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# The capitalist destruction of the environment and the ecosocialist alternative

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**The resolution "The capitalist destruction of the environment and the ecosocialist alternative" presented by the Ecology Commission and endorsed by the outgoing Bureau was adopted 112 votes for, 1 against, 2 abstentions.**

*In memory of Berta Caceres, indigenous activist, ecologist and feminist from Honduras, assassinated on the 3rd of March 2016 by the henchmen of the multinationals and in memory of the martyrs in the struggles for environmental justice.*

## 1. Introduction

1.1. The pressure humanity exerts on the Earth System has been growing ever more rapidly since the 1950s. Geologists consider that we are now in a new geological era, the Anthropocene. At the beginning of the 21st century, it has reached an extremely alarming level, and continues to grow in almost all areas. Thresholds are already exceeded in some areas, particularly greenhouse gases concentration in the atmosphere. This increasing quantitative pressure, observable everywhere and in most fields, leads to a qualitative shift that could be abrupt (within a few decades) and largely irreversible. 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, the transition to 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.

1.2. The danger increases day by day, but the catastrophe can be averted, or at least limited and contained. It is not human existence in general that is the determining cause of the threat, but the mode of production and social reproduction of this existence, which also includes its mode of distribution, consumption and cultural values. The mode in force for about two centuries - capitalism - is unsustainable because competition for profit, its driving force, implies a blind tendency to limitless quantitative growth. During the 20th century, the countries of "really existing socialism" were unable to offer an alternative to the productivist destruction of the environment to which they also contributed in an important way. At the beginning of the 21st century, humanity is confronted with the unprecedented obligation to control its development in all fields in order to make it compatible with the limits and the good health of the environment in which it has developed. No political project can ignore the conclusion of scientific studies on "global change". On the contrary, every political project must be assessed first of all by how it takes into account the risk, the systemic responses it brings, the conformity of these responses with the fundamental requirements of human dignity, and their articulation with its program in the other areas, particularly in the social and economic sphere.

## 2. A 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.

2.1. An entirely different relationship of humankind to the environment is an urgent necessity. This new relationship, based on a caring model for both humans and the environment, will not be simply the result of individual changes in

behaviour. Rather it needs a structural change in the relationships between humans: the total and global eradication of capitalism as the mode of production of social existence. This total eradication is indeed the necessary condition for a rational, economical and prudent management in the exchanges of matter between humanity and the rest of nature. Sciences and technologies can facilitate this management, but only on the condition that their development is not subjected to the dictates of capitalist profit. The dichotomy between the country and the city makes the development of ecosocialist consciousness difficult. Cities, particularly the big urban centres, literally devour biodiversity. There is an alienation both in terms of the management of common resources and people's relationship to them - the urban population does not know where the water and the food they consume comes from or who produces them and under what conditions.

2.2. The decision of the COP 21 to fix the danger threshold for global warming at 1.5 degrees centigrade is a success and something that helps the movement. Nevertheless green capitalism and the Paris agreement do not allow us to get rid of the environmental destruction in general and of the dangers of climate denial in particular. The struggle to defend the planet and against global warming and climate change requires the broadest possible coalition involving not just the power of the indigenous movements and the labour movement but also the social movements that have strengthened and radicalized in recent years and have played an increasing role in the climate movement in particular. The alternative can only come from a worldwide policy which satisfies real human needs. These are not determined by the market but by a democratic discussion that allows people to take their destiny in their own hands, liberated from market alienation. This will break the impersonal logic of productivist accumulation typical of capitalism.

2.3. The key demands of this alternative are:

1- the socialization of the energy sector: this is the only way to break free of a fossil energy economy, stop nuclear energy, reduce radically the production/consumption of energy and realize as fast as possible the transition towards a renewable, decentralized and efficient energy system according to ecological and social imperatives;

2- the socialization of the credit sector: this is essential given the interweaving of the energy and financial sectors in heavy and long-term investments and in order to have the necessary financial resources for transition investments;

3- the abolition of private ownership of natural resources (land, water, forests, wind, solar energy, geothermal energy, marine resources, ...) and intellectual knowledge;

4- the destruction of all stocks of arms, the suppression of useless (weapons etc.) or harmful products (petrochemicals, nuclear energy), the production of use values decided democratically instead of exchange values;

5-a common and democratic management of resources at the service of real human needs, with respect for the good functioning and the capacities for renewal by the ecosystems;

6- the abolition of all forms of inequality and discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, religion, or sexual preferences; emancipation of all the oppressed, particularly the emancipation of women and people of color;

7- the abolition of imposed working hours for the production of commodities as an alienating category that destroys leisure time and discourages non-commodified human activities;

8- a long-term socio-economic policy aiming at rebalancing urban and rural populations and overcoming the opposition between town and countryside;

2.4. There is a deep gap between this objectively necessary alternative and both the social relationship of forces and the current levels of consciousness. This gap can only be closed by concrete struggles of the exploited and the oppressed in the defence of their living conditions and of the environment. By winning immediate demands, broader layers will radicalize and their struggles will converge. They will formulate transitional demands incompatible with capitalist logic.

In this strategic framework, some key demands are:

1 - disinvest from the fossil fuel sector; stop subsidies for the development of projects based on fossil energy and its combustion; oppose public-private partnerships that currently dominate the energy sector worldwide;

2- mobilize against all extractivist projects - especially new oil exploitation such as shale gas (fracking) and large-scale useless investments at the service of the fossil sector (airports, motorways etc.);

(These three demands can be raised agitationaly using the slogan ' Keep the oil in the soil and the coal in the hole' which expresses our willingness to mobilize against climate catastrophe.)

