative prices, imposed by integration into the world system, sustain and reproduce the model of increasingly unequal distribution of incomes (hence, marginalization), and so in their turn they keep a country in the peripheral model of resources allocation. The "rectifying" operation of the process of resource allocation should therefore largely be undertaken outside the rules of the market by directly assessing the expression of needs (nutritional needs, houses, education and culture, etc.). By so doing, the periphery is forced to supersede capitalism, to open a breach through which a socialist civilization can emerge to "disalienate" humanity. (2)

It is from this fundamental point of view that all the "technical" problems of the transition strategy should be re-examined. It is within this framework that links between agriculture industry, light industries, basic industries, labour intensive methods, capital intensive methods, should be re-considered. The problem here is to combine the most modern installations with immediate improvements in the "poor" sector (sector 2 of the model) where the mass of the population is concentrated, to use modern technology for the immediate improvement of productivity as well as the lot of the masses. In fact, the release of productive forces and incentive initiatives, and the mobilization of the masses in the true sense of the word, depend on this immediate improvement and on this alone. Mobilization in this sense, obviously requires the development of specific forms of true democracy at all levels : in the village, in the region and in the state as a whole (3).

The specific combination modern techniques - immediate improvement of the lot of the masses, certainly, requires a radical review

of the direction of scientific and technological research. The response to this specific problem facing the under-developed world today cannot be found in the imitation of the technologies obtaining in advanced countries. This is the major reason advanced by those in favour of autonomous scientific and technological research for the "Third World"⁽⁴⁾

Thus conceived the specific transition strategies are first and foremost "self-reliance" strategies. This self-reliance should be apprehended at various levels, democratically respecting the real popular social groups constituting the nation: the village, the region (particularly, in Africa, the true region which corresponds to a homogeneous cultural and ethnic whole), the state and possibly a group of states. The degree of maturity of conditions may force a country to consider for the time being, only the most elementary levels of these specific transition strategies, strategies which must then be designed for a long-term perspective. It is in this context that we will place the question of "small countries". The example of Viet Nam shows that even in a "small country" - and here under the most difficult objective conditions imposed by the war - a self-reliance strategy may be the first effective stage of transition. Here the very long-term prospect of the transition does not imply "the failure" of a development which one would hope to be rapid. It only shows that the problem of under development can ultimately be solved only within the framework of a radically renovated world system and a world-wide socialist society. That is why the term transition is appropriate: the transition of the world capitalist system based on a hierarchy of nations to a world socialist system which therefore cannot be constituted by the juxtaposition of relatively isolated and self-sufficient "socialist" nations. The effects of the real solidarity of peoples, in this blueprint for remoulding the world are apparent here: the limited immediate prospect of progress in the regions of the "Third World" where the conditions leading to the superseding of the capitalist

system are gestating reflects nothing other than the present weakness of the forces of socialism in the centre of the system.

Thus presented, the nature of the problem of transition helps us to understand the narrow limits of the framework in which the discussion was enclosed until the sixties. The transition requires more than the expansion of public ownership at the expense of private ownership or, the extension of the percentage of heavy industry etc. If this extension of the public sector and heavy industry is not accompanied by a radical review of economic choices, even if it means sacrificing in part the target of a rapid maximum growth, it is liable to perpetuate the dependent development model at the periphery, although this may take new forms. This is, as we shall see later on, the spontaneous trend of the present system. The problems involved in the dynamic relationships between the market and the non-market forms of the transition categories are an essential aspect of the real discussion, as is the nature of the dynamic relationships between centralization and decentralization, power and democracy, etc.

When we see transition under present conditions of inequality among nations, we are reminded that a development which is not simply a development of underdevelopment, in its "classical" form or in "renovated" forms, is simultaneously national, popular-democratic and socialist because of the blueprint which is its context. A strategy may be termed a transition strategy only if the target of the maturation and development of socialist consciousness is not sacrificed at any stage to that of rapid economic progress.

The spontaneous trends of the system : the failure of development policies and the renovated forms of dependence.

The preceding analysis of the conditions of transition, defined on the basis of the current model of the generation of inequality among nations enables us, in contradistinction, to ascertain the reasons for the failure of the development policies adopted in the "Third World", and to bring to light the direction of the spontaneous trends of the system.

