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Ecosocialism

# The contribution of the Fourth International to ecosocialism

- Features -



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**This document traces the path taken by the International, from Trotsky's modernist concerns to the adoption of the Manifesto for an Ecosocialist Revolution and the campaign waged around it by the sections.**

Leon Trotsky, founder of the Fourth International in 1938, is one of the great revolutionary figures of the Twentieth Century and an outstanding Marxist theorist. Lenin and Trotsky were the principal leaders of the October Revolution. Founder of the Red Army and a relentless opponent of the Stalinist counter-revolution, Trotsky is distinguished by his Marxist analysis of fascism and bureaucracy, as well as by his theories of uneven and combined development and permanent revolution.

## Leon Trotsky: a great thinker, but not an eco-socialist ...

By founding the Fourth International at what was “midnight in the century”, he passed on the legacy of revolutionary Marxism to subsequent generations. His work covers key events such as the Russian Revolution, the rise and fall of the Communist International, the revolutionary wave of 1917-1923 and its ebb, fascism and Stalinism, the Popular Front and the Spanish Revolution, the decline of the British Empire, and the rise of the United States.

The absence of any ecological awareness casts a shadow on this assessment. The legacy Trotsky bequeathed to his successors makes no reference to the concerns, tools, and precursor concepts of ecosocialism developed by Marx and Engels. This omission is particularly striking in Trotsky's views on progress and the relationship between humanity and nature, in his conception of science and technology, and in his approach to the peasant question.

While their dialectical vision of progress had led the founders of Marxism to distrust “victories over nature. For each such victory nature takes its revenge on us” [\[1\]](#), Trotsky praised them without nuance: “Man will occupy himself with re-registering mountains and rivers, and will earnestly and repeatedly make improvements in nature.” [\[2\]](#)

The idea that scientific progress would unveil all the mysteries of the universe one after another was widespread in the nineteenth and early twentieth Centuries. The founders of Marxism did not always depart from this approach, but they believed neither in “absolute knowledge” nor in “sovereign thought.” Less cautious, Trotsky loudly proclaimed his “faith [...] in the unlimited possibilities of knowledge, prediction, and mastery of matter.” [\[3\]](#)

Some evidence suggests that Marx did not consider technology neutral. Trotsky's assessment differs. To the question, “What is the concept of class society?“, he replies: “The class character of society lies fundamentally in the organization of production [...] technology is a fundamental achievement of humanity” [\[4\]](#). No trace of the precautionary principle can be found in his works.

It is true that it is important to take the context into account. From 1923-1924, faced with the retreat of the world revolution and the demobilization of the Russian masses, two alternative orientations emerged within the Communist Party.

On the one hand, Stalin and Bukharin advocated advancing “at a snail's pace” towards socialism. [\[5\]](#) Renouncing

world revolution, they bet that the enrichment of the countryside would give them the means to build a new society.

On the other hand, Trotsky advocated the planned development of nationalized heavy industry. According to him, this development was essential to allow the Soviet regime to resist without degenerating, while awaiting a new international wave of revolutionary struggles.

Trotsky was right to promote industrial growth as a means of creating the conditions for development in rural areas, but he was wrong to think that this meant a state-directed “industrialization of agricultural production.” Unlike Marx, he failed to consider the need for a “rational management of the exchange of matter” between humanity and nature.

This probably explains why Trotsky’s work makes no mention of Lenin’s policy on the protection of “monuments of nature” *zapovedniki* [6], nor of Stalin’s attacks on these environmental achievements when he tried to cover up the failure of forced collectivization by opening up nature reserves to agriculture.

To Trotsky’s credit, it should be noted that a technocratic and modernist culture was hegemonic in the international workers’ movement of the time, including among Russian revolutionaries. But this context does not explain everything. In matters of ecology, the founder of the Red Army lagged behind Marx, Engels, and even Lenin. His successors therefore had to fill these gaps in order to reappropriate and develop the unfinished work of “Marx’s ecology”.

## Ernest Mandel’s (late) discovery of ecology

From the 1960s until his death, Ernest Mandel (1923-1995) was the leading figure and theorist of the Fourth International. A brilliant Marxist economist, his writings were studied and admired far beyond the ranks of his movement. He also drafted the International’s most important resolutions during those years and contributed to the adoption of a non-dogmatic and resolutely democratic version of communism.