3- stop nuclear energy, end the exploitation of coal, tar sands and lignite;

4- support for mass educational programs concerning ecological sustainability;

5- refuse any capitalist appropriation of land, of oceans and of their resources;

6- defend women's rights beginning with the fight against all attempts to criminalize women's decisions concerning their reproductive capacities. Free abortion and contraception on demand, paid for by the social security/health care system. De-feminize and de-privatize caring for the young, the sick, the elderly. These are communal responsibilities;

7- recognize the first nations/indigenous people's right to self-determination. Recognize their knowledge and their sustainable management of the ecosystems;

8- give refugee status to the victims of ecological/climate disasters; full respect for the democratic rights of refugees including freedom of movement and settlement;

9- ensure a decent social security system with guarantees for all individuals, and including adequate pensions;

10- abolish multilateral and bilateral free trade agreements; remove ecological technologies from GATTs;

11- respect the Green Fund commitments (\$100 billion / year) to be made in the form of grants not loans. Public management of the Green Fund, not by the World Bank but by representatives of the countries of the South, under the control of communities and social movements;

12- tax international air and maritime transport; the product of this tax should go directly to the countries of the South as a (partial) compensation of the ecological debt and this tax rate should be regularly raised.

13- recognize the ecological debt to the countries of the South. Abolish (without compensation except for small

shareholders) public debts used by imperialism to impose an unjust and unsustainable development model;

14- tax financial transactions and construct a redistributive fiscal reform so that owners of capital and their inheritors pay for the transition;

15- abolish the patent system and in particular, stop all patents on life and on technologies concerning energy conversion and storage. End the theft of indigenous peoples' ancestral knowledge, notably by pharmaceutical companies;

16- reorganize public research; end the system that submits research to private industry;

17- promote food sovereignty and the protection of biodiversity by agrarian reforms;

18- put in place an ecological, local agriculture, without GMOs nor pesticides and recognize it as a public good;

19- abolish industrial animal breeding; strongly reduce production/consumption of meat. Respect animal welfare;

20- ban advertising and institute recycle, reuse, reduce: end the consumerist, wasteful and energy-demanding model imposed by capital;

21- establish free energy and water for basic necessities and, above this threshold, impose strongly progressive tariffs tied to usage in order to fight against waste while insuring basic access; develop a strategy to extend distribution of free goods (basic food products) and services (public transport, education, health care, etc.);

22- guarantee to workers, whose companies are to be closed within the framework of the transition, the right to propose alternative production needed to build a sustainable infrastructure, if those plans prove unrealistic, workers will maintain the right to retraining, new work or retirement ;

23- develop public enterprises aimed at job creation through the implementation of the ecological transition regardless of profit, under workers' and citizens' control (in particular in the fields of electricity generation, water management, construction-insulation-renovation of buildings, mobility of people through the exit of the "all-car" system, recycling of waste and repairing of ecosystems);

25- reduce working time without wage loss, with lower work rates; implement proportional hiring (especially of youth, women and minorities): together with the development of the public sector, this is the best way to reconcile the reduction of production and energy consumption with full employment and a democratic transition;

24- guarantee workers' right to organize and exert control in the workplace, in particular on occupational health, product sustainability, production efficiency, etc. Protection of whistle blowers;

26- reform of urban areas aimed at breaking land speculation, "de-artificialising" the city (through fostering community gardening and urban agriculture, restoring biotopes embedded in the urban framework) and freeing it from the car in favour of public transport and 'soft' mobility (developing areas exclusively for walking and biking);

27- denounce the militarisation of the climate issue by the big powers who cynically aim to take advantage of the

catastrophe for geo-strategic aims.

2.5. This program is not exhaustive; it is 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 and for an improvement of living conditions, 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. What is common is defined by the social process of its democratic construction, not by nature which would make certain things as "commons", while others would be doomed to private appropriation.

The above demands do not therefore constitute a bespoke, finished solution: they indicate the general way forward for an anti-capitalist, internationalist, ecosocialist and ecofeminist perspective that will change all spheres of activity (production, reproduction, distribution, consumption) and will be accompanied by a profound change in cultural values. They are applicable separately, but an end to the crisis is possible only through their coordinated and planned application. These measures 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.

### 3. Wage-labour, alienation and ecosocialism

3.1. The exploited and the oppressed alone can lead the environmental struggle to its goal because the abolition of the capitalist system corresponds to their class interests. Yet capital incorporates the worker by the purchase of his/her/their labour power. Commodification and destruction of the environment are the result. Under the "normal" circumstances of the capitalist mode of production, daily existence of working people depends on the functioning of the system which mutilates them directly and, by mutilating their environment, indirectly. This contradiction makes it both very difficult and of decisive importance to mobilize the labour movement in the ecological struggle. In the present moment given the restructuring of the economy with its mass unemployment and deterioration in the relationship of forces between capital and labour this difficulty has increased. Certain sectors lean towards a protectionist position, indeed to climate denial. Indeed in certain cases climate defence is used as a pretext for capitalist attacks, or unionists have the illusion that doubting this reality could help to avoid the destruction of jobs in fossil fuel sectors. Fostering a debate on ecosocialist alternatives and helping to develop a left wing breaking with class collaboration is therefore a task of prime strategic importance

