

REVIEW ESSAYS

A GREAT LEAP BACKWARD: A REVIEW OF GORAN HYDEN'S NO SHORTCUTS TO PROGRESS

by

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This is an ambitious book*. Hyden contends that the last two decades in Africa have been spent essentially denying and therefore trying to escape from the constraints of Africa's own history. This is because "to the extent that the past has been considered at all in Africa it has been the colonial experience. ...Africa's pre-capitalist past was ignored in favour of its capitalist present; in other words, there was a strong inclination to argue Africa's case in relation to global or external rather than local and internal forces." This has been "true of protagonists of both the right and the left" (p. 191). Thus, what is needed to understand the real "roots" of the crisis in Africa is a "paradigm shift", requiring a "closer look at the historical realities intrinsic to Africa" (p. xiii). To do this, claims Hyden, is only possible from the perspective of historical materialism. So, he presents his book as based on this "simple thesis, originally developed by Marx" (p. xiv). No more, no less.

I. The Argument

No Shortcuts to Progress can be neatly divided into three sections. The first two chapters state the "intrinsic realities" that Hyden believes are the "root causes" of the current crisis in Africa; the next three describe the consequences of these root causes which make up the various elements of the contemporary African crisis; and the last three chapters prescribe a way out of that crisis.

What, then, are these "historical realities intrinsic to Africa?" The central reality is "the existence of a separate 'peasant mode of production' functioning side by side with either capitalism or socialism" (p. 6). The "principal premise of this book" is "that the peasant mode keeps alive opportunities for the rural producers to escape the demands of any given macro-economic system" (p. 9). The African peasant, says Hyden, is "uncaptured". Why? "Because he owns the land, or at least has the undisputed right to till it, his ability

*Goran Hyden, No Shortcuts to Progress: African Development Management in Perspective, Heinemann Educ. Books, London 1983.

to escape such policy demands is much greater than that of a tenant under feudal rule or a worker under capitalism" (p. 8).

It is pre-capitalist practices organized along kinship lines that Hyden quaintly terms the "economy of affection", "the peculiar type of economy that is apparent in any society where the peasant mode is still surviving" (p. 8). The combined fact of a peasant majority and a weak, tiny and lopsided bourgeois class "has created one of the most problematic paradoxes in contemporary Africa." For, "with the eventual departure of the colonial rulers... the economy of affection tended to swamp the public realm." This fact "tends to perpetuate a locale-specific outlook," that is, "'tribalism' and 'nepotism'" (p. 17). This is why "those saddled with the responsibility to govern are neither landlords nor capitalists controlling the economy through ownership of means of production." Rather, "they are spokesmen and representatives of political clans or groupings derived from the economy of affection" (p. 41).

Hyden's point is that instead of the state capturing society, as in Orwell's 1984, it is (peasant) society which has absorbed the state. "How to resolve this paradox," that of "a state with no structural roots in society," that is "perhaps the key problem facing African countries in the years to come" (p. 19). And Hyden keeps on repeating the point through the first 2 chapters: the real "objective challenge" that Africa's rulers face is, "how to capture a multitude of small producers, engulfed in the economy of affection, for the benefit of national, macro-economic objectives and concerns?" (p. 22).

From this twin reality, that of an "uncaptured peasantry" and "a state with no structural roots in society" follow all the symptoms of the African crisis - so Hyden contends in chapters 3, 4, and 5.

The first consequence of Africa's pre-capitalist condition, and the first dimension of the current African crisis, is pervasive bureaucracy and a stifled market. The "preference for bureaucracy", says Hyden, is the result of an "inherent attitude and inclination among leaders who see themselves as guardians of African (that is, precapitalist) values and institutions." Neither is this peculiar to Africa because "all pre-capitalist leaders have preferred the bureaucracy (to) the market" since "the extension of bureaucracy offers effective control of appointment of followers and retainers" (p. 51). Nor do Ivory Coast and Kenya, "where the market has been sustained as an important mechanism," constitute any kind of an exception, since there too "its survival is due to the presence of foreign minorities

and multi-national corporations rather than active government support alone" (p. 50).