In the early 1970s, well before other Marxists, Mandel was alarmed by environmental destruction and maintained this concern until the end of his life. This is evident in his polemical 1972 response to the Meadows report on the limits to growth, a response that also reveals the limitations of his thinking on these issues. His reluctance to admit the finite nature of natural resources—and thus of the growth of material productive forces—is clear when he asserts that it is the “anarchy” of production, rather than its “unlimited” nature, that should be condemned. Moreover, he put forward typically productivist and unsustainable proposals—for example, in agriculture, advocating for the “deforestation of forests” and the irrigation of “two billion hectares of desert land” [7].

The 1972 article is imbued with the fear that the discourse on the limits to growth would serve as a cover for an austerity offensive against workers and a global neo-Malthusian offensive against the poor. This fear was—and remains—entirely relevant, and Mandel’s response to it is entirely legitimate. However, in his polemic, he fails to sufficiently distinguish between the objective fact of the natural limits to production and the way in which this fact is distorted for reactionary ends. Consequently, there is no clear distinction between the capitalist pressure exerted on workers to sacrifice their well-being and the absolute necessity of reducing societal consumption, for example, in terms of energy.

Curiously, at the very moment he offers this rather disappointing response to the Meadows Report, he treats the same document more cautiously in his 1972 book, *Late Capitalism*. The report argues that extending the American production structure to the entire planet would deplete global raw material reserves by the end of the century and

endanger the oxygen content of the atmosphere. While suggesting that the report exaggerates its argument, Mandel acknowledges that it “might be right.” In the same book, he quotes Barry Commoner’s classic ecological (and socialist) work, *The Encirclement* (1971): “The Earth is not polluted because man is a particularly dirty animal, nor because there are too many of us. The fault lies with human society.” He also pays homage to another pioneering socialist/ecological work, Harry Rothmann’s *Murderous Providence – A Study of Pollution in Industrial Societies* (1971), which he describes as “the best Marxist work dealing with all the dangers to the environment and the possible measures to prevent them “.

To illustrate the dramatic consequences of chemical pollution on the environment and human health, Mandel cites several examples from the history of the United States and Germany in a lengthy footnote. However, unlike Commoner and Rothmann, Mandel gives only a marginal place to ecology in his economic and ideological analysis of late capitalism.

Several years later, in 1992, in a kind of critical self-assessment, he wrote in his book *Power and Money* “Today we have become aware, with much delay, that dangers to the earth’s non-renewable resources, and to the natural environment of human civilization and human life, also entail that the consumption of material goods and services cannot grow in an unlimited way.” [8] It is interesting to note that, in the footnote following this passage, Mandel mentions Peter Hennis and Michael Müller’s 1989 book, *The Climate Catastrophe*, but he himself does not address the issue of climate change.

Around the same time, in a 1990 article [9], he made what can be considered his most serious assessment of the ecological crisis:

Since the beginning of the 20th century, and starting with Rosa Luxemburg, Marxists were right to sum up the future of humanity in the formula ‘socialism or barbarism’ [...] Today, the choice has become “Socialism or death” [...] This stems from the implicit danger of extermination linked to the risk of an intercontinental or global conventional or nuclear war amidst nuclear power plants [...] but there are other deadly dangers to humanity, including the threat of environmental destruction.

In other words, while Ernest Mandel became increasingly aware of the danger of ecological catastrophe, this did not lead him to reformulate his Marxism according to the principles of ecosocialism. This task was left to the next generation of the Fourth International.

## The path of the Fourth International towards ecosocialism (2001)

After May 1968, the Fourth International began to recognize the importance of ecological issues. Its activists in France, Germany, Britain, and elsewhere participated in environmental movements, primarily in the fight against nuclear power and pollution. Gradually, ecological issues began to be discussed at its congresses, but no specific resolution on ecology was adopted during those years.

At the Twelfth World Congress in 1985, the main resolution called on the International and its sections to “take up the environmental question more and more systematically in their propaganda and general activity” and to undertake “common actions with ecologist movements.”

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In the late 1980s, a group of comrades from the FI drafted a document on socialism and ecology, but it was decided that the issue needed further discussion before being presented at the Thirteenth World Congress in 1991. The document, entitled "[Socialist Revolution and Ecology](#)", which was published after the congress, is a very substantial attempt to discuss the causes and consequences of the ecological crisis, the policies of the bourgeoisie, the limitations of the environmental movement, the situation in the workers' movement, and a programme of action. Among the urgent demands requiring coordinated action at the international level were a radical break with the system of exploiting export-oriented agricultural production in dependent countries, which breeds famine and poverty; the immediate ban on the entire nuclear energy production cycle; and an end to the destruction of tropical rainforests and the deadly contamination of forests in industrialized countries.