3.2 Left-wing sectors are taking part in environmental struggles - e.g "Trade Unions for Energy Democracy", "Labor Network for Sustainability" and the "Climate Jobs Campaigns". These initiatives engage trade unions and their membership to overcome the fear of massive job losses. All those important union initiatives attribute the responsibility for getting out of the fossils economy to polluting companies and the governments who protect and subsidize them. As such, they develop anticapitalist demands which can be amplified and coordinated when workers are confronted with the severity of the ecological crisis. For example, "Trade Unions for Energy Democracy" defends the socialization of energy. The demand for a Just Transition expresses at one and the same time a consciousness of the necessity of ending the use of fossil fuels and a workers' refusal to pay the costs of de-carbonisation. It is clear that pro-capitalist forces will try to limit the radicalism of these campaigns by insisting that they remain within a framework of "respect for the competitiveness of companies" (ITUC, Vancouver Congress, resolution on "Just Transition"). Furthermore, campaigns for climate jobs are sometimes based on too optimistic projections concerning the "growth" of employment thanks to the transition. Sustainability creates the necessity of a reduction of production, and this is not always taken into account. The closure of harmful industries - from the production of weapons to coal-fired electricity plants - and the reconversion of the production of cars into the production and maintenance of a system of mass public transport are priority measures of the transition. Indeed, the transition will create a growth of

employment in other sectors. For example, the dismantlement of agribusiness in favour of ecological farming and the development of a public or community sector, under democratic control, will offer possibilities for reconversion.

We must also take into account the fact that reorganizing activities according to social needs, and the reduction of inequalities, constitute objectives which are not limited to a specific region. They constitute global objectives implying new jobs for repairing the damage inflicted on the countries of the South. However, a global reduction of material production is necessary. The workers movement must give an answer to this by demanding a reduction of working hours without loss of wages. A radical reduction of working hours is the antiproduktivist demand "par excellence". It constitutes the best way to "manage in a rational way the exchange of matter with nature and at the same time respecting human dignity", reconciling full employment and the suppression of useless and wasteful production and planned obsolescence.

3.3. The deterioration of the balance of power between capital and labor has resulted in a deterioration in working conditions. The health of the most precarious workers is especially endangered. Thus the fight against the increase in occupational diseases constitutes a lever to increase workers' awareness of the fact that Capital destroys both the Earth and the laborer. This destruction includes rising psycho-social risks, resulting not only from the forms of organization and control of workers, but also from the environmental damage that many workers are forced to implement by the dictates of capital. The defense of workers health is also a lever for the often difficult convergence of demands by the workers of polluting companies with the surrounding populations - who also suffer from this pollution - and movements for the environment. The asbestos scandal has shown that hard struggles can be carried out when the workers of a polluting factory, their families and the local community are victims of the callous bosses who expose them to these toxic products

## 4. Women's struggles and ecosocialism

4.1. Indigenous peoples, peasants and youth are at the forefront of environmental struggles, and women play a leading role in these three sectors. This situation is the product of their specific oppression, not their biological sex - as the non-essentialist ecofeminists have shown. Patriarchy imposes social functions on women directly linked to "caring" and places them at the forefront of environmental challenges. Because they produce 80% of the food in the countries of the South, women are directly confronted with the ravages of climate change and agribusiness. Because they take on most of the child-rearing and home maintenance tasks, women are directly confronted with the effects of environmental destruction and poisoning on the health and education of their communities.

4.2. On the ideological level, women's movements remember how women's bodies have been used in the name of science (forced sterilization campaigns, etc.). This instrumentalist view has been another tool of domination and manipulation.

4.3. Women's struggles also have a special, valuable and irreplaceable contribution to the development of a global anticapitalist consciousness that favors the integration of struggles. According to the UN the full range of modern family-planning methods still remain unavailable to at least 350 million couples world-wide. More than 220 million women are denied basic reproductive services which can be (and often are) the difference between life and death. 74,000 women die every year as a result of failed back-street abortions a disproportionate number of these in the Global South. Every year, around 288,000 women die from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth and 99% of them occur in developing countries. By fighting against the patriarchal appropriation of their bodies and against the exploitation of their free domestic work, women grow to realize that 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. Women's struggles (i) for the right to control their bodies, sexuality and reproductive capacities, free of violence, (ii) against sexist and racist discrimination in the wage labor market and in production in general, and (iii) for social recognition and reorganization of domestic work are thus an integral part of the ecosocialist struggle. The struggles of women deepen and enlarge the horizon of liberation.

## 5. The agrarian question and ecosocialism

5.1 Around the world farmers, landless peasants and agricultural workers are the world's most heavily involved social sector in the fight for the environment in general and climate in particular. This vanguard role is attributable to the brutal aggression of capital, which wants to eliminate the independent peasants and replace them with agricultural workers, subcontracted workers and the unemployed (in order to put pressure on wages). The industrial agricultural system produces cheap goods at low cost for the market rather than quality food for local populations. Peasant unions such as Via Campesina carry out organizational and awareness-raising work, including helping the landless take over abandoned lands.

5.2 Unlike salaried workers, small-scale farmers are not incorporated into capital. Although production for the market tends to impose productivist objectives and methods on them, they also retain the mentality of the craftsperson anxious to do "fine work". Despite a powerful capitalist enemy, they mobilize to retain or re-conquer the ownership of their means of production. But the very unequal balance of power in the face of agribusiness and large-scale distribution forces them to seek alliances with other social movements, in particular with wage-earners and the environmental movement. Agricultural workers, especially undocumented seasonal workers who are over-exploited, have little prospect of leaving the ultra-precarious margins of wage-earners. Despite employer intimidations and even repression, some have managed to form unions and raise their wages and working conditions. Their struggle is objectively anti-capitalist.