Is any different path to development possible? A superficial examination of the results obtained in the last 25 years might suggest it. Some underdeveloped countries have in fact, for more or less long periods, experienced high growth rates within the framework of the present world system. These "miracles" which are based on an externally - oriented development which is itself conditioned by the external demand for a particular raw material (sector 1) and by the investment of foreign capital (in sectors 1 and 3 of our model), have had as a corollary the stagnation of other developed countries which form the very large majority. Moreover in all these apparently "fortunate" experiments, the specific characteristics of under-development (growing internal inequalities and consequent distortion of resources allocation, "marginalisation" and dependence etc.) have not only not been reduced but are becoming more and more marked. (5)

Hence "planning" devoid of its content appears as a hollow shell : a technique which proves to be inefficient. We can only plan, in fact, a self-centred development. The discussion of the accumulation model in the centre has shown us the basis on which a national economic policy can be built; it constitutes the essential content of "indicative planning", and the "concerted economy" of the advanced capitalist countries. This basis, it should be recalled is,

on the one hand, an advanced stage of monopolization and a democratic social consciousness on the part of a highly organized working class on the other hand. Nevertheless, the "concerted economy" finds its limit in the ever growing contradiction between the world-wide nature of production and the national character of the "social contract"⁽⁶⁾. The accelerated accumulation model of Soviet Russia developed planning techniques under specific conditions already described. We have described the essential content of the necessarily self-centred strategies which can constitute the basis of a third type of planning.

On the other hand, the attempt to "plan" a dependent and externally - oriented development strategy is, strictly, meaningless. For, it is unnecessary if conditions are "favourable" and futile if they are not. Certainly, this attempt is probably a result - through a minor one - of the technocratic alienation and of the slavish imitation of "fashions" transposed indiscriminately from the developed to the under-developed world, most often in a feeble and sometimes in a caricatural version. The failure of these types of planning can be wholly attributed to the fact - valid in Africa, in Asia and in Latin America - that the "results" (in terms of growth) have proved almost entirely independent of the forecasts, and of the "plans". The inadequacy of methods and techniques and that of the administrations responsible for the execution, administrations, which is usually invoked to explain the inability of the planning services truly to guide the country's economic life, are only the superficial aspects of a powerlessness, the origin of which can be found elsewhere. The action of the dominant multinational firms, whose decision-making centres are outside the developing countries in which they operate, reduces "planning" to the forecasting of the probable behaviour of these firms and that of the responses of the "traditional" economy and of the small and medium-sized concerns to this behaviour. At best, the plan will be reduced to a forecast of the inconsistencies of behaviour and the possible bottle-necks resulting from them without

being in a position to not effectively or to the drawing up of traditional government programmes accompanying an uncontrolled growth.

The criticism levelled against the ineffectiveness of planning under these conditions is a common place today, so much so that its abandonment in favour of the mere rehabilitation of the cost-benefit analysis "by project" is even openly recommended. This policy which is systematically recommended especially by the IBRD, does not solve the problem: it only shows that the claims have failed.

Can a "spontaneous" development of this type create, at least the conditions of its own superseding within the framework of the system, in which case, it may finally appear as a historically "necessary" first stage? We have the gravest doubts about this, since the model on which it is based is a model reproducing its own conditions. This intensification of dependent peripheral development is under way in directions which are already visible today and which will no doubt constitute the major forms of "advanced" under development tomorrow. Technological domination necessarily results from the "priority" given to the development of sectors "1" and "3", because these sectors have to be competitive at the international level whether the items involved be exports or "luxury" goods whose promotion reflects the adoption of western consumption models. This "indirect" domination may replace the "direct" control of the enterprise by foreign capital.

In fact in the early stages of the formation of peripheral economies when the technological gap was still small, in order to guarantee the smooth running of the system for its own benefit, the dominating central capital had to have a direct control over the "modern sectors whose promotion it ensured. At that stage, means of direct political control, were also necessary, hence colonization of direct intervention in "semi-colonies" which the Latin American countries and some Eastern countries then were. At an advanced stage of peripheral development, the technological domination, based on an ever widening gaps in this field, and geared to the existence of local social strata and classes integrated by their mode of consumption (therefore, their real interest) and usually by the accompanying ideology (renunciation of national patriotism, reduction of ideology to "consumismo" etc...), guarantees the conditions for the reproduction of the system without any direct controlling investment and without direct political intervention. This is the significance of the neo-colonialism or neo-imperialism which is taking shape⁽⁷⁾. Under these conditions, the burden of investment may be ensured by local "savings", private savings and particularly public savings. The development of a public sector which may become very important and even dominant locally does not, therefore, exclude the dependence of the system as a whole, including the public sector, on the developed world. This dependence is guaranteed by the interplay of local social forces, even if they are organized in a state capitalism which claims to be "socialist". At a very advanced stage, we may even imagine the development of a sector "4" - that is of a heavy industry - the latter providing local support for the overall dependent development. In such a case, this sector usually takes the forms of a public sector, as in Brazil.