From this all-pervasive bureaucracy stems the second dimension of Africa's crisis: naked dictatorship. So far as the people are concerned, "in the absence of a functioning market, compulsion, or naked force, remains the most likely tool to deal with the uncaptured peasant" (p. 52). This is so particularly since the fact that "the state is not structurally tied to society means that African leaders "are not in a position to exercise systemic power." It is this objective situation that "invites authoritarianism and often arbitrariness in political decisions." At moments, Hyden even laments for those African leaders who "have been forced to sacrifice democratic principles of rule," adding in the same breath, "often against their will" (pp. 44-45).

Bureaucracy, once again, accounts for the third dimension of Africa's contemporary crisis, this being all-round corruption, collusion and circumvention of laws in public life. "Where bureaucracy prevails," writes Hyden, "there is little challenge to pre-capitalist values and ... (the) assignment of resources in society are not likely to follow scientific socialist principles but instead the affective criteria inherent in society" (p. 52). Thus, the proliferation of malpractices: public officials circumvent rules, they collude secretly with the very politicians who are supposed to supervise policy implementation, and secure private objectives through corrupt means. The result, says Hyden borrowing Gunnar Myrdal's phrase, is the "soft state" in Africa (p. 63).

As the state capitulates to society, it becomes engulfed in the system of spoils and corruption so characteristic of the "economy of affection." Even the plan becomes "a political instrument" (p. 61). All administrative reforms fail due to the pervasive pre-capitalist environment. This is true of all state "de-centralization" measures and of all "hiving off" of central responsibilities to parastatals. In fact, the closer a state agency comes to the ground, the more effectively it is penetrated by the "economy of affection" - so runs the thread of argument through chapter 4. Hyden is really quite emphatic; Africa is pre-capitalist, and that is the source of its crisis. Period.

How then can poor Africa, the reader begins to wonder, get out of this vicious circle of affection? Hyden's recipe is unambiguous. "Material conditions in African countries, with very few exceptions, are not really congenial to revolutionary acts of change," he begins (p. iii). This objective fact "calls for a very different conception of what is progressive in the contemporary African context" (p. 213).

The concrete "progressive" remedies are brought out in the pinultimate chapter. Its title, "Implications for donor agencies," is no slip of the pen. The author is clear as to the real agency of change in this pre-capitalist swamp that is contemporary Africa: "foreign donors, particularly those who enjoy the trust of African leaders, can play an instrumental role in helping to redefine the parametres of development and adjust its own system of aid to suit a new strategy." (p. 180)

Specifically, donor agencies must move away from the "state-centered approach," whereby they deal directly with state agencies and primarily fund state-controlled programmes. They must now connect directly with private groups in society. The point, argues Hyden, is "on a large scale...to facilitate foreign aid on a 'people-to-people' or 'movement-to-movement' basis." (p. 184) Through "strengthening the market" and assisting "non-government organizations," foreign aid must promote the development of a strong bourgeois class in Africa. For "there is no substitute for the development of a borgeois class." (p. 181) Anyone who thinks otherwise is a utopian attempting "Shortcuts to Progress."

II. The 'Economy of Affection': Is the African Peasant Really 'Uncaptured'?

Hyden's rather misleading phrase, 'economy of affection', refers to pre-capitalist economic practices organized along kinship lines. His argument is not simply that these are pervasive; more importantly, he contends that these practices are autonomous of the state and capital. The argument rests on two legs. The first relates to land: that, except in the small enclaves of capitalist or feudal-type agriculture, land is relatively plentiful in Africa since peasants have immediate and direct control over it. Not only does the peasantry remain undifferentiated, its autonomy from the demand of an exploitative class is "much greater than that of a tenant under feudal rule or a worker under capitalism." (.1) The second argument relates to labour: that the network of mutual help practices characteristic of peasant communities provides a "safety net" to peasants in times of distress. It therefore also provides an "escape valve" from the demands of capital, whether in its state or private form. Let us now examine these two legs of the argument in turn.

Land:

Hyden argues as if land is the only means of agricultural production; therefore his point that the "undisputed right to till the land" is sufficient to guarantee autonomy to the direct producer.

