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1991 World Congress

# Socialist revolution and Ecology

- Fourth International resolutions - World Congresses - 13th World Congress - 1991 -

Publication date: Monday 1 January 1996

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# I. Foreword

ALTHOUGH ecological problems are not new to humanity, their scope and intensity have now lent them a new quality.

In many cases environmental damage entails irreversible negative consequences for human beings and nature; a nuclear reactor accident can put millions of lives at risk.

For most of their history, the traditional reformist leaderships of the workers' movement have ignored or trivialized ecological problems. Even today the learning process is painfully slow and difficult and is often limited to mere environmental repairs.

On a self-critical note it must also be said that even the revolutionary currents in the workers' movement - ourselves included - needed to rethink their position before coming fully to grips with the explosive potential of the ecological dimension in late capitalism.

The work done by many different campaigning groups and the green parties in putting the ecology question back on the agenda - despite the rejection of this question in the workers' movement - must certainly be acknowledged. Many of their proposed solutions however have an illusory character because they fail to recognize that the destruction of the environment is deeply bound up with the capitalist profit motive or, in the transitional societies, with bureaucratic rule. Taking ecological dangers seriously means looking beyond the profit motive or bureaucratic rule towards a democratically planned, socialist society.

# II. The facts of the ecological crisis

The ecological crisis, a result of the impact of human beings on nature, has reached proportions which call into question the survival of the human race. Because of the economic interests of a tiny minority, we are confronted on the one hand with an increase in new forms of production, the ecological consequences of which have not been adequately investigated, and on the other hand with the blatant continuation of older forms of production, though their harmful effects are already known. The backdrop to all this is technology's growing impact on nature, i.e. its increased ability to disrupt or destroy ecology.

The industrial revolution, a product of the development of capitalism in the 19th century, increased environmental pollution through emissions and industrial waste, at the same time creating additional health hazards for working people and the urban population as a whole. In general, it amplified ecological shock waves of human origin. But the ecological crisis of today is not a linear result of industrial development since the 19th century. It is the result of a qualitative leap which came about within the framework of the economic boom of the 1950s and 1960s, through the massive increase in the use of oil and the enormous development of the automotive industry, and through the development of the chemical industry and its generalized penetration of every sector of human activity, especially agriculture by means of fertilizers and pesticides. This qualitative leap has been reinforced since the 1970s by the economic crisis of the bureaucratically planned economies, which has exacerbated the irrational aspects of their functioning, and in an especially dramatic way by the combination of economic crises and unbridled, wild

industrialization in the "Third World."

### **Air pollution**

The most important air pollutants are:

1. Substances that result from the combustion of fossil fuels (coal and oil); these are primarily sulphur dioxide, oxides of carbon, and nitrogen compounds.
2. Carcinogenic organic substances, such as benzol or formaldehyde.
3. Heavy metals, such as mercury, cadmium and lead.
4. Microscopic asbestos fibres and dust emissions.
5. Chlorinated fluorocarbons.

These substances are emitted into the air by means of industrial production processes, vehicles or consumer goods. The unchecked and seemingly uncontrollable growth of the automobile as a means of transportation has made it the main source of sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides, well ahead of private and industrial heating systems. Motor fuels are also the main source of benzol and lead. Formaldehyde, mercury and asbestos are industrial pollutants, but they also occur in common consumer goods and building materials (formaldehyde and asbestos) and in electrical batteries (mercury).

The concentration of these substances in the air can be over a thousand times greater in urban areas than in rural ones. Air pollution has become a plague in the big cities of the rich countries and has taken on especially gigantic and anarchic proportions in those of the poor countries. It has resulted in an alarming increase in illnesses of the respiratory tract in urban environments: pseudo-croup (pseudo-diphtheria) in children, asthma, bronchitis and lung cancer.

Asbestos has led to a very high cancer-related mortality rate among dockyard and construction workers. Due to the latent period of these types of cancer, the true dimensions of the problem will only be revealed in the years to come. The discovery of the dangers of asbestos has led to a strong reduction in its use in the rich industrialized countries; in the "Third World", however, its use is on the increase.

Sulphur dioxide and the nitrogen oxides are the cause of acid rain, which is responsible for the gradual destruction of the forests in the temperate regions of the Northern Hemisphere.

The increase in the carbon dioxide content of the atmosphere via the burning of fossil fuels and the burning of the felled forests will in all probability result in climatic warming in the 21st century, causing geographical upheavals with catastrophic local effects on the economies of human communities (the greenhouse effect). Predictions based on current trends indicate that these climatic changes will combine with an increase in the carcinogenic ultraviolet rays reaching the earth's surface. This increase is caused by the accumulation of a number of pollutants in the higher atmosphere, especially the chlorinated fluorocarbons. These are emitted primarily by spray cans and broken refrigerators. Initially harmless, they rise into the upper atmosphere, where they trigger chemical reactions that allow a higher percentage of ultraviolet rays to reach the surface of the earth (destruction of the ozone layer).