The political theory of "sub-imperialism"⁽⁸⁾ corresponds to a real problem which arises here: the problem of unequal peripheral development. For, it may be conceived that, within the framework of a hierarchical world system some regions of the periphery may "benefit" from the geographical concentration on their own territories, of industries of types "3" and "4", not only for their own "national" market, but also for that of their neighbours who are mainly confined to ~~serving as~~ cheap manpower reserves. Such prospects are not only apparent in some big states of the underdeveloped world (Brazil is the most complete example of this, but we should consider in this context the role that India may be called upon to play); they are even apparent in smaller areas, in the Arab world and Black Africa. In Africa, perhaps more than elsewhere, the direct and brutal colonization broke up of all the precolonial structures, particularly that of the networks of intercontinental African trade as well as that of the complementarity existing between the various regions of this huge continent. We shall have the opportunity to see how the re-shapening of Africa in the direction of a dependent externally-oriented economy was reflected in the geography of the continent through a polarization of development on the coast with a concomitant impoverishment of the hinterland. The mass migrations which were an outcome of this, in turn, accentuated the regional inequalities. The political balkanization, one of the essential foundations of which lies in the process of unequal dependent peripheral development, creates the conditions of micro "sub-imperialisms" within the framework of an overall dependent system.

consciousness, in particular class consciousness, cannot be understood and located in the abstract without any reference to the real social system in which the social groups studied are found. The consciousness can only be an awareness of reality. This awareness enables the social groups to contemplate an effective action, either accepting the roles assigned to them, within the framework of the system, or with a view to radically changing the organization. It will be noticed that in the central system, the consciousness of belonging to a social group (the proletariat for instance) does not in itself define class consciousness. This may be a "reformist consciousness - a social-demarcation class consciousness which as we have seen, is an objective condition of the functioning of the central system in our time. On the other hand, a social consciousness of this type is not possible in the periphery, since the objective functioning of the system does not integrate the masses, but, on the contrary, rejects and marginalizes them. From these masses, the awareness of marginalization must lead to the rejection of the system. The question which arises here is specifically whether, at a particular time in a particular country, the marginalized groups or sub-groups attribute their lot to the objective functioning of the system, or whether, on the contrary, they see in it the effect of alien social or even supernatural forces, which obviously reduces their ability to act so as to change the system and forces their political action not to transcend the stage of revolts without strategy. The answer to this question, in our opinion the only one which arises will, of course, differ according to groups, places and times. The social, ideological, cultural and political problems of the present "Third World" should all be considered within this theoretical framework.

The "tradition - modernity" debate usually makes an absolute distinction between the two terms it defines. The second term is reduced to its historical form (capitalist and western) - thus barring the way to superseding of capitalism which would be world wide, universal (but not homogenizing). The first term is defined with no reference to the present peripheral societies, the traditional being placed in a pre-capitalistic (and non western) context which no longer exists. For, where are the "traditional" societies today? Fulfilling the function of supplying cheap labour to the "modern" sector (to sectors 1 and 3, inter-connected as they are). The so-called "traditional" society in the majority from the point of view or the number of people it includes, is so no longer; it is pseudo-traditional, that is, its traditionality is transformed, distorted and subjugated. We shall see indeed that, in the African experience, the social transformation movements which look traditional (the religious protest movements which take prophetic forms. The theocratic movements **for re-**organizing local government such as those of the moslem confraternities of West Africa - the "Mourides" of Senegal, the "Sultanates" of Nigeria - or the Sudanese "Madhism", the evolution of some centralized monarchies of animistic Africa such as the Wolof or Dahomean States etc...) are responses to the problems of integration into the emerging world system, that is, movements of adaptation and adjustment to the status of periphery. Phenomena which are too often analyzed by sociologists in terms of "survivals" such as "tribalism" or village, family, **clan or ethnic solidarities among town immigrants - are so tenacious** that they call for a criticism of this mechanistic dualist approach. Their tenacity can be explained when we understand that these pseudo-traditional forms conceal a "modern", though poor, contents, that they constitute a means of survival in the dramatic conditions of marginality⁽⁹⁾.

