

CAPITALIST BARBARISM OR ECO-SOCIALISM

As a result of climate change the state of the planet has become an international problem and merits our serious consideration.

We give you extracts from Michael Lowy's essay dealing with the environment and socialist planning. (Michael Lowy is Research Director in Sociology at the National Centre for Scientific Research ie CNRS in Paris, France.)

In 2001 Michael Lowy and Joel Kovel published " The Eco-Socialist Manifesto". They were both present at a conference in Paris at the end of 2007 where Eco-Socialism was discussed. Michael stated that "The aim of socialism is a new society based on ecological rationality, democratic control, social equality, and the predominance of human need over profit making."

This aim requires:

- a) collective ownership of the means of production - "collective" here meaning Public, Co-operative, or communitarian property.
- b) democratic planning that makes it possible for society to define the goals of investment and production.
- c) A new technological structure of the productive forces. In other words a revolutionary social and economic transformation."

The Paris Conference press release sums it up like this: "Eco-socialists believe that the driving force of the ecological crisis is the RUTHLESS PRESSURE of the Capitalist system to expand in a process which destroys not only the integrity of nature but also the ecological basis of human survival". Eco-socialism is a word which does not yet appear in any dictionary, yet we believe that it represents the single best hope for healing the Planet and saving society from ecological devastation.

Ian Angus who was at the Paris conference (contactable at ecosocialism@gmail.com) says "The great Rosa Luxemburg gave us the choice of Socialism or Barbarism. This is quite true. The failure of the socialist revolutions as in the case of Rosa herself - the Spartacist Uprising in Germany, and the failure of socialism around the USSR and China has been a condition for the present triumph of barbaric capitalism, with its endless wars, nightmarish consumerism, ever-widening gap between the rich and poor - and most significantly, the present ecological crisis. So the choice remains the same, except that capitalist barbarism now means ecocatastrophe. This is because the capacity of the Earth to buffer the effects of human production, has become overwhelmed by the chaos of its productive system. Any movement for social transformation will have to make a careful consideration of the foregoing, for the very notion of a future depends on whether we can resolve it or not. For this reason, a socialism worthy of the name will have to be ecologically oriented, i.e. It will have to be an ecosocialism devoted to restoring the integrity of our relationship to nature.

Ian Angus told a Greek Socialist newspaper journalist that "Ecosocialism has grown out of two parallel political trends - the spread of Marxist ideas in the green movement and the spread of ecological ideas in the Marxist Left. The result is a set of social and political goals, a body of ideas, and a global movement.

Ecosocialism's goal is to replace capitalism with a society in which common ownership of the means of production has replaced capitalist ownership, and in which the preservation and restoration of ecosystems will be central to all activity.

As a body of ideas ecosocialism argues that ecological destruction is not an accidental feature of capitalism, it is build into the system's DNA. The system's insatiable need to increase profits cannot be reformed away."

EVIDENCE OF CLIMATIC CHANGES CAUSED BY GLOBAL WARMING.

There is evidence aplenty that in 2007 environmental damage has been accumulating because of global warming, and doing major damage to communities, nations and continents. As ever it has been the poor who have been the most vulnerable and who have lost the most in terms of lives, possessions and livelihoods; in most places it is women and children who bear the brunt.

Most of all, 2007 has been the year of the flood. But it has also been the year of forest fires on several continents, most notably in Greece, the USA and Australia.

Climate experts have said; More than a billion people may face freshwater shortages by 2050. Millions will be threatened by rising sea levels. Island inhabitants and populations in large river deltas in Asia are most at risk. Dry areas may become drier with crop yields dropping by fifty percent in sub-tropical areas by 2020. Higher rates of climate related illness, including malnutrition, malaria, dengue fever, heat stroke could take effect.

MEGA FLOODS

1. Two waves of massive flooding in China, one in June and one in September-October which killed more than a thousand people.
2. The same storm that struck China, hit Vietnam with 120 deaths.
3. The worst floods in living memory in Central Africa stretching from coast to coast, devastating crops and drowning hundreds. 22 countries were flooded.
4. Unprecedented flooding in north and central England in June 2007.
5. The Mexican president called it the "greatest natural disaster in the country's history" when the state of Tobasco was submerged twice in a decade. Dozens died and 100 000 made homeless.
6. Hundreds died in India, from Mumbai to Bihar where 500 died. Much of this catastrophe has hardly been reported in the western media, but the fire risks to celebrities' homes have been more important than deaths of African and Indian peasants.
7. A direct result of sea-warming in the Gulf of Mexico is the worsening of tropical storms in Central America and the Caribbean. In Mexico sixteen rivers overran their banks in the state of Chiapas. The effects of this flooding is still ongoing as this article is being written.
8. According to BBC on 4 November 2007, the effects of the tropical depression have been felt in other central American states like Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador which have already suffered three weeks of heavy downpours. More than 50 people have been killed and 100 000 have been evacuated. Some large areas are facing epidemics and food shortages, millions of dollars worth of crops have been ruined, outbreaks of malaria, cholera and dengue fever have been reported in the worst hit areas. Crop losses have been estimated at 480 million dollars. The state and National Government have been animated because the hungry people of Villahermosa, capital of Tobasco, have started to loot supermarkets to get food! Thousands of desperate and hungry people cannot be allowed to break property laws for the mere purpose of getting something to eat! What next?
9. In Greece, as temperatures reached 46 degrees C. the countryside burnt with a ferocity not seen before. More than 60 people were killed in cut-off villages. The ecology of Greece is changing permanently. An arid country is threatened with becoming a Mediterranean desert if temperatures routinely climb to 40 degrees C. and more.

CAPITALISM COLLIDES WITH NATURE.

Climate change is causing more and more deaths and devastation. Thousands are becoming eco-refugees, becoming ill, being made homeless and losing their livelihoods.

Climate change is not a danger, it is already a reality. Its effects are hitting the poor. Whether its war, earthquake or climate change, the poor pay the price. CAPITALISM has produced this crisis. SOLVING IT MEANS ENDING THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM.

A Jacobs
April 2009