This 1991 document, provisionally adopted by the FI at that time, was a great achievement, but it had some obvious limitations. For example, in describing the ecological crisis, it refers to air and water pollution, deforestation, and industrial (chemical and nuclear) disasters, but makes no mention of climate change. While the idea of a socialist ecology is very much present, the concept of ecosocialism—as a new way of understanding the socialist programme—is still absent.

Several years later, around 2001, a group of French members of the FI (including Laurent Garrouste, Vincent Gay, and Michael Löwy) decided to draft a new document, entitled "[Ecology and Socialism](#)", based on the previous document but with substantial changes. It was presented at the Fifteenth World Congress (2003) with a report by Michael Löwy and was adopted by a large majority.

In a critical self-assessment, the resolution's introduction acknowledges that it was not only the reformist leadership of the workers' movement that ignored or dismissed ecological problems: "We must recognize that revolutionary currents in general—and the Fourth International in particular—were very late in incorporating the ecological question." In a section devoted to the Fourth International and the ecological crisis, the resolution states that many comrades in our organization "continued to regard ecological problems as just one contradiction of capitalism among many" and only addressed ecological issues when other social forces brought them to the forefront. While other currents and individuals had been discussing ecology and socialism for decades, the Fourth International remained virtually silent.

The resolution begins with a discussion of the ecological crisis in the capitalist world as well as in the "old bureaucratic societies" (USSR, etc.). Climate change is mentioned here, but as one problem among many, without particular emphasis. In a section on "the workers' movement and ecology", the contributions of Marx and Engels and their limitations are discussed; social democracy and Stalinism are criticized for their blind productivism. Reformist ecology is also criticized, and the true alternative is presented as ecosocialism, an ecological current that integrates the fundamental achievements of Marxism while shedding its productivist shackles.

Here is how the resolution summarizes its conception of "ecosocialism":

"Ecosocialism is the branch of the workers' and environmental movements most sensitive to the interests of workers and peoples of the Global South. It breaks with the productivist ideology of progress—in its capitalist and/or bureaucratic form (the so-called 'real socialism'—and opposes the endless expansion of a mode of production and consumption that is destructive to the environment. It understands that 'sustainable development' is impossible within the framework of the capitalist market economy".

Walter Benjamin's influence on some of the document's authors is evident in their critique of linear progress. The resolution also defines ecosocialism as revolutionary project.

Ecosocialism is the current in the workers' and ecology movements most sensitive to the interests of workers and peoples of the South. It breaks with the productivist ideology of progress - in its capitalist and/or bureaucratic form (so-called "actually existing socialism") - and opposes the infinite expansion of an environmentally destructive mode of production and consumption. It understands that "sustainable development" is impossible within the framework of the capitalist market economy.

Explaining the meaning of ecosocialism, the 2003 resolution insists that it requires a change in civilizational paradigm:

An overall reorganisation of the mode of production and consumption is needed, based on criteria foreign to the capitalist market: people's real needs and environmental safeguards. This means an economy in transition to socialism, based on the peoples' own democratic choices of priorities and investments - and not the 'laws of the market' or an all-seeing politburo. This would be a planned economy, able to find lasting ways of overcoming the tensions between satisfying social needs and ecological imperatives. It would be a transition leading to an alternative way of life, a new civilisation, beyond the reign of money, consumer habits artificially fuelled by advertising, and the endless production of environmentally harmful goods (the private car!).

The 2003 document distances itself from "workerism" much more than the 1991 project, but it does not ignore the importance of winning the workers' movement over to ecosocialism:

While criticizing the ideology put forward by the dominant currents of the labour movement, they understand that workers and their organizations are an essential force for transforming the system.

The resolution "Ecology and Socialism", adopted by the Fifteenth World Congress of the Fourth International (2003) and translated into several languages, marks a turning point in the history of the Fourth International. For the first time, it adopted a document dealing exclusively with the ecological crisis and defined itself as an ecosocialist organization. In fact, despite its late conversion to ecology, the Fourth International became the first international organization to embrace ecosocialism. From that moment on, ecosocialism became an increasingly key aspect of the revolutionary programme, strategic perspectives, and practical work of the Fourth International.