Anyone with experience of peasant agriculture would know that there is a world of difference between formal access to land and the actual capacity to utilize that same land. The capacity is determined, not simply by the availability of land, but also by control over instruments of labour, however rudimentary. A recent study of a peasant community in northern Uganda (quite 'pre-capitalist' according to Hyden's criterion) showed that whereas there was little difference between the land formally owned by poor and lower-middle peasants (on the average, 4.26 acres per family) and that owned by average and upper-middle peasants (4.2 acres per family), the real difference lay in the land each had the capacity to utilize: the former could manage to cultivate no more than 1.92 acres in comparison to 3 acres for the latter. Why? Because rural poor households, though they could muster an average labouring strength of 2.59 members had no more than 1.74 hoes at their disposal, with some even wielded at no more than 50% effectiveness due to advanced wear and tear.

The point is that the real dilemma of the rural poor in Hyden's "pre-capitalist" Africa is not that they are land-poor, but that they are implements-poor. What drives these families to seek alternate forms of income, including income from wage labour, is not always the scarcity of land, but often the incapacity to till even the land they do possess.

Let us now examine how wage labour relations may emerge without necessarily taking its classic form under industrial capitalism in 19th century Europe.

Wage-Labour

The second leg on which Hyden's argument stands is that cooperative communal forms of labour substantially insulate the peasant from demands from above. The problem, once again, is that Hyden is content simply to observe the formal fact of communal labour practices, citing secondary materials from a number of studies; at no point does he bother to undertake an historical examination of their function. In other words, is what looks communal, cooperative and autonomous on the face in fact so in practice?

Another look at our study in Northern Uganda will help make the point. The dominant form of labour organisation in pre-colonial times in that region was in the form of communal cooperative labour. Communal group teams called Wang Tic (pronounced Wang Tich), worked in turn on individually-held plots of land in return for a traditionally specified 'token' of appreciation in the form of a millet brew or food. So long as the community remained independent and its members of roughly equal standing, the system functioned as it was

supposed to. With the colonial period, however, neither condition obtained.

Two changes could be observed under colonialism. First, the colonial authorities demanded that huge bloc farms be cleared at a distance from each village and that each peasant family cultivate one acre of cotton and food on these farms utilizing Wang Tic labour. Secondly, with increased population and differentiation, some peasants become too poor to afford the traditional 'token' that must be given in return for labour. In time, the community divided into two: on the one hand, those who could afford the 'token' and so remained as the 'recipients' of communal labour, and on the other, those too poor to afford it who now entered the system only as 'participants'. And yet, since the traditionally fixed 'token' never quite fully compensated for the labour expended in return, the Wang Tic system remained communal and cooperative only in form; its content was radically altered as the system now served to transfer labour from the poor to the better off households in the community, and from the community to the colonial state.

With neo-colonialism, the system reached a point of crisis, surfacing in the draught years of the late 60's when more and more peasants, millet-poor, were unable to brew the beer needed as 'token'. The system was reorganized on a class basis, renamed Awak. Membership was voluntary, not compulsory as before. All members were required to work as "participants", and each was entitled to be a "recipient" of labour in turn. The "token" was abolished.

Here was an attempt by the labouring poor to put the communal labour system on a new footing. But the attempt failed. Why? Because the context of the system, the larger environment, had not changed. The labouring poor could not escape from the demands of a cash income. Starting with the most desperate households, one after another peasant began to take the Awak team to a capitalist employer when his/her turn came, collecting the payment for him/herself.

The Awak, in other words, was functioning as a disguised form of group wage labour. It had succumbed to the same socio-economic forces that had brought about the collapse of the old Wang Tic. It is to the analysis of these forces, the wider environment, that we must now turn.

The Market and the State

What is it that drives the peasant producer household into the web of commodity relations, compelling it to seek minimal cash income to reproduce in a simple fashion the objective conditions of its existence? Obvious as it may

sound, one is compelled to remind Hyden that this household is not autonomous - in relation to the production process. The peasant is tied by two strings, to both the market and the state.

The first string is sustained by the fact that the peasant household must depend on the market to obtain all its essential manufactured needs both for producer goods (hoe, knife, machette, axe, at the minimum) and for consumer goods (salt, soap, match boxes, paraffin, clothing, utensils, medicine, at the minimum). Without these, survival is literally impossible. Here, we have the dull compulsion of economic forces from which there is absolutely no escape.