"Marginalization" raises a very real and serious problem : the problem of its forms (and the effects of these forms on social consciousness) and of its frontiers (which are always very blurred). The empiricist observation of social phenomena in these fields has led to conclusions which are, in our opinion, too hasty. The theme of the "cultures of poverty"⁽¹⁰⁾ and the analogies between this theme and that of "lumpen-proletarianization" is an example of simplification yet to be criticized. At the other extreme, the theme of the "labour aristocracy" of developing countries is an equally debatable example.

It is true that the "working class" in the strict sense may at very elementary stages of industrialization as still occurs widely in Africa, appear to be a "privileged" class, a class not far from that of the petty bourgeoisie in its social status and consciousness. The policy of international firms accentuates this feature⁽¹¹⁾. Under the specific conditions obtaining in some regions of Tropical Africa, particularly the lateness of colonial development, (backwardness in the development of sector "1"), the stability of the pre-capitalistic structures untouched by the "peripherization" of the society (these structures becoming the prevailing ones in sector "2"), limits the pressure, which the growing "modern" sector (1 and 3) can exert on the society in the process of "peripherization". In economic terms the supply of cheap labour for the growing modern sector is limited; hence its remuneration is not too bad. But the acceleration of the "peripherization" process shows that, at more advanced stages, the condition of this proletarian core deteriorates in relative, and often absolute, terms. New alliances then become possible between this core and the marginalized mass henceforth, semi-proletarianized in the full sense of the term, these alliances being based on an objective solidarity (the pressure henceforth directly exerted by the declared unemployment on the wages of those with a relatively permanent employment). From then on, the objective conditions are ripe for a real strategy of transition, thus preparing the ground for a superseding of capitalism.

NOTES

- (1) We do not claim that this brief survey deals with all the aspects of the problems of "civilizations" the theory of which is yet to be formulated. The work of PELLETIER and GROBOT (matérialisme historique et histoire des civilisations, Paris 1969) is a first stimulating beginning in this field. On the Arab world, see Ahmad el Kodsy, (Nationalism and Class Struggle in the Arab world, Monthly Review July-August, 1970
- (2) The universal scope of the Chinese cultural revolution is obviously to the point here. See Pierre Amon, "La révolution culturelle et le marxisme", Que Faire, No. 5, 1970.
- (3) The whole nature of the pseudo "tribalism" problem in Africa should be reviewed in this light. The necessary authentic democracy demands the full respect of the social reality. It is only by respecting it that we can integrate it positively into a process which enables it to be superseded. The bureaucratic negation of reality holds up evolution and leads to a false and negative re-appearance of this reality which is officially denied.
- (4) See the article by Mrs. Muller. Plantenberg (Technologie et dépendance, Critiques de l'économie politique, No. 3, 1971) which clearly defines the type of technology which can meet the problems of the present under-developed world.
- (5) As has just been recognized by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) grouping 77 countries in Lima (October 1971).

- (6) That is why the crisis of the system is noticeable in the field of international monetary relations (the present dollar crisis etc...) Triffin, (Le système monétaire international, Paris 1969) expresses awareness of this by pleading the cause of the Utopia : that of a supra national monetary authority, which presupposes that the contradiction has been overcome.
- (7) This stage has not yet been reached in contemporary Africa where direct foreign investment still remains the propelling force. That is why the term neo-colonialism has never appeared scientific to us. We prefer the term "neo-imperialism" (for want of something better), which applies only to very advanced under-developed countries (such as Brazil).
- (8) Term taken from Ruy Mauro Marini (Subdesarrollo y revolucion, Siglo XI Mexico 1969).
- (9) The famous Senegalese film of Ousmane Sembène (LE MANDAT) is a living scientific demonstration of this theory, better than many pretensions sociological studies:
- (10) Oscar Lewis (The children of Sanchez) inaugurated this school.
- (11) G. Arrighi (International Corporations, Labour aristocracies and economic development in Tropical Africa, mimeographed document, Dar-es-Salaam, 1969) dealt with this theme in the most consistent way known to us, with reference to the case of Tanzania.