While the document considers environmental destruction to be "one of the major threats to humanity" in our time, climate change is treated only as one of many problems, and its threat to human life is barely mentioned. This is perhaps the resolution's greatest shortcoming. It would be addressed in the years to come.

Alongside its own activities, the FI has contributed to various international ecosocialist initiatives. The first international ecosocialist meeting took place in Paris in 2007, with the support of the French section of the FI. The conference decided to create an International Ecosocialist Network (IEN), open to anyone who agrees with the main ideas of the First Ecosocialist Manifesto. (published by Joel Kovel and Michael Löwy in 2001).

The IEN commissioned Ian Angus, Joel Kovel, Michael Löwy, and Danielle Follet to draft a new manifesto, primarily addressing the issue of climate change. In anticipation of the World Social Forum held in Belém do Pará, Brazil, in January 2009, this document was entitled the "Belém Ecosocialist Manifesto". This second manifesto was signed by hundreds of people from dozens of countries and printed by the Brazilian Ecosocialist Network (which included several members and supporters of the FI) in English and Portuguese, then widely distributed at the World Social Forum in Belém.

The IEN's next initiative took place in Copenhagen in December 2009, on the sidelines of the UN's COP15 climate change summit. During the protest against the summit, which drew 100,000 people from across Europe into the streets, the IEN distributed an ecosocialist comic strip entitled "Copenhagen, April 12, 2049". The leaflet depicted what Copenhagen would look like submerged by the sea. It was printed and distributed by the Danish Socialist Workers' Party, the section of the Fourth International. [\[10\]](#)

The IEN ceased to function in 2013, but in 2020, a new initiative also involving a number of FI activists was launched by John Molyneux: the Global Ecosocialist Network (GEN).

# Climate Change Resolution (2010): The FI “in favour of reducing material production”

In 2010, the World Congress of the Fourth International adopted a resolution entitled “[Capitalist Climate Change and Our Tasks](#)”. For the first time, the movement discussed and adopted a document devoted to a specific aspect of the “ecological crisis”. This stemmed from a decision made a year earlier by the International Committee of the FI. In support of the draft resolution, a comprehensive document on the science of climate change had been translated into several languages and distributed to the various sections. Daniel Tanuro drafted both texts and presented the resolution to the congress.

The resolution comprises five chapters. The first attributes responsibility for climate change to the capitalist system, while recalling the disastrous record of the USSR, its allies and China, guilty of having reproduced productivism.

The second chapter explains why capitalism is incapable of stopping the catastrophe. First, because the necessary reduction in greenhouse gas emissions can only be achieved by drastically reducing energy consumption, and therefore also material production. Second, because North-South justice demands that the bulk of this reduction take place in imperialist countries, in order to leave others some leeway to meet basic human needs.

The third chapter warns against barbaric Malthusian policies as a bourgeois response to the combined economic, climate, and food crises. The fourth emphasizes the dual urgency of a global socialist alternative and a radical break from the socialist vision of productivism. “The emancipation of the workers is no longer conceivable without simultaneously taking into account the principal natural constraints.” The Congress ratified the idea that the objectively new situation justifies the adoption of ecosocialism. The fifth chapter focuses on the tasks to be accomplished.

The first Marxist organization to adopt ecosocialism, the Fourth International was also the first to embrace the idea that “the reduction of material production and consumption is immediately necessary [...] because capitalism has led humanity too far into a dead end.” The text clarifies that this reduction does not “in any way prejudice future development possibilities, once the climate system has stabilized.” It also notes that it “constitutes only one quantitative criterion of the necessary transition towards an economy without fossil carbon” and adds: “

this quantitative criterion must be combined with qualitative criteria: in particular, redistribution of wealth, reduction of working time without loss of wages, development of the public sector. If these criteria are satisfied, and on condition that it targets useless or harmful productions, the reduction in material production will actually be synonymous with an increase in the wellbeing, the wealth and the quality of life of the vast majority of humanity, through [...] the re-conquest of the free time necessary for self-activity, self-organization and democratic self-management on all levels.

It further says:

It is not enough to affirm that socialism must take ecological questions on board. The real challenge consists rather of creating the conditions so that the socialist project is compatible with the global ecology of the terrestrial super-ecosystem. Development cannot only be conceived of with the aim of satisfying real democratically determined human needs, but also according to its sustainability by the environment, [...] The concept of “human control over nature” must be abandoned. The only really possible socialism from now on is one that satisfies real human needs (disentangled from commercial alienation), democratically determined [...] simultaneously taking care to carefully question ourselves as to the environmental impact of these needs and the way in which they are satisfied.

