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Ecology

Second ecology seminar at the IIRE 1-3 March 2013

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The second ecology seminar organized by the Fourth International represents a significant step forward for the sections of the Fourth International and its sympathising organisations. The presence of members of the national leaderships was proof of the fact that our work and activities linked to the ecological crisis is increasing and also that our ecosocialist alternative to the capitalist system, is becoming more and more a central concern our organisations in many countries. This was partly the result of integrating the resolutions of the last two world congresses on the ecological crisis at national level.

General introduction

The seminar started with a general introduction on the current state of the planet in respect of nine key elements of the ecological crisis, of which the current climate change due to global warming is the most important. Other elements of the crisis of the global environment which were discussed were: the acidification of the oceans, the evolution of the global stratospheric ozone layer, the nitrogen and phosphorus cycles, the loss of biodiversity, the usage of fresh water, the changes in land use, the increase of aerosol and dust micro-particles in the air and the chemical poisoning of the biosphere.

For each element, scientists have tried to establish the critical threshold and timing of future tipping points. This overview put concrete figures and time scales on the general idea that the ecosystems of the planet are not without limits. In the general discussion, participants looked into the question of demography and population, they discussed general aspects of different campaigns against climate change and for global justice, the fight against new form of extraction of oil ('extreme oil') and the resistance of indigenous people against the privatisation of their lands and territories.

You can listen to the audio file of the introduction and download the Power Point presentation here:

Friends and comrades from Belgium, Brazil, Euskadi, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, the Philippines, Quebec, Russia, the Spanish State, Switzerland and the USA participated and gave reports on specific ecosocialist struggles in their country.

Reports by the participants

The twenty minutes reports from the different countries were very diverse, reflecting activities and theoretical developments in different countries. There was a general introduction on ecofeminism. A history of the antinuclear movement in Germany explained why there is a large majority of the population in Germany that remains hostile to nuclear energy and, after Fukushima, obliged Merkel to close all nuclear power stations.

The experience of some successful ecosocialist struggles by indigenous people in Latin America stood in sharp contrast with the lack of struggles against deep oil drilling on the Brazilian coasts.

Most of the participants did not know much about the new ecological struggles by young people in Russia, which started in 2010 when the Putin regime wanted to build a motorway through the old forest of Khimki near Moscow.

Two young Russian comrades told about other examples of the new struggles going on in Russia against pollution, against projects for mega dams etc. This movement has been criminalised by the regime, one Russian participant managed to get political asylum in Europe, he was being accused of terrorism in the struggles to protect the Moscow forest. The comrades also spoke about the plans to raise the water level on a major dam on the Volga and the dangers this posed in Russia but also for other European countries downstream.

The experience of ecological struggles in the island of Mindanao was fascinating. It combines the defence of the ancestral lands of indigenous people with the fight for food sovereignty against agribusiness, the reconversion from chemical farming to ecological-sustainable-organic farming in different regions and villages. This work has now been going on for several years and thanks to this project, more than a hundred local varieties of rice have been saved and now methods of using organic fertiliser have been applied.

From Europe, we had reports on the fight against the privatisation of water in Aragon (Spanish State), on several victorious battles against dams and against nuclear plants over the last twenty years in Euskadi, on the current successful national campaign in France against the mega project of a new airport at Notre Dame des Landes, on the ecosocialist work in Geneva (Switzerland) and on the one million climate jobs campaign in Britain. This particular campaign was important because it showed the possibilities for working together with the big trade-unions linking social justice with the fight against climate change.

A young ecosocialist activist from the USA, member of Solidarity, explained that there is now a new generation of young people starting to fight against the big pipeline which is planned from the Alberta province in Canada to the gulf of Mexico, transporting heavy oil extracted from tar sands. The fact that Obama will probably approve this, will destroy any illusion some of those young activists still have in the Democratic party.

In the Canadian State, it is mainly the first peoples in those provinces where the tar sands are being extracted, who are entering into the struggles against climate change, against the Canadian state. Susan Caldwell called Canada the most important 'rogue state' attacking the global climate.

Sadly, a comrade from Algeria could not come to the seminar, so the ecological crisis in the North of Africa was not discussed.

General evaluation and plans for the future.

After two intense days of general discussion and reports from the different experiences, we took time out on Sunday to have a balance sheet of this seminar and to discuss out plans for the future.

We are now planning to have an ecology seminar every two years. We will reactivate the FI discussion list on ecology for exchange of information and planning activity between all of us and other interested comrades and friends. We will form a coordination group with Europeans and completed with one person for Latin America and one from Asia.

This coordination group will work on a list of questions about our involvement in ecological struggles in order to have a larger view on our activities in this field in different countries.

The ecosocialist group of SolidaritéS (Switzerland) proposes to organise a European conference on our vision of ecosocialism as a radical, anticapitalist, internationalist and feminist project.

French comrades propose to work in the perspective of a big demonstration in Paris during the UN climate summit in December 2014.

The comrades from the Philippines will be aiming at organising ecological seminars focused on the specific topics of the region.

The results of the seminar should be discussed in all sections of the Fourth International and in the leading bodies of the International.

Publication

If we find space and time, the reports will, together with additional articles, lead to an anthology of ecosocialist struggles.

Reports made at the seminar will be put on the IIRE website as audio files in the three languages [here](#)