

## Foreword

Poverty can be chosen by individuals, as an internal conquest, a liberating choice. However, this book is about poverty forced on persons, who do not have any other choice. Such forced poverty is linked to injustice, pain, desperation and rebellion.

During the last decade, on one hand the percentage of persons living with less than one dollar per day has decreased from 28.3% to 24%. On the other hand, due to world population growth, the absolute number of poor people has been keeping still, if not slightly moving up-words.

About 1.2 billion persons continue to be below the limits of absolute poverty, as defined by international criteria.

If the criteria for defining poverty is increased to 2 dollars per day, the number of poor arrives to 2.8 billion persons. This means almost half of the world's population continues to live in such unacceptable conditions, that to talk about development, rights and health may seem like a provocation when the poor have difficulty in their daily survival.

In 1820, the difference of income between the rich and the “developing” countries was almost 3 to 1. By 1999, this difference had increased to 700 to 1, notwithstanding all the technological and productive advances, which are supposed to improve life conditions.

These are just numbers to be quoted in different reports and we have become used to looking at such numbers.

In reality, the system developed in the rich North over the last century has produced an incredible and scandalous economic disparity.

The scandal arises from a deeply unjust planetary order, which is accepted with indifference by the prosperous communities of north, even if we insist on talking about promoting development. Our ideas about development, in reality tend to reduce the value of life to the market forces and are geared towards profit and consumption, destroying the human relationships and environment.

It is not enough to protest and to shout slogans against multinationals or super-powers' aggressiveness, nor do we need to appeal to the good will and generosity of persons. We need a new culture, a new proposal for overcoming that sin, that Raoul Follereau called the “other leprosy” – the indifference towards the poverty and misery of others. For this new culture, we must start from our own selves. There is an allegory about anger and violence of the excluded persons exploding and waves of misery sweeping away the opulence of the “golden islands”.

However, the crude reality of our times has gone beyond all allegories.

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