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Ecosocialism

**"It is necessary to propose a
radical, anti-systemic,
anti-capitalist alternative:
ecosocialism"**

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Description:

Greetings from Michaël Lowy to the Founding Assembly of the Ecosocialist Network in Quebec, followed by an interview datelined 12 March 2013.

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Greetings from Michaël Lowy to the Founding Assembly of the Ecosocialist Network in Quebec, followed by an interview datelined 12 March 2013.

"Warm congratulations to the Founding Assembly of the Québec Solidaire Ecosocialist Network! You are in the front line of the battles in North America against the biggest polluters of the planet. Your struggle, your thinking and your courage to go against the current are precious for all those who hope that another world is possible, a world where human beings and nature are no longer reduced to the condition of commodities."

Interview

Bernard Rioux: Why talk about ecosocialism today?

Michaël Lowy: We are facing an ecological crisis that endangers, in the form of climate change, human life on the planet. At the root of this crisis lies a civilization - modern industrial capitalism - based on productivism, consumerism, commodity fetishism and the unlimited accumulation of profit; its logic of unlimited expansion has shown itself to be fundamentally incompatible with the protection of nature.

Hence the need to propose today an anti-systemic, radical, anticapitalist alternative: ecosocialism. What is at stake is decisive: it is a question of preventing a catastrophe that would be unprecedented in the history of humanity. Ecosocialism is an original attempt to articulate the fundamental ideas of socialism with the advances of ecological criticism. Its objective is a new civilization, an alternative way of life, based on social and ethical values - solidarity, equa-liberty (as Etienne Balibar puts it) - and on the respect of nature.

BR: What has been the follow-up to the 2001 international appeal in 2001 on ecosocialism? What is the present influence of ecosocialism?

Michaël Lowy: The 2001 appeal contributed to relaunching the debate on ecosocialism and to creating an international ecosocialist network. But the influence of ecosocialism today goes far beyond this initiative. We are seeing in Europe and in the Americas (North and South) a multiplicity of declarations in favour of ecosocialism, from different left forces, and the organization of conferences and seminars - in Paris a few months ago, soon in Quito and Caracas - around this alternative. In the United States, journals like *Capitalism, Nature and Socialism*, *Monthly Review* and *Against the Current* increasingly refer to ecosocialism (or to socialist ecology).

BR: There is the European example - NPA , Left Party, Die Linke - and whether we are talking about parties or entire populations like the indigenous peoples of Latin America, does ecosocialism appear as a perspective that is more and more relevant today?

Michaël Lowy: The fact that in France, the NPA and the Anticapitalist Left, but also the Left Party, and even the Socialist Youth, identify with ecosocialism is important. But the most promising development is the rise of the socio-ecological struggles of indigenous peoples in Latin America, who are struggling to defend their land, their rivers and their forests against the destructive greed of multinational oil companies and capitalist agribusiness. Some of the leaders of these indigenous movements, such as the Peruvian Hugo Blanco, identify themselves as ecosocialists.

For him, this idea corresponds to the way of life of the indigenous communities of the continent for centuries, based on collectivist practices and respect for the "Earth Mother".

BR: Are we not seeing a hardening of the positions of the bourgeoisie and the governments of the major powers? (failure of the Kyoto agreements - abandonment of policies against global warming - relaunching of exploitation of fossil fuels: tar sands, shale oil and gas)?

Michaël Lowy: The spectacular failure of International Climate Conferences-from Copenhagen to Doha, via Rio - and of the Kyoto agreements, as well as relaunching frantic exploitation of fossil fuels, including those that are "dirtier", environmentally destructive and disastrous from the point of view of the climate - such as tar sands - is simply the result of the logic of the system. Businesses, banks, governments and the so-called "international institutions" (WTO, IMF, World Bank) act according to the imperatives of capitalism: "expansion", profitability, maximum profit, competitiveness, a fierce struggle for market share. Their "hardness" is merciless and blind, the hardness of the system itself. The capitalist oligarchies seem to be inspired by the old principle proclaimed by Louis XV: "after me the deluge".

BR: In this context what are the new challenges of the movement for climate justice and the proposals of ecosocialists?

Michaël Lowy: The proposals of ecosocialists start from the fact that a solution to the ecological crisis, and to global warming in particular, cannot be achieved within the limits imposed by the capitalist world system. But we must start the struggle for ecosocialism here and now, around concrete and immediate objectives, such as those of the movement for climate justice. The challenge for this movement is to contribute to a collective awareness and a massive mobilization on the issue of climate change and social justice, before it's too late. It is essential for it to win the support of youth, women, workers and trade unionists, explaining that another policy would create millions of "green jobs".

BR: In North America, with the search for energy autonomy by the United States and the relaunching of exploitation of oil and gas, are the issues more important than ever? What are the paths of resistance?

Michaël Lowy: The capitalist industrialized countries in North America are among the major contributors to the process of climate change. Canada has the distinction of having one of the most retrograde governments, from the ecological point of view, of the planet. We are witnessing a real blind rush forward in the exploitation of fossil fuels, each time with terrible environmental consequences, as is the case with shale gas, tar sands or deep water oil (the Gulf of Mexico!). Short-term profitability is the one and only criterion, in the two countries of North America, for energy policies. The battle against the XL Pipeline is the most important immediate issue, and it is encouraging to see the success of the mobilization in the United States against this harmful project. It is necessary to build a common resistance between the inhabitants of Canada and United States against this new infamy of the fossil oligarchy.

BR: What are the main tasks facing ecosocialists in the present international context?

Michaël Lowy: We must participate in any movement, any struggle that tries to block the ecocidal dynamics of the system, while trying to bring about a convergence of social and ecological mobilizations. At the same time, within these mobilizations, as well as in the global justice movement and the movement for climate justice, we propose for discussion our anticapitalist analyses and our ecosocialist programme, the concrete utopia (Ernst Bloch) of a new civilization. The task is immense and our opponents are very powerful. But, as Bertolt Brecht said, if you fight you may lose, but if you don't fight you've already lost...