The resolution elaborates on the idea that technologies are not neutral, an idea already raised in previous documents.

The capitalist energy system is centralized, anarchic, wasteful, inefficient, dead-labour intensive, based on non-renewable sources and characterised by a tendency towards overproduction of commodities. The socialist transformation of society requires its progressive destruction and its replacement by a decentralized system, planned, economical, and efficient, living-labour intensive, based exclusively on renewable sources and directed towards the production of durable practical values, which can be recycled and reused. This transformation does not only concern the “production” of energy in a narrow sense but the entire industrial apparatus, agriculture, transport, leisure and town and country planning. The energy/climate challenge forces us to conceive of the socialist revolution not only as the destruction of the power of the bourgeois state, the creation of a proletarian state which starts to wither away as soon as it is established and progressive phasing-in of self-management by the masses, but also as the beginning of a process of destruction of the old capitalist productive apparatus and its replacement by an alternative apparatus, utilising different energy sources, different technologies and different structures in the service of democratically decided objectives.

In its conclusion, the resolution sets out twelve tasks: raising awareness of the seriousness of the situation; developing grassroots disaster relief practices; fighting against neo-Malthusianism to defend the poor and women’s rights; developing a comprehensive anti-capitalist plan for social and ecological reconstruction, concretely linking the fight for climate and for social rights, especially the right to employment; supporting indigenous peoples; opposing the rush towards dangerous technologies; establishing links with critical scientists, etc.

## 2018 FI World Congress: Capitalist Destruction and the Ecosocialist Alternative

The Seventeenth World Congress of the Fourth International in 2018 adopted a resolution entitled [“The Capitalist Destruction of the Environment and the Ecosocialist Alternative.”](#) A lengthy preparatory document had been drafted by Daniel Tanuro. The Ecology Commission decided to submit one of its chapters to the Congress and to publish the full text as a working document.

The resolution acknowledges the “extremely alarming level” of the crisis. “Thresholds are already exceeded in some areas, particularly greenhouse gases concentration in the atmosphere,” which could lead to “a qualitative shift,” the text states.

The Earth System would then enter a new dynamic equilibrium regime, characterized by very different geophysical conditions and an even more marked decrease in its biological richness. At the least, in addition to the consequences for other living creatures, [...] this new regime would endanger the lives of hundreds of millions of poor people, especially women, children and the elderly. At the most, it cannot be excluded that it contributes to a collapse of our species.

The document emphasizes the “deep gap between the urgency of a radical ecosocialist alternative on the one hand and the relationship of forces and the levels of consciousness on the other hand.” The measures to be taken should

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include: “the socialization of credit and energy“; “abolition of private ownership of natural resources [...] and intellectual knowledge“; “the suppression of useless or harmful products “; and “the common and democratic management of resources to serve the real human needs.” But these measures are clearly beyond the reach in the current context.

The resolution states that :

This gap can only be closed by concrete struggles of the exploited and the oppressed [...]. By winning immediate demands, broader layers will radicalize and their struggles will converge. They will formulate [...] demands incompatible with capitalist logic.

The text lists demands that fall within this strategic framework. They “are applicable separately, but [...] form a coherent whole, incompatible with the normal functioning of the capitalist system.” This programme “is not exhaustive [...] and will continue to be enriched through concrete struggles.” “From an ecosocialist perspective,” the text indicates, “this enrichment must be guided by [...] environmental and social justice, common but differentiated responsibilities, the fight against inequalities [...], the end of green colonialism and environmental racism, the priority given to collective solutions, internationalism, and the precautionary principle.”

The text lists demands that fall within this strategic framework. “They are applicable separately, but [...] form a coherent whole, incompatible with the normal functioning of the capitalist system. There is no other way to deal with the urgency of the situation.”

This programme is not exhaustive; [...]and will continue to be enriched by concrete struggles. In an ecosocialist perspective, this enrichment must be guided by the main aspects of a just transition: environmental and social justice, common but differentiated responsibilities, fight against inequality [...] the end to green colonialism and environmental racism, prioritising collective solutions, internationalism, the principle of precaution.