The second string ties the peasant to the state. Extra-economic compulsion from state authorities take a variety of ever-growing forms: from compulsory annual taxation to a range of compulsory "contributions", in the form of cash or labour, for this or that service (clearing roads or wells, building churches or schools, for the party or the local state authorities). Here, it is a situation of push and pull. The peasant may attempt, singly or collectively, to escape a particular demand. But unless she/he crosses the state boundary and becomes a refugee - thus leading to 'capture' by other state authorities - she/he cannot escape all of them.

The point is that the autonomy of the peasant that Hyden writes of is not in the process of production; to the extent it exists, it is in the labour process. But here too, it is nowhere near complete. It is the formal autonomy of a hemmed-in petty commodity producer, the conditions of whose production are limited at least doubly: in the first instance because the producer is enmeshed in a system of commodity relations, whereby the surplus product is pumped out of him/her through a complex of exchange relations; and in the second instance, because he/she is also subject to compulsory labour "contributions" demanded by political (state) authorities.

Sum Up

To sum up the section, the problem with Hyden's theorization of the "uncaptured" peasant in Africa is three-fold.

First, the peasantry appears in Hyden's book as an undifferentiated mass. In it, there are no classes: only "peasants" and "clan leaders." To the discerning reader, it is obvious that to the extent Hyden is writing about peasants in Africa, he is really referring to the middle peasantry, and to none other.

Second, even in conceptualizing the position of the middle peasant, Hyden is off the mark. His problem is that he proceeds by way of formal analogies to historical situations elsewhere. His argument is that to the extent relations in agriculture are not industrial capitalist i.e., employer-wage labour) as in Europe, and not feudal (i.e., landlord-tenant) as in Asia and Latin America, the peasant in Africa remains uncaptured.

For a book that claims to be laying bare the "intrinsic" historical realities of Africa, this is indeed a strange way to proceed. It stops at showing what does not exist in the case of the African middle peasantry: that there is no immediate overlord. But it has absolutely nothing to say about what does exist, the concrete situation of a peasant (in particular, a middle peasant) family in a social formation where the agricultural surplus is pumped out through trade relations - whether this trade is officially (state) or privately controlled, being a secondary point - it is this reality that Hyden fails to grasp. What all this amounts to is the failure to see the specific relations of "capture" or, to put it in a less militaristic language, relations that subordinate pre-capitalist forms to the accumulation needs of capital.

Finally, for all its claim to be unravelling Africa's "intrinsic" history, Hyden's book is really ahistorical. Hyden has no conception that the subordination of pre-capitalist relations to the demands of capital accumulation is a phased, step-by-step process. True, there are moments when Hyden does suggest that this process began in the colonial period.² But these remain isolated references. As a rule, Hyden ignores the colonial period. He assumes it to have been some sort of a temporary aberration from which pre-colonial pre-capitalist Africa emerged unscathed.

What is absent is the understanding that the development of capitalism is a historical process. Capitalism does not spring from the womb of pre-capitalist society like the Greek Goddess Athena from the head of Zeus, its features fully formed and looks easily identifiable to one and all. Neither is it like a flag planted from outside in a single clean swoop. Capitalist relations assume a variety of historical forms, depending on both the concrete character of the pre-capitalist soil in which it grows or on which it is foisted, and the overall international context. The most bizarre feature of Hyden's book is his failure to identify the capitalism that has actually grown in Africa under imperialist hegemony; instead, he laments it as a pre-capitalist cancer, wishing the slate could somehow be wiped clean for pure capitalism to grow on it!

III. Capitalist Development Under Imperialist Hegemony

Hyden has a point when he implies that the specificity of history in Africa is lost whenever there is a tendency to submerge the study of Africa in the general contours of a tricontinental (African, Asian, and Latin American) history a la dependency theory. But the point turns lame when he fails to deliver the promise. The book contains an analysis of neither Africa's early "intrinsic" history nor - and this in particular - of that history which has shaped contemporary reality in Africa. I refer to the history of capital accumulation in Africa over the past five centuries, and not simply over the colonial period.

