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REPRODUCTION/29-82

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AN AUTO-CENTRED TECHNOLOGICAL POLICY :
FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEMS

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Extract from: "REVUE INTERNATIONALE DES SCIENCES SOCIALES"

N° 3 - 1981

Distributed for: 9-MONTH PROGRAMME

25 October 1982

24 June 1983

COURSE: AFRICAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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OCTOBER 1982

AN AUTO-CENTRED TECHNOLOGICAL POLICY :

THE FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEMS

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Today, the control of technology is one of the major instruments of domination in power relations within a country as it is in international relations particularly in North-South relations. For example, the worker who operates a machine with a very fragmentary know-how, without understanding why it operates will hardly ever be capable of controlling his own work. Similarly, a society cannot efficiently control the process of accumulation and corresponding changes in class structure if it does not control technology. But, if the control of technology is necessary for any transition strategy towards increased self-reliance, it does not yet clearly exist in the majority of developing countries. Technological dependence - that is, the inability to design, adapt and use technological systems corresponding to needs - constitutes one of the essential factors of imbalance in their economic and social development.

We have pointed out elsewhere that international technology transfers subjected to the laws of oligopolistic competition have contributed to aggravating the already gross inequality of the world distribution of control on the conditions and products of development-research and its applications. International technology transfers have become one of the instruments for the maintenance of inequality in North-South relations, as well as in South-South relations together with all the consequences that it involves: under-development, poverty and risks of world conflict.

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In order to understand technological dependence, it should be re-inserted within the framework of the general structure of dependence which characterizes third-world societies and consider it as a dynamic process, which has recently become one of the major obstacles to the conquest of economic independence. In other words, an auto-centred development cannot be conceived without a coherent policy at the scientific and technological level and integrated in national planning. But how can we define the type of development to be pursued and determine the priority scientific and technological sectors for the society?

This article will be based on the following problems: the close interdependence of the basic objectives of development and priority scientific and technological sectors; the conditions for success, particularly the determination of executors and the strategy programme.

SELECTIVE BREAK FROM TECHNOLOGICAL DEPENDENCE

After centuries of under-development imposed from outside, most third-world countries are today obliged to import the technology required for increasing their production, their productivity, and their long term development possibilities. The essential problem is to succeed in curbing the massive importation of foreign technology, which leads to a qualitative aggravation of dependence. To do this, technological dimension should be integrated in a self-reliant decision-making process, by means of a selective break from links of domination and the determination of priority sectors for an auto-centred development.

In this regard, the important points are as follows.

First of all, the essential problem is not the lack of scientific and technological resources per se, but the almost total absence of self-reliance even with regard to the fundamental choices concerning the technologies to be embodied within a "national" development plan. This dependence is manifested both in the choice of the best suited technologies and in the choice of the suppliers of these technologies,