“Above all, the exploited and the oppressed must develop their empowerment by democracy, decentralization, control and the collective appropriation or re-appropriation of the commons.”

Renewable energy technologies can contribute to promoting self-management, as “the physical nature and the difficulty of storage of electrical energy make it is easier to manage in a decentralized, combined and complementary system”. The resolution affirms that “Along with food sovereignty this field of struggle is particularly important for the countries of the South, as part of an alternative development model to the imperialist model.”

A major contribution of the resolution is the way it unifies the vision of capitalism:

Capitalism relies not only on the appropriation of nature and the exploitation of the labor force through wage labor but also on the patriarchal invisibility of the labor of care and reproduction of the labor force. Added to these three pillars of capitalism is a fourth, exploitation based on race. All have a common denominator that is the appropriation of natural resources, in which the human workforce is a part.

The resolution underscores the leading role of Indigenous peoples, peasants, women, and youth, providing a materialist explanation for their vanguard position. Clearly, the key issue is the role of the working class. Capitalist relations of production mean “the involvement of the trade unions in the climate struggle is ultimately crucial, though it remains difficult in such a defensive period.” Job losses pose a challenge: even if “the transition will create a growth of employment in other sectors” “sustainability creates the necessity of a reduction of production.” Hence the crucial importance of a “reduction in working hours without loss of wages.”

The resolution concludes that:

the struggle for an ecosocialist transitional program is ultimately achievable only through the emergence of political alternatives for a comprehensive plan of structural anticapitalist reforms that satisfies both social needs and environmental constraints.

### **International Committee meeting of February 2022: developing a “transitional programme within the framework of the necessary reduction of global material production “[Contribution to the development of an ecosocialist programme in the framework of the necessary reduction of global material production”**

In February 2022, the link between the Covid-19 pandemic and the destruction of biodiversity, as well as the increase in floods, megafires, droughts and other serious climatic “accidents”, led the International Committee of the FI to launch a project for an “ecosocialist programme” within the framework of the necessary reduction of global material production.

Noting that “the ecocidal accumulation of capital threatens the very conditions of human life on the planet”, the adopted resolution affirms the need to “pull the emergency brake [...] both to combat social inequalities and to open the way to qualitative development centred on caring for people through the satisfaction of real human needs, disalienated from commodities, democratically determined in careful respect for ecosystems.”

The text denounces “the fiasco of capitalist policies” based on the idea that “the global economy could both continue to grow and decarbonize” —which is “a physical impossibility.” It warns against “false and dangerous solutions” such as nuclear power, geological capture and sequestration, hydrogen, geoengineering, and large-scale monoculture tree plantations.

“All the conditions seem to be in place for the catastrophe to turn into a cataclysm,” the resolution states. It continues: “Only a world ecosocialist revolution could stop it, but it is not on the agenda. Capital is strengthening its grip everywhere, the unions are clinging to the capitalist revival as if it were a lifeline, social movements are on the defensive, democratic and social rights are receding, the political field is shifting to the right and to the far right in most countries...”

In this context, it is crucial to avoid “two traps”: “that of abstract revolutionary maximalism and that of a pragmatism

obsessed with immediate responses.” The resolution observes that “this approach of the Transitional Programme is more relevant than ever,” while specifying that “meeting the challenges of the 21st century implies a decisive novelty: the programme must organize a global decrease in final energy consumption, and hence in material production and transport.”

“This degrowth is obviously not a societal project,” the text states, “physical constraint of degrowth is necessary because the capitalist social mode of production has pushed humanity beyond ecological limits,” and “if these vampires are left to their own devices, if the poor do not make the capitalists pay for degrowth, this will be imposed by the human catastrophe in the socially barbaric form of the elimination of some of the poor for the benefit of the rich. Physics do not negotiate...The political expression of this “solution” is fascism. So the choice is clear: ecosocialism or barbarism.”

In conclusion, the resolution outlines the path forward: “The ecological crisis obviously requires a specifically ecological programme, based on sound science. But this programme will not solve anything without a package of measures that makes the rich and the capitalists pay to repair society, nature and the relationship between society and nature.” “These measures are part of the real possibility that all people can lead a good life by consuming little energy and reducing overall impacts on ecosystems.” They are grouped into five areas: “urgent regulations, at the expense of the rich and their businesses”; “tax justice social justice = climate justice”; “democracy to regain control of our lives, to take care of humans and the Earth”; “produce less, work less, live better”; “disarming the Men who do not like life,” notably through the socialization of key sectors.