From the point of view of a study of capitalist development in Africa, that history can be divided into three distinct periods. The first and longest lasting was the period of slavery. Then, the emphasis was mainly on imperialist plunder which tended to destroy the productive forces, not on introducing capitalist production relations which would tend to reproduce and raise the level of the productive forces in a spiralling fashion.

Africa entered the second period with its partition and physical occupation a century ago. Bourgeois colonial states were implanted on pre-bourgeois social formations on the continent. One aspect of the history that followed was a protracted attempt by colonial bourgeois states to subordinate (not necessarily to transform) all existing pre-bourgeois social processes, but particularly that of production, to the demands of capital accumulation in the imperialist countries. Unlike in the period of slavery, a bourgeoisie did develop in the colonial period, but it was a bourgeoisie predominantly introduced from the outside, not developed from the inside. Generally speaking, the colonies could be divided between those where the local bourgeoisie had a settler character, its point of origin being the imperialist countries themselves, and where it had a settler-type character, originating from older colonies like India or Lebanon.

It was this social fact which was brought to light by the popular revolt, more or less organized, against the colonial state and its allied classes. Confronted with this revolt, the colonial state gained an understanding of its central political weakness: that colonial imperialism had frustrated the development of an indigenous bourgeoisie, thereby rendering weak the internal class base for continued imperialist domination of these countries.

Out of this realization was borne the imperialist strategy for the period that followed independence, that of neo-colonialism. The whole range of "nation-building"

policies, devised, financed and implemented by a host of "donor agencies" in the sixties, were none other than various elements of a single bourgeois-building project. It was Cabral who commented on this thrust of "neo-colonialism:" "Its current framework in the underdeveloped countries is the policy of aid, and one of the essential aims of this policy is to create a false bourgeoisie to put a brake on the revolution and to enlarge the possibilities of the petty bourgeoisie as a neutralizer of the revolution."³

My point is simple: that an indigenous bourgeoisie has developed in most African countries mainly after independence. It is this historical fact which distinguishes the African situation not just from the imperialist countries where the bourgeoisie is hegemonic but also from the countries of Asia and Latin America where it has had a longer history of development and therefore a more effective presence in both the economy and society. In contrast, the bourgeoisie in Africa is still in the throes of birth. That is why, in the process of capital accumulation underlying this development, a direct state connection has been and continues to be vital. This central fact has shaped both the political and the economic features of this bourgeoisie. But Hyden's analysis shows no grasp of this historical fact.

Hyden's political analysis focuses on what he terms "clan politics." His contention is that clan politics is characteristic of a pre-capitalist society, and is the opposite of class politics in a bourgeois society. To draw such a rigid dividing line between clan politics and class politics is to fail to understand politics in both Africa and the advanced capitalist countries. Hyden's failure is really double: he misses both what is common and what is distinct between politics in the African neo-colonies and the advanced capitalist countries.

Let us begin with the commonality. Capitalist competition, it is generally accepted, is the source of factional struggles within the capitalist class; whether in Africa or Europe. Furthermore, that contending bourgeois factions should try to organize behind them other classes on the basis of "natural" ties (e.g., kinship, religion, race, region) that tend to unite them with these classes, and not such "historical" relations (as social class) that tend to divide them from these same popular classes - this tendency too can be observed not only in Africa but where bourgeois factions vie for power against one another. If Hyden's point is that in a bourgeois society, unlike in Africa, classes line up as classes in the political arena, and then confront one another across the battle line, this is simply not true.

It is only in a revolutionary situation that form tends

to coincide with content, that classes tend to organize politically as classes and the class struggle is visible to one and all. The point about a non-revolutionary situation, after all, is precisely that it is the factional struggle within the bourgeoisie that occupies the center of the stage, and not the oppressor/oppressed contradiction, and that the oppressed are led into the political arena under the leadership of separate and contending oppressor factions and thereby simultaneously disorganized. That, after all, is what "pluralist" politics in a bourgeois democratic society is all about.