5.3 The importance of the agrarian question should not be judged only by the proportion of farmers in the labor force, but based on five objective facts:

5.3.1 The industrial modes of agricultural production and fisheries are at the center of decisive human health issues (obesity, cardiac diseases, allergies, etc.) and the protection of the environment, which reveal the destructive force of capital. Changes in behavior by consumers will not lead the ecological transition, but choices made in food consumption can support the reorientation of agriculture and have a significant ecological impact. The demand of "food sovereignty" makes it more difficult for multinational companies to use food as a weapon against the struggles of the people. It makes it possible to unify consumers and producers around practices generating anti-capitalist consciousness.

5.3.2. Women play an important role in agricultural production, making up 43% of the agricultural workforce in so-called "developing" countries. Patriarchal discrimination is reflected in the smaller size of their farms and livestock, the lower level of mechanization, a heavier workload for a lower yield (due to the weight of what are considered 'non-productive' chores - such as obtaining water and firewood), less access to training and credit (but a more important part than men in microcredit). The emancipation of women farmers as women is one of the decisive conditions for addressing both the challenge of food sovereignty and ecological agriculture. It is therefore an ecosocialist issue in itself.

5.3.3. The agricultural-forestry sector as a whole is responsible for more than 40% of greenhouse gas emissions. Agribusiness is also a key agent for chemical poisoning of the biosphere, while industrial fishing and water pollution by agribusiness are key determinants of the biodiversity loss in aquatic environments. At the same time, warming



threatens land productivity and acidification, caused by rising CO2 levels, threaten aquatic ecosystems.

5.3.4. Biodiversity loss will not be stopped fundamentally by the creation of nature reserves but by the development of ecological agriculture. Moreover, reducing greenhouse gas emissions to zero is no longer sufficient to curb climate change. In the coming decades carbon must be removed from the atmosphere. Given the logic of profitability, capital can only react with dangerous technologies such as geo-engineering and a general appropriation of "ecosystemic services". Peasant farming and rational forestry are the only means of achieving this removal efficiently and safely while respecting social justice. Thus the protection of biodiversity and the climate reinforce the need for the ecosocialist alternative. The decisive role of agro-ecological farming is materially grounded in this overall alternative.

5.3.5. The transition to environmentally friendly agriculture, fisheries and forestry is a major condition for building an ecosocialist society. This aspect is of the same importance as the democracy of producers and the use of 100% renewable energy. However, agro-ecology is more labor-intensive than industrial agriculture. The transition to sustainable forestry and the restoration / protection of ecosystems entail an increase in the share of the population invested in these activities. To answer this challenge requires a long-term policy of upgrading agricultural trades, training workers, equipping rural areas with infrastructure, personal services and building urban gardens.

## 6. Indigenous peoples, buen vivir and ecosocialism

In North, Central and South America, Africa, Asia and Oceania, indigenous peoples are on the front line. Their struggle often combines with that of peasants and rural communities, but it is specific. Indigenous peoples produce their social existence from a direct relationship with the environment they have shaped and which constitutes their way of life. As a result, these peoples are blocking many powerful capitalist players eager to plunder natural resources: oil, gas, mining, wood, pulp, meat multinationals, agribusiness, pharmaceutical sector and those who finance carbon offsetting disguised as ecological defenders of the forest. All of these extractivist plunderers generally act with the complicity of national governments and local authorities, who invoke development goals and ecological needs to conceal their greed and neocolonial contempt for indigenous peoples. For their part, these peoples generally have no title to property or the resources of their environment. They have no other means but to struggle against displacement. Through their struggle indigenous peoples protect and make known their world outlook, which is a precious asset to the whole of humanity and an inspiration for ecosocialism. As capitalism seeks to push them aside and appropriate their resources and their knowledge, they play a vanguard role in the struggle for a society of ecological balance. Even when indigenous people live in urban areas, they maintain ties to their communities and culture although they also face particular problems within cities, including discrimination. They rightly look for allies to strengthen their fight.

## 7. Self-management, control and political prospects

7.1. The profound changes in lifestyle and development prospects that ecological transition requires cannot be imposed from above, either authoritatively or technocratically. They are only feasible if the majority of the population acquires the conviction that they are indispensable and compatible with a significant improvement in their living conditions, hence desirable. This requires a major shift in consciousness to value time, control over what is produced, and unalienated labour over endless material things. Therefore popular education about the severity of environmental destruction and its causes is essential. In the face of capitalist deception, the movement for sustainability must stimulate democratic processes of active control, take charge of the transition, intervene in public decision-making, and even take over production and social reproduction, as well as protect endangered ecosystems. By their very nature, these processes combine with the struggles of oppressed nationalities for their social rights and

democratic right to self-determination. It is a matter of sketching in practice the invention of emancipated relationships between human beings, and between humanity and the rest of nature, to show that "another world is possible". These practices of the social sectors most involved in struggles encourage the workers' movement to combat the influence of protectionism and productivism within it.