## The 2025 World Congress adopts a “Manifesto for an Ecosocialist Revolution - Breaking with Capitalist Growth”

Shortly after the 2022 International Committee meeting, the FI bodies established a Drafting Commission tasked with concretising the orientation adopted. The Commission, which grew in size as its work progressed, held more than fifteen meetings over three years. Ultimately, it comprised nine members from both the Global North and South: Michaël Löwy (France), Júlia Câmara (Brazil), Jacob Schäffer (Germany), João Machado (Brazil), Alex Merlo (Spain), Christine Poupin (France), Jawad Istaqbal (Morocco), Farooq Tariq (Pakistan), and Daniel Tanuro (Belgium, Commission coordinator). A colleague from Congo-Brazzaville, unable to participate in virtual meetings due to technical difficulties, provided extensive written feedback.

The Commission quickly determined that the importance of the ecosocialist programme it was tasked with drafting justified the document taking the form of a Manifesto. A first draft was submitted to the International Committee of the FI in 2023. Its main objective was to clarify a class-based approach that took into account the differentiated implications of global degrowth in developed capitalist countries, semi-industrialized countries, and the poorest countries. The Commission was mandated to continue its work to improve the document based on these discussions.

A second version of the text was submitted to the International Committee in February 2024. Daniel Tanuro presented the Manifesto, and Christine Poupin summarized the discussions. The document was approved by a very large majority for distribution to all organizations, with a call for amendments and contributions to the debate, in preparation for the World Congress in February 2025.

The Manifesto includes an introduction followed by six chapters:

- The first outlines the dual social and ecological crisis; it leads to the objective necessity of a global revolution –

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ecosocialist, internationalist, feminist, antiracist, anticolonial, and anti-imperialist.

It is not enough to question the neoliberal regime and to revalue the role of the state. It would not even be enough to stop the dynamic of accumulation (an impossible goal under capitalism!). Global final net energy consumption must decrease radically – which means producing less and transporting less globally – while increasing energy consumption in poorer countries to meet social needs.

It is the only solution that makes it possible to reconcile the legitimate need of well-being for all, and the regeneration of the global ecosystem. Just sufficiency and just degrowth – ecosocialist degrowth – is a *sine qua non* condition of rescue.

- The second presents our concrete utopia. We reject the easy joker of “abundance”: the emancipation for which we fight requires a society where, with basic needs met, being comes before having.
- The third recalls what the transitional method developed by Leon Trotsky consists of.
- The fourth section briefly presents 21 key elements of a coherent ecosocialist programme. Some are achievable within the capitalist framework, but the whole requires the overthrow of the system. They build in intensity, from measures to protect populations from disasters, to the socialization of key sectors and democratic planning, including the dismantling of agribusiness, the protection of biodiversity, the fight against environmental racism, and urban policy under the control of the working classes.
- The fifth chapter, “Material global degrowth in the context of uneven and combined development”, delves deeper into the implications of the concept of “common but differentiated responsibilities and capacities” for countries of the South, distinguishing between semi-industrialized countries and the poorest countries, in which the satisfaction of social needs will require that fossil fuel energy still be consumed for some time.
- The sixth and final chapter is devoted to the strategic question: autonomy of social movements, refusal of any hierarchy of struggles, convergence of struggles and conquest of political power.

The Manifesto gives a central place to women’s demands. It adopts the objective of “care” – of humans and the planet – put forward by feminists - and affirms the central importance of social reproduction in relation to production.

The emphasis placed on Indigenous peoples is another noteworthy point, reflecting a renewed approach to the transitional agenda. For the Manifesto, although a minority within the world’s population, Indigenous peoples provide evidence that a different relationship between humanity and the rest of nature is possible. Their testimony thus carries immense ideological weight. This is why we recognize them as a fundamental part of the revolutionary subject of the Twenty-first Century

For the same reasons, the Manifesto also places great importance on the struggles and demands of small-scale economic actors: farmers facing agribusiness and fishermen facing industrial fishing. It advocates food sovereignty, radical agrarian reform, and agroecology.

The Manifesto generated considerable interest within the FI sections and sympathizing organizations. Dozens of

amendments were proposed by comrades from all regions of the world, including the United States, Mexico, Brazil, Peru, Germany, France, Britain, Italy, India, Pakistan, Algeria, South Africa, and Switzerland. Most of these amendments enriched the text. The collective nature of the Drafting Committee's work was highlighted by a report presented jointly by four comrades (two from the North, two from the South, two men and two women). The final text was adopted by a very large majority of delegates (124 votes in favour, 1 against, 3 abstentions, and 4 non-voting votes).