From this point of view, then clan politics in contemporary Africa is none other than the historically concrete form of bourgeois-organized politics under neo-colonial capitalism. Similarly, ethnic organizations are also none other than bourgeois-organized united fronts which serve a dual political function: simultaneously to organize the various competing factions of the bourgeoisie while disorganizing the popular classes into hostile factions, each contained under the leadership of "its" bourgeoisie!

Perhaps it is understandable that, with his sights focused on the "inherent" realities of Africa, Hyden should miss the above commonality: that the dominant politics in non-revolutionary Africa is some form of ethnic (or religious) pluralism organized from the standpoint of different bourgeois factions. But it is surely ironic that Hyden should also miss what is distinct about African politics: that inter-bourgeois factional struggles become so bitterly antagonistic, thereby rendering antagonistic whichever "natural" tie (kinship, religion, region) has come to be the basis of political organization and now in turn come to represent the dividing line between contending factions.

Surely, this phenomenon can not be explained unless we grasp the elementary fact that a direct state connection is absolutely central to the accumulation process in contemporary Africa. This is why inter-bourgeois factional political struggles come to acquire a life-and-death type of character - precisely because the loss of a key state position means likely death as a bourgeois! This is why opposition is considered to be synonymous with treason by those in power, elections are either a nominal single party affair or a multi-party hoax and the normal method of transfer of power from one government to another is an armed putsch. Precisely because every change in government is simultaneously a sharp shift in the internal composition of the bourgeoisie-in-formation.

Economically, a bourgeoisie in the neo-colony of the African type has required two connections to thrive:

internally, a connection with the state, thereby giving it predominantly the character of bureaucrat capital, and externally a connection with foreign capital, giving it mainly a comprador character.

Now, between these two aspects of neo-colonial capitalism, its bureaucratic and its comprador aspect, there exists a definite tension. The stronger the bureaucratic aspect, the greater is the tendency towards official corruption (this being a most important form of primitive capital accumulation) and the more is the social character of the bourgeoisie defined along sectional (nationality, religious, regional) lines. Particularly in times of declining economic activity such as the current world depression, this has all the makings of a political crisis inside the bourgeoisie, whose spill-over effects are even more serious from the point of view of the hegemonic imperialist power, since they involve the twin possibilities of disaffected bourgeois factions drawing sections of popular classes out of the electoral arena into the field of various types of "armed struggle" and opportunities for contending external powers to link up with these same disaffected local bourgeois factions. Just witness developments in Uganda and Chad.

It is in the context of this crisis that US imperialism has mounted a counter-thrust in the field of "aid", its point being simultaneously to strengthen the comprador aspect of capitalism and to prune its bureaucratic aspect so as to widen the internal social base of the neo-colonial bourgeoisie. It is not only Hyden, but a whole range of "donor agencies," from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) downwards, who are talking of moving away from a "state-centred" to a "market-centred" strategy of bourgeois development in the African neo-colonies.

But Hyden does this with a sleight of hand. He detaches the bureaucratic aspect of neo-colonial capitalism from its comprador aspect, opposes one to the other in an absolute way, presenting the first as pre-capitalist (and at times even as socialist) and the second as capitalist, thereby presenting his call for a shift inside the neo-colonial framework as a historically "progressive" demand for a movement from pre-capitalism to capitalism.

But Hyden's recipe does not even amount to a pro-people reform. Every book, it is said, is written for a particular audience. Hyden's audience is the "donor agencies" whom he addresses directly in the pinultimate chapter as the real moving force behind developments in Africa. His beckoning them to move away from a "state-centred approach" and "on a large scale... to facilitate foreign aid on a 'people-to-people' or movement to movement' basis" (p. 184),

no matter what language it be couched in, this is a clarion call for a direct, comprehensive and all-round penetration of Africa by imperialism. It advocates bypassing organized state powers in Africa so as to develop direct links between imperialism and local private interests. It represents a call for the final negation of the independence of the sixties, a movement backwards from neo-colonialism to colonialism!*

IV Modernization Theory Recast as Marxism

It is unfortunate that Hyden should find it necessary to claim that his thesis is a simple return to Marx. Unfortunate because it misleads all readers, whether Marxists or non-Marxists. And yet - to set aside secondary issues of form and presentation, and to grasp the kernel of what Hyden has to say - it is necessary to realize that his thesis is basically a re-presentation of the modernization theory of the 60's. The only change is in terminology, presumably undertaken to suit the changed ideological context of the 1980's.