7.2. The movement for the divestment of fossil fuels and the transition towns' movement must be actively supported. In general, the experiences of workers' control, citizen control, participatory management and self-management, as well as women's struggles for social recognition and the sharing of domestic tasks, favor an anti-capitalist consciousness and project that includes the ecosocialist dimension at its core. Experiments in cooperative ecological agriculture, particularly in Europe but especially in Latin America, demonstrate this and also have an influence in the labor movement. Many self-management production experiments also involve fired, excluded and precarious workers, even undocumented migrants and asylum-seekers. These alternatives provide an immediate response to massive and permanent social exclusion, which degrades the lives and dignity of people. They have an important place in an ecosocialist strategy because they refuse fatalism, create solidarity and enlarge the circles of environmental activists.

It is, however, an illusion to believe that their generalization would make it possible to avoid ecological catastrophe. Structural socio-economic measures, in particular the socialization of credit and energy, are absolutely necessary. Transitional initiatives must be based on democratic planning, meeting social needs while respecting ecological constraints. Without such an articulation, these initiatives may have an effect of depoliticisation, or even constitute long term coexistence with a profit-based system.

7.3. The struggle against major fossil infrastructures is a key element in the general movement of interference, control and transition. Mass demonstrations, occupations of sites, mines, and civil disobedience campaigns make it possible to concretely oppose the "growth" and "extractivist" dynamics of capital. These fights have a key importance in defending the ecosystems and the human communities that live there and shape them. They are of strategic importance in defending the climate because the current level of infrastructure constitutes a bottleneck in the development of fossil capital. Thus they constitute a privileged means of building bridges between the struggles of peasants, indigenous peoples, youth, women and from there, to challenge the labor movement to join the struggle. The international networking of these resistances makes it possible to improve the balance of power, to dispel the accusations of NIMBYISM and to reinforce the legitimacy of the demands. In some cases, this can impose reforms which, while remaining within the capitalist framework, serve as a basis for subsequent radicalization.

7.4. The necessary convergence of social and environmental struggles is not a gathering of a stable compromise but a dynamic process of clarification, recomposition and radicalization. Such a process involves multiple conflicts between social sectors, particularly conflicts with sectors of the labor movement that engage in class collaboration with productivism. While demonstrating the necessary tactical sense and emphasizing the benefits of the ecological transition to workers (especially in terms of jobs and health), it is necessary to challenge the workers movement under protectionist and productivist influence. In a conflict between the social sectors involved in the environment and sectors of the workers movement believing in productivism we defend the former whilst trying to convince workers to change their point of view. In these cases, we must try to propose solid programmatic alternatives aiming at improving the rights and well being of both workers and communities. They should not pay for the decisions of the corporations and governments that supported them.

7.5. To win the labor movement and other social actors to 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. Without the construction of such political alternatives, and without their articulation with social movements, this will always be a chimera: the environment will be sacrificed on the altar of the social, or vice versa. The creation of an ecosocialist government that breaks with capitalism through social mobilization is the cornerstone of an ecosocialist emergency program. But there

is no possible ecosocialism in one country. The formation of such a government is, in turn, only a transitory stage of a permanent process which aims at the overthrow of capitalism on the whole surface of the globe.

## 8. Technologies, self management and decentralization

8.1 "The Commune is the political form finally found of the emancipation of labor," announced Marx in his work on the Paris Commune. In the 19th century, capitalism created an increasingly uniform and centralized energy system, whose technical and political control involved a large bureaucratic apparatus and a complex system of delegations of power. This system is obviously not the cause of the bureaucratic degeneration of the USSR - which was the result of the Stalinist counter-revolution - but it favored it to some extent. Conversely, the flexibility and modularity of renewable technologies are no guarantee for socialist democracy, but they open up new possibilities for anticapitalist structural reforms. These can be aimed at decentralized territorial development, organized around the democratic control and use by local communities of the renewable energy resources available locally. But the realization of these possibilities depends on the class struggle. The confiscation of only part of the fortunes accumulated by the Arab petro-monarchies would suffice to finance regional projects of alternative development in the Near and Middle East based on solar energy and directed towards the satisfaction of local social needs. Similarly, it is deplorable that the so-called "progressive" Latin American governments have not invested a large portion of the revenues of fossil exploitation in social and ecological transition plans aimed at another type of decentralized development: democratic, more urban-rural balanced, community-based and 100% renewable.

8.2. Renewable energy technologies also modify the link between structural measures and control or self-management experiences at the territorial level, with new possibilities for energy autonomy. Social technologies play an important role because they create long lasting and autonomous alternatives to the market. This contributes to the defence of common resources and communal knowledge. The project of a democratic eco-socialist society based on a network of decentralized bodies of power thus regains credibility. The physical nature and the difficulty of storage of electrical energy make it is easier to manage in a decentralized, combined and complementary system than in the current system, which is subjected to the dictates of the market. 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. Generally the continental or sub-continental level is adequate for articulating a new conception of development based on the self-management of territories and for providing links between the local and the global.

## 9. Environmental destruction and the social role of scientists

Capitalist responses are insufficient ecologically and socially unjust because they are biased due to the assimilation of market rules with unavoidable natural laws. This reality pushes some scientists to engage in the struggle. Their commitment is against the background of the increasing fragmentation of scientific research and its increasingly strong subordination to the needs of capital. A growing number of researchers perceive the necessity of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary work that implies collaboration with social movements. In this context, an opportunity arises to redefine "knowledge", liberating it from capital. Scientists are further challenged by the rise of irrationality and the denial of objective facts within certain sectors of the ruling class, two reactionary traits embodied in particular by Donald Trump. Ecosocialists need to encourage scientists to speak out. It is not a question of subjecting the social movement to the dictatorship of "science" or of experts, but rather of putting expertise at the service of the movement, even while stimulating criticism. This can greatly increase the credibility and legitimacy of anti-capitalist options. In particular, the experience of international scientific cooperation is a powerful asset in developing and deepening internationalism.

