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From Development to “Décroissance”

61st congress of FAF (Rennes) Motion of support to
the employees of STMicroelectronics

Fédération Anarchiste

2006

The development of ‘productive forces’, conceived by capitalism as the purpose of History, generated a new religion, that of economic growth. According to the promises of the liberal ideology, happiness was to be measured depending on the GNP.

After half a century of ‘improvement’, ‘modernists’ vast works look like ruins. Man is affected in his flesh and dignity: alienation through work, unemployment, lack of job security, stress, loneliness, spleen, and so on. Social disparities, both between rich and poor countries and within each nation, have never been striking. Armed conflicts, ignited and maintained mainly for strategic reasons, germinate on all continents.

But above all, because it puts the future generations in danger, results concerning the environment turn out to be an absolute disaster. Mankind’s impact on global ecology, (that is to say the level of depletion of resources and the disturbance of regulating mechanisms) already exceeds by 20% the Earth’s biological capacities. Sooner or later, if we maintained current ten-

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Retrieved on 2020-04-02 from www.i-f-a.org

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dencies, we should need resources amounting to several planets. Growth is no longer possible.

To remedy this situation, the 'sustainable development' is appointed by the people in charge (political, economic, media, etc), as well as by the anti-globalisation minority which dreams of 'humanising' capitalism, as a panacea. But the trickery does not resist to any serious thinking. The ambiguity of the expression itself is a warrant of success: it conceals the problem while giving the impression of resolving it. Worse, it shifts a problem to create another, more acute. For the beneficiaries of 'globalisation', it is by no means a way of questioning the principle of free-market economy, but of getting the rules of the World Trade Organisation to be accepted, with the prospect, for hundreds of multinationals, to privatise vital fields a little more, such as water, food, health. The market is in charge of remedying the destruction of the planet by... the market, the only concession consisting in easing its most visible damages, as long as profits remain.

Since the ecological impact puts in evidence an 'overheating' regarding the resources of the planet, it is necessary to turn towards a physical 'décroissance', that is to say gradually reduce the quantity of raw materials and involved energy. 'Décroissance' is not an ideological choice, it is an absolute necessity.

If no society is ecologically innocent, that is if the development of Humanity always comes along with a transformation of the environment, it is indeed the run for profit, for accumulation, together with the continuous creation of artificial needs that produces a striking acceleration of the degradation of the ecosystem. The preliminary to the implementation of this 'décroissance' is therefore the disappearance of capitalism. Because the system needs growth to survive, because its own logic is a suicidal dynamic, it cannot carry out this 'décroissance'... except by massively eliminating poor populations, that is to say to perpetrate genocides.

The second condition is the suppression of the State, in that this capitalist dynamic only accelerates with the cooperation of various governments: multiple subsidies, implementation of infrastructures taken care of by the public power of training, research, environmental costs, financial losses, customized legal frame... To not get down the State's disappearance would imply sparing a fundamental pillar and a formidable opponent, this rendering society's deep-rooted conversion impossible.

Any solution which would avoid disbanding wealth would inevitably be doomed to failure. In order for 'décroissance' to be mastered by the various populations, so that it does not lead to barbarity within conflicts for the appropriation of resources or to the drastic measures of totalitarianism, the problem must imperatively be put into an economic and social equity perspective, the wantonness of public services being able to constitute an essential lever in this construction.

If individual initiative of voluntary simplicity, that is the undertaking of a different lifestyle may represent the foundation of a 'philosophical' society concerned about future generations, it is self-evident that the addition of 'responsible' individual behaviours would not be sufficient — far from it — to build a society based on 'décroissance'. If only because the greediest fields of energy and raw materials (military-industrial complex, transportation, agriculture, etc) fall within global politics, and thus collective decisions. It would be deceptive to think we could do without a revolution.

Because of one's control of one's own existence, because the meaning of one's own needs cannot by any means justify a bulimic production, generator of alienating work, only a self-managing federalist society can guarantee jointly economic equity, social justice and preservation of natural resources.