In a nutshell, Hyden's argument can be summed in two paragraphs: the real struggle in Africa is that between the forces of capitalism (read: modernity) and those of pre-capitalism (read: tradition). All major problems of contemporary Africa are rooted in its "inherent" pre-capitalist (i.e., traditional) past. This pre-capitalist (traditional) past has neither a history nor any specificity worthy of analysis. It was neither created nor has it essentially changed over time. It is really Africa's original sin, awaiting a comprehensive and extended missionary treatment.

The solution is to move from pre-capitalism (tradition) to capitalism (modernity). The agency of this change in Africa, as everywhere else, must be its entrepreneurs (read: modernizers). But, how to create these "men of destiny" (p. 24) from a pre-capitalist swamp, short of sheer magic? So Hyden turns to external forces for a helping hand. To be sure, a promising beginning was made under colonialism but it was unfortunately cut short by independence in the sixties, leading to the crisis of the eighties. To pick up the pieces

*The most bizarre statements of Hyden are those which dismiss neo-colonialism as a "bogey". For with his repeated statements about how African states have no roots in "their" societies and how they are suspended from above almost exclusively through "donor agencies" funds, Hyden really builds a case for considering African states as the extreme form of comprador powers!

where he believes they were left in the sixties, Hyden turns to the "donor agencies;" indeed, his faith in them as the champions of all that is rational and coherent in the world today is quite touching.

Now, to return to our own commentary. Only from the modernization perspective can one make sense of Hyden's contention that "important leads to an understanding of African development today" can come from "observations on the early phases of class formation in industrial society" and not from "contemporary parallels from other parts of the world, be it India, China, the Soviet Union or the United States." (p. 22) And so concludes the last paragraph of the theoretical first chapter:

"This suggests that African countries, irrespective of current political ideology, cannot really expect to jump the capitalist phase. By studying the early phases of transition to capitalism in other societies, it will be possible to understand better what kind of issues are likely to be at stake in Africa and what strategies may be possible to pursue in the years to come." (p. 29)

It is certainly true that social reality in contemporary Africa represents an admixture of capitalist and pre-capitalist elements. But it is not true that therefore this is the same, even in essential respects, as the European transition of the 15th and 16th centuries. Why? Because this admixture exists under imperialist hegemony, a historical fact which has created of contemporary Africa an entirely different totality.

Though it represents the pivot around which Hyden's solution to the contemporary African crisis turns, imperialism is totally absent from Hyden's analysis of that same crisis. Thus, Hyden ends up detaching the positive from the negative aspects of monopoly capitalism. Reminiscent of Schumpeter, he characterizes the former (rationality, simplicity, flexibility, coherence) as capitalism and the latter (monopoly, bureaucracy, dictatorship) as pre-capitalism! Anyone reading his ode to the virtues of the market on p. 105 would think Hyden fancies himself sitting in the 18th century, singing songs of the rationality of competitive capitalism against feudal obscurantism. It is as if monopoly capitalism (imperialism) never was!

The recognition of this new totality is the key factor in path-breaking Marxist writings after Marx, i.e. in the period of imperialism. The recognition is central to the writings of both Lenin and Mao. But Hyden is silent on this. Why?

In the midst of the current African crisis, it should be expected the contradictory perspectives would arise pointing to different ways forward, reflecting opposed class interests, whether its authors be aware of this fact or not. In this objective sense, No Shortcuts to Progress is written from the point of view of Africa's contemporary masters, imperialism and the allied local ruling classes. Its point is to resolve Africa's current crisis in their favour. It is this fact which explains, not only moments of eloquence in Hyden's book, but also gaps of silence in it.

Reading Hyden's book should have a sobering effect on progressive African intellectuals, spurring them on to examine afresh key questions regarding Africa's intrinsic reality, one of which is the agrarian question. But this examination cannot be undertaken either in a historical void with dogmatism. Our starting point must be that intellectual and practical tradition which has tried to resolve historical crisis, at other times and places, in favour of the people. This is why a word on the contribution of Lenin and Mao on the particular issue Hyden addresses is in order.