## 10. Self-organization of the affected populations

The capacity to ward off the coming environmental catastrophe is behind schedule. As we already witness, "anthropogenic" ecological disasters are therefore likely to multiply, particularly due to extreme weather events (floods, cyclones, etc.). This creates situations of disorganization and chaos exploited by speculators with the aim of domination (political, economic, geo-strategic). At the same time, these same situations may be conducive to initiatives aiming at building solidarity networks that are alternative to imperialist agencies. This self-organization of aid, reception of refugees and even reconstruction of social life in general is critical to building social solidarity. These initiatives then benefit from a great legitimacy because they become vital in these circumstances and are more efficient than international aid. Such a perspective is an integral part of our ecosocialist strategy as a revolutionary strategy. More generally, the failure of capitalism to respond to the growing ecological crisis poses an alternative: either we succumb to devastation or we rescue ourselves.

## 11. Ecosocialism and internationalism

11.1. In the ecosocialist emergency plan, the requirements of localization of production and food sovereignty are part of a self-management and internationalist perspective that is radically opposed to both capitalist globalization and "free trade" on the one hand, and to capitalist protectionism and national sovereignty, on the other. In developed countries in particular, the greatest vigilance is required in the face of the far right's attempt to shift ecological demands towards nationalist pseudo-responses. These are always at the service of capital and make the link with the racist, islamophobic and reactionary-traditionalist themes. These attempts are most often found in the demand for localization of production and food sovereignty. It is therefore crucial to frame demands to these issues carefully.

11.2. We are opposed to the relocation of companies to low-cost countries, and are in favor of localization of production in general, but we do not support the demand for relocation in imperialist countries of companies that have moved towards low-cost countries. This idea would entail that workers in low-cost countries should lose their jobs so that those in the imperialist countries will regain their own. Instead of uniting the workers of different countries against their exploiters, this demand puts them in competition, and therefore disarms them in the face of the pressure of employers for market competitiveness. The location of production is part of an entirely different project, based on ecological and social needs, in particular the right to employment and income for all, close to the place they are living. Similarly, food sovereignty, for us, is not national sovereignty, but a sovereignty at the level of territories historically defined by communities. They must respect their own history. We defend solidarity between communities in order to manage common resources and exchange them on the basis of solidarity and complementarity rather than on competition and over exploitation.

11.3. In general, various formulas of "Left-wing Protectionism based on solidarity" support the idea that competition from low-wage countries that do not protect the environment are the decisive cause of industrial job losses in developed countries. Yet the main cause of these job losses is the increase in labor productivity, whether through intensifying the work day, automation or outsourcing to facilities where workers have fewer rights and a lower wage package. The obvious solution is to reduce working hours but that has been blocked by the deterioration of the balance of power between labor and capital. By adopting the obsolete vision of a global economy based on competition among countries, while the dominant role today is played by multinationals, "left-wing protectionism" divert attention from the capital-labor contradiction to an interclass front in defense of competitiveness. "Left-wing protectionism" pretends to be internationalist, but it is silent on the destructive competition of low-cost agribusiness exports from developed countries to the South such as corn shipped from the United States that has destroyed most Mexican milpa farms—and other manifestations of imperialist domination. The danger of racist contamination starting with chauvinist positions is significant. Indeed, in the more developed countries, the defense of employment by safeguarding the competitiveness of firms against the competition of low-wage countries can easily change into

the defense of employment by combating illegal or foreign workers' competition, since the latter represent, so to speak, "a third world at home". It is precisely in this deadly trap that the extreme right wants to attract the labor movement and the environmental movement.

There is no shortcut, no possible front between capitalists and their workforce, that can confront both unemployment and destruction of the ecosystem. Instead workers must develop solidarity campaigns where they can find unity and strength to overcome the crisis.

11.4. An Ecosocialist government, brought to power as the result of the mobilization of the exploited and the oppressed, would begin to break with capitalism through measures such as the monopoly of foreign trade, control of capital movements and so on. But this does not mean protecting capitalist companies from international competition. Quite the opposite, it is a matter of protecting anti-capitalist policies while calling on the exploited and oppressed of other countries to join the fight. This is an internationalist perspective for overthrowing world capitalism. Such a policy is at the very opposite of "protectionism", which always amounts to subordinating ecological and social demands to the needs of strengthening national capitalism on the world market, that is to say, ultimately, to free trade.

11.5. Ecosocialism can begin at the national level but can only be achieved at the world scale. Rational and prudent management of the Earth System requires global democratic planning. The global scientific work realized by bodies like the IPCC, the IGBP and others shows this global democratic planning is possible. Their model of international cooperation could be carried out by democratically elected representatives of the social movements too. In fact it is partly accomplished today by organizations like Via Campesina.