## Concrete examples of ecosocialist activities of the FI sections

At the 2018 World Congress, the debates on ecology reflected the strong involvement of many activists in concrete struggles, particularly in the countries of the South which are most affected by climate change.

The section of the Fourth International in Mindanao (Philippines) has long been committed to defending communities against increasingly violent typhoons. These comrades are engaged in developing agricultural methods based on food sovereignty, the exclusion of genetically modified seeds, and the production of organic food for local communities.

In Bangladesh, one of the countries most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, the FI organization is deeply involved in large-scale peasant struggles against climate change. Together with Via Campesina and other organizations, comrades are leading a campaign for food sovereignty, the rights of small farmers and land redistribution, following in the footsteps of the Brazilian Landless Workers' Movement. Since 2011, they have been heavily involved in organizing climate caravans that campaign in Bangladesh, Nepal, and India.

In Pakistan, too, comrades from the FI have been at the forefront of the fight against climate change. In 2010, devastating floods submerged a fifth of the country and left millions homeless. Twenty million people were affected, and 2,000 lost their lives. Five comrades were imprisoned for defending villagers after a landslide blocked the Hunza River in the Gilgit-Baltistan region, sweeping away homes and killing 19 people. The landslide created a 23-kilometre-long lake that submerged three villages, leaving 500 people homeless and 25,000 stranded. Seven years after their trial, they remained in prison, despite campaigns for their release.

In Brazil, our comrades are involved in building the climate justice movement. In 2015, in Fortaleza, they organized the largest climate march in the country's history. They also demonstrated in 2016 as part of the Break Free campaign in front of Brazil's largest coal-fired power plant and participated in the 2017 Water March. They are committed to defending the Amazon and opposing the disastrous REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) treaty alongside Indigenous peoples, local communities, and environmental groups, who were violently repressed by Jair Bolsonaro's fascist government. In recent years, our Brazilian comrades have been leading the ecosocialist project within the Party of Socialism and Liberty (PSOL), and they helped organize the Latin American Ecosocialist Meetings during COP30 in Belém in 2025.

The FI organizations in Latin America participated in the mobilizations around the People's Summit convened by Evo Morales in Cochabamba, Bolivia (2010).

In Europe and North America, comrades from the Fourth International are increasingly involved in climate mobilizations, around the COPs in Copenhagen (2009), Paris (2015), Madrid (2019) and in the large youth demonstrations that took place in different countries in 2019. They also participate in local struggles against fossil fuel projects (what Naomi Klein calls "Blockadia"), such as hydraulic fracturing in Great Britain, tar sands mining in

## The contribution of the Fourth International to ecosocialism

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Canada, the construction of the Keystone pipeline in the United States, the Notre-Dame-des-Landes airport in France and the Ende Gelände campaign against lignite mining in Germany.

In cooperation with other organizations and trade unions, FI members also participated in the initiative to organize European ecosocialist conferences bringing together several hundred people – in Geneva (2014), Madrid (2015), Bilbao (2016), Lisbon (2018), Basel (June 2020), Buenos Aires (2024).

6 November 2025

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[1] Engels, "[The Part played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man](#)" *Dialectics of Nature*, Marxists Internet Archive.

[2] Trotsky, Chapter 8 "[Revolutionary and Socialist Art](#)", *Literature and Revolution*, Marxists Internet Archive.

[3] Trotsky, "[Dialectical Materialism and Science](#)", speech at the Mendeleev Congress, September 17, 1925, Marxists Internet Archive.

[4] Trotsky, "Culture and Socialism", Marxists Internet Archive.

[5] Report by Comrade Bukharin to the assembly of officials of the Moscow organization (January 5, 1926)

[6] See in particular "[Le bolchevik et la nature](#)", Andreas Malm, first published September 15, 2017, *Revue Période*.

[7] Ernest Mandel, "[1973: The dialectic of growth](#)" November 1972/1973.

[8] Ernest Mandel, *Power and Money: A Marxist Theory of Bureaucracy*, London Verso 1992, page 207.

[9] Republished in 2023 by Inprecor "[L'avenir du communisme](#)".

[10] The text is reproduced on [ESSF](#).