Both Lenin and Mao tried to grapple with the question of revolution in a backward country in an era when imperialism had become a worldwide system. Russian Marxists had been led by Plekhanov to argue that there was no question of a socialist revolution in Russia until capitalism had matured. But following the revolution of 1905 and the subsequent Stolypin reaction, Lenin broke new ground as he called upon Social Democracy to recognize the revolutionary potential of the peasantry in semi-feudal Russia. As Leninism incorporated the democratic core of Narodnik utopianism, its agrarian program went through marked changes. By the time Lenin wrote "Two Tactics of Social Democracy," his emphasis was not on a Socialist revolution but on a democratic revolution as the immediate task to be accomplished in Russia.

It is the emphasis on a democratic revolution - a revolution to liberate first and foremost the vast majority of the people, i.e., the peasantry - that is the real connecting link between Lenin and Mao. In China, too, years of Koumintang rule clarified, not that capitalism could not grow in a semi-colony, but that it could not do so independent of imperialism and feudalism. Capitalism in China, said Mao, had predominantly a comprador/bureaucrat character. To put it differently, what Mao had recognized was the night-and-day difference between imperialist-dominated countries with an admixture of monopolistic bureaucratic features and pre-capitalist backwardness on the one hand and early European societies in transition from pre-capitalism to capitalism on the other.

From this recognition followed Mao's programme for the Chinese revolution. Once again, this was not a programme for a socialist revolution, but for a new democratic revolution, under the leadership of the working class, but incorporating the peasantry (meaning the labouring peasantry) as its most substantial motive force. And the most pressing and immediate thrust of this movement forward, this new democratic revolution, was to resolve the agrarian (and the national) question.

Before Hyden protests, let us admit that Africa is neither Russia of the early 20th century, nor China of the 1930's. True that in this underdeveloped continent, except in enclaves, the agrarian question does not assume the same form as it does in the land masses of Asia and Latin America where its rallying cry has been "Land to the Tiller." Also true that that part of the African crisis is the political fact that social forces in Africa remain weakly organized. But while this calls upon us to think for ourselves, rejecting all forms of sloganeering and rote-learning, it in no way invalidates the general relevance of Mao's thesis of a new democratic revolution for Africa today.

While Africa has rightly seen through the false "internationalist" mask of imperialism which dragged it into the human community on the terms of a slave, and then of sweat-labour, it must now also see through the current change of masks - particularly slogans which proclaim the "inherent" and "unique" character of Africa, so as to detach and isolate the African struggle from the global struggle against oppression and exploitation.

Surely, it is not just accidental that, while he claims to make a general survey of all relevant writings (Marxist and non-Marxist), Hyden should ignore the writings of precisely those Marxist revolutionaries (Lenin, Mao) who grappled with the question of revolution in societies where the peasantry was the majority. Neither is it a simple oversight that he should make no reference to even those contemporary academic Marxists who try to analyze the concrete "articulation of modes of production" in the era of Imperialism. How else, after all, could he claim to be simultaneously an upholder of Marx (but of a Marx removed from the Marxist tradition) and a critic of all hitherto Marxist analyses of Africa (but of a Marxist tradition reduced to African socialism on the one hand and the dependency school on the other). One thinks of Cabral's dictum, "claim no easy victories!" Or to use Hyden's own phrase, it is not only in the world of practice, but also in that of theory, that there are No Shortcuts to Progress.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Mahmood Mamdani, "Forms of Labour and Accumulation of Capital: Analysis of a Village in Lango, Northern Uganda," paper presented at the Third Mawazo Workshop, Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda, October 12-14, 1984.

² The clearest statement of this can be found on p. 195 where Hyden implicitly underlines the progressive character of colonialism beginning with the following statement: "The colonial rulers attempted to ground their state in African society by transforming the relations of production and by socializing Africans into accepting the norms and principles of the capitalist system. Although they tried hard, they generally failed to complete their mission."

³ Amilcar Cabral, "Brief Analysis of the Social Structure in Guinea," in Revolution in Guinea, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1969.