## 12. The state of the movement

12.1 The indigenous peoples have long been the most effective defenders of the ecology of the planet and its wildernesses and the best guardians of its integrity and biodiversity. Many indigenous peoples live on resource-rich territory, partly because they have protected and preserved it for generations. This makes them prime targets for both extractive industries and land grabs. They have struggled against colonisation for more than 500 years and continue to struggle against all forms of colonisation and racism. Aboriginal peoples from Canada and the northern United States have been in the forefront of the struggle against the construction of pipe lines to service the extraction of the Alberta tar sands. Fifty indigenous organizations signed a treaty to oppose the treaty in 2016 including the Standing Rock Sioux tribe, which opposes the North Dakota pipeline.

Following the defeat of the climate movement at the Copenhagen climate summit (COP15) the Bolivian president Evo Morales called a Peoples' Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, in Cochabamba Bolivia, in April 2010, in order to make the voices of the peoples, including the indigenous peoples, heard. Over 35,000 people, from indigenous communities, ecological movements and peasant unions, attended the conference.

The struggle to defend the planet and against global warming and climate change requires the broadest possible coalition involving not just the power of the indigenous movements and the labour movement but also the social movements that have strengthened and radicalized in recent years and have played an increasing role in the climate movement in particular. Organizations such as 350.org, Plane Stupid, Take the Power, and the Ende Gelände movements in Germany have led important direct-action campaigns. La Via Campesina is one of the largest social movements in the world, and brings together more than 200 million small farmers, landless people, women farmers, indigenous peoples, and agricultural workers from 70 countries. The struggle for agro-ecology against capitalist agro-business has become increasingly central in their agenda. Longstanding organizations such as Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace have grown and radicalized in recent years and new groupings with an impressive mobilising

ability have come on the scene such as Avaaz and 38 degrees and they have radicalized, particularly in the run up to Paris. Many local mobilisations, such as the fight against gold mines in Cajamarca, Peru, or against the Notre-Dame-des-Landes airport in France, can block destructive initiatives. All these resistance actions, called Blockadia by Naomi Klein, are the most important components of the struggle to "change the system, not the climate".

The involvement of the trade unions in the climate struggle is ultimately crucial, though it remains difficult in such a defensive period. Progress has nevertheless been seen in initiatives such as the campaign for a million green jobs in Britain which has the support of most major trade unions and the TUC. Campaigns such as 'Trade Unions for Energy Democracy' and the 'Labor Network for Sustainability', whatever their limits, have credibility in the unions because they address the issue of job-losses as a result of the changeover to green energy.

Some radical left parties, Europe-wide, have defined themselves, formally at least, as ecosocialist including the Red-Green Alliance in Denmark, the Left Bloc in Portugal, the Socialist Left Party in Norway and the Parti de Gauche in France.

### 12.2 The FI intervention

The FI declared itself ecosocialist at the last World Congress in 2010. In doing so it became the only international current of the radical left to do so. It was an important decision but it was only a first step on which to build. The strongest advocates of it were its sections from the impoverished countries of the Global South that are the most impacted by extreme weather events, have contributed least in terms of carbon emissions, and are most deprived when it comes to climate justice. Some of these sections were already in effect ecosocialist.

The FI section in Mindanao in the Philippines, for example, a region facing ever more frequent and powerful typhoons, has long been involved in the defence of their communities against extreme weather events. They are also involved in the development of agricultural methods based on food sovereignty and the exclusion of genetically modified seeds from multi-nationals like Monsanto. Instead they are harvesting their own seeds and producing organic food for the local communities.

In Bangladesh, one of the most vulnerable, low-lying, and most affected countries in the world in terms of climate change, is already suffering from rising sea levels and the salinification of vast areas of the country, the FI section is deeply involved in the struggle against climate change and rising sea levels. The FI section is centrally committed to major peasant movements campaigning both against climate change and for land redistribution along the lines of the MST in Brazil. Along with La Via Campesina and other organizations they are campaigning for food sovereignty, the rights of peasant producers and for land redistribution. They have been heavily engaged in organizing climate caravans since 2011, which have campaigned throughout Bangladesh and into Nepal and India against climate change and global warming.

In Pakistan, FI comrades have also been at the sharpest end of the climate struggle. 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, 12m people had their homes damaged or destroyed. Half a million livestock were lost, and 10,000 schools destroyed.

Five comrades were jailed for defending villagers after a landslide blocked the Hunza River in the Gilgit-Baltistan region of Pakistan, sweeping homes away and killing 19 people. The slide forming a 23km long lake that submerged three villages leaving 500 people homeless and 25,000 stranded. They are still in jail today seven years later and campaigns are still continuing for their release.

In Brazil FI comrades have been involved in defence of the Amazon and against the disastrous REDDs treaty. We are involved in the construction of the climate movement. In 2015 we organized the largest climate march in Brazil in Fortaleza, and took to the streets in two other marches since then. In 2016 as part of the 350s Break Free campaign in front of one of the largest coal power plants in Brazil and in 2017 with the Water March. We act alongside indigenous peoples, local communities and environmental groups in water conflicts, especially in the semi-arid North-eastern part of the country. In Latin America, the organizations of the FI have been involved in mobilisations around the People's Summit at Cochabamba.

In Europe and North America FI comrades have been increasingly involved in climate mobilisations whether around COPs in Copenhagen and Paris, or around more localized struggles against fracking in Britain, against the tar sands in the Canadian state or against the Keystone Pipeline in the US and Canadian state.

### 13. Conclusion: ecosocialism and revolution

The absurd capitalist logic—the irrational expansion, unlimited accumulation as well as a productivism obsessed by the search for profit at all costs—are responsible for placing humanity at the edge of the abyss: facing climate change and ecological destruction.