### **Water pollution**

This planet's water is being used as a gigantic waste dump for the byproducts of human activity - both domestic and industrial/agricultural byproducts. Most heavily affected are the continental waters, rivers and lakes, although rivers and coastal cities are increasingly contributing to the pollution of the oceans. The most serious consequence is an

accumulation of heavy metals, mercury, cadmium, etc. plus highly toxic organic compounds in the sediment, and more importantly, in the water itself, the accumulation of fatty substances, nitrates and phosphates, resulting in the unchecked growth of certain aquatic plants. When these plants decompose, they consume the oxygen in the water, turning it into a mass grave for the creatures living in it. This deteriorating situation is increasingly affecting the oceans, all the more so given their direct pollution with astronomical amounts of oil from oil bore holes and ships, and the dumping of toxic, chemical and radioactive wastes.

In addition to water pollution there is also soil pollution, which is both a result and cause of certain forms of air and water pollution. Associated with this pollution of the soil are the consequences of the agricultural practices determined by the constraints of the market economy: intensive cultivation (abuse of and dependence on fertilizers and pesticides), monocultures and crops unsuitable for local ecosystems and climatic conditions, etc. We are confronted with the massive destruction of the soil on a global scale resulting from the combined effects of pollution, exhaustion, dessication and massive erosion, which is bound up with the economic and social causes of the hunger affecting 500 million people in the "Third World".

### **The destruction of the forests**

Among the more dramatic revelations of the ecological crisis, the global destruction of the forests is an especially disturbing factor due to the extent of its consequences. Tropical countries are particularly affected. In the industrialized countries the area covered by forest remains relatively stable, although the forests are slowly dying off due to a lethal combination of air, soil and water pollution. In the "Third World" countries however it is deforestation which is characteristic of the ecological crisis. Between 1980 and the year 2000 the "Third World" will have lost 40% of its forest area. In view of the special characteristics of the tropical rain forests (1/3 of the world's plant mass, extremely thin topsoil) this deforestation will have terrible consequences:

- At the local level, due to the mutually compounding effects of dessication and erosion, it will severely intensify agrarian crises and hunger.
- On a global scale, the burning of felled trees will intensify the greenhouse effect.

### **The industrial catastrophe**

The devastating consequences of human activity can also be seen in the form of large-scale accidents or the potential risk of such accidents in industry - for example in chemical or nuclear power plants.

Given its special nature and the unfathomable extent of the possible negative consequences and especially its long-term effects, the nuclear industry represents a particularly alarming example of wrong decision-making in the development of the forces of production, especially in view of the existence of alternative solutions to the problem of energy supplies.

### **Conclusion**

The combined elements of this ecological crisis do not create new priorities which marginalize "traditional" economic, social and political problems. On the contrary, they are closely interwoven.

The relationship between the destruction of the Amazon and the struggles of the rural and urban dependent population in Brazil or between the deforestation in the Himalayas, the social balance of forces in Bangladesh and

the natural catastrophes (floods) in that country illustrates the close interplay between nature and politics. The ecological crisis is a dramatic, ongoing phenomenon, exhibiting regional and partial catastrophes, cases of irreversible damage mixed with cases of potentially reversible damage - be it in the short or medium-term future, or in two to three hundred years (the age of many trees). Everything depends on what human communities consciously decide to do.

### III. The structural causes of the environmental crisis

The destruction and pollution of the environment expresses a failure to organize properly the social life of a mass of human beings in the biosphere. As the preceding rough outline of the global environmental situation shows, over the past few years this failure has not only grown but become clearer. In the last two centuries and especially in the 20th century, the globally dominant form of the organisation of social life has been determined by capitalist relations of production. The entire population of planet earth has become increasingly dependent on the capitalist market economy via the extension of waged labour and the intensified capitalization of all sectors of life. To this extent, an evaluation of the environmental situation is primarily an evaluation of the capitalist mode of production.

This also applies to those parts of the world which, after more or less intense anticolonial, anti-imperialist and anticapitalist liberation struggles and revolutions, have placed themselves off limits to the capitalist market economy. All the attempts to build a planned economy based on the social possession of the means of production are in reality still dependent to a high degree on the global economic relations determined by the imperialist powers. Via the global market, division of labour and trade relations, the capitalist law of value still influences the centrally planned economies of Eastern Europe, Eastern