Moving from the "destructive progress" of capitalism toward ecosocialism constitutes a historical process, a revolutionary permanent transformation of society, culture and consciousness. This transition will not only bring us to a new world of production, to an egalitarian and democratic society, but also to an alternative way of life, a new civilisation, beyond the rule of money, beyond habits of consumption artificially produced by advertising and beyond the unlimited production of useless commodities. And, as Marx has said, the Kingdom of Freedom starts, with diminishing working time...

It is important to underline that such a process cannot happen without a revolutionary transformation of social and political structures through mass action by a large majority of the population. In the development of a socialist, feminist and ecological consciousness, the collective experience of people's struggles is the decisive factor, from local confrontations to a radical change of society.

To dream and to fight for green socialism, or as some say, for solar communism, does not mean that we do not to fight for concrete and urgent reforms. Without any illusion in "green capitalism", we must try to win time and impose on the powers in place concrete measures against the ongoing catastrophe, starting with a radical reduction in the emission of greenhouse gases.

These urgent ecological demands can favour a process of radicalisation under the condition that we refuse to limit their objectives by obeying the capitalist market or accepting the "competitiveness argument".

Each small victory, each partial advance can immediately bring us to a higher and more radical demand. These struggles on concrete problems are important, not only because partial victories in themselves are welcome, but also because they contribute to the growth of an ecological and socialist consciousness, and promote autonomy and self-organization from below. This autonomy and this self-organization are the necessary and decisive preconditions for a radical transformation of the world. This means a revolutionary transformation is only possible through the self-emancipation of the oppressed and the exploited: workers and peasants, women, indigenous communities, and all stigmatized because of their race, religion or nationality.

The leading elites of the system, retrenched behind their barricades, are incredibly powerful while the forces of radical opposition are small. Their development into a mass movement of unprecedented size, is the only hope to stop the catastrophic course of capitalist "growth." This will allow us to invent a desirable form of life, more rich in human qualities, a new society based on the values of human dignity, solidarity, freedom and respect for "Mother Nature".

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## Two points of view

**The issue of carbon taxes or fee- and-dividend (James Hansen's proposal) is being very much discussed in the ecological left and the Fourth International. We briefly present here two different views on the issue, leaving the debate open for the moment.**

**Point of view 1.**

### Make the polluters pay.

The unavoidable reality is that as long as fossil fuels are the cheapest energy available they are going to be used. The most effective way to cut carbon emissions quickly which is crucial is by making fossil fuels much more expensive than renewables by a means that is socially just, economically redistributive, and capable of commanding popular support, and in the two or three decades that remain to us. In other words an exit strategy from fossil fuel. The principles are: make the polluter pay: keep the oil in the soil and the coal in the hole.

One proposal on these lines is James Hansen's fee and dividend proposition. It provides a high impact measure that can bring about big reduction in fossil fuel usage and emissions, in a short period of time, and on the socially progressive basis of a major transfer of wealth from the rich to the poor directly into the individual bank accounts of the population as an incentive to drive it forward. It has the potential to mobilise the kind of mass popular support that would be necessary for the kind of rapid change that is needed. It also has the advantage over the alternatives of a government imposed cap or fuel rationing in that it would reduce production by reducing demand in a way that would be popular and acceptable.

It would need, as Hansen argues, to go alongside a crash programme of renewable energy production to meet the demand that his incentives would create. It would also need to go alongside a major programme of energy conservation, a big reduction in the use of the internal combustion engine, the abolition of factory farming and a big reduction in meat consumption.

I am not insisting on Hansen but on the principle of a big impact idea with fast results. There may well be other such proposals but let's start the discussion.

**Point of view 2.**

### Challenge the logic of accumulation



## The capitalist destruction of the environment and the ecosocialist alternative

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According to neo-liberalism, the climate could be saved (i) without challenging the capitalist accumulation, (ii) without binding regulation, (iii) without collective practices generating new values, (iv) by giving a price inciting carbon companies and consumers to change their habits. The "fee and dividend" is a social variant of this strategy.

Hansen says that his proposal is consensual: it gives purchasing power, stimulates growth and requires no regulation. So, fee-and-dividend would be the only realistic answer to the emergency. On the contrary, the climate emergency requires more regulation and attacking the logic of capitalist growth. As for social justice in the transition, 1) it is not limited to "purchasing power" - it requires collective investment (conversion plans, public transport, insulation-renovation, regional planning, ...); 2 °) it must be global - the protectionism proposed by Hansen violates the principle of differentiated responsibilities of North and South.

Hansen proposes a tax growing to \$ 115 / tCO<sub>2</sub> in ten years. On this basis, it projects a reduction in US emissions of the same order (30%) as is expected from the regulation measures of the Clean Power Plan (26 to 28%). This tax of \$ 115 / tCO<sub>2</sub> would increase the price of gasoline by \$ 1 / gallon in ten years. In comparison, a recent increase of \$ 1.20 / gallon has reduced US emissions by ... 3%.

The "fee and dividend" is not the axis of an exit strategy in social justice. Some tax claims are legitimate (on kerosene, for example), but the essential is elsewhere. There is no miracle recipe: we can not avoid a strategy confronting the capitalist dynamic of accumulation with mobilizing demands, uniting the social and the environmental (see 2.4.).

This ecosocialist strategy is concrete, but different from that of Hansen. The first focuses on the convergence of the struggles of the exploited and oppressed, the second on the illusory hope of a green capitalism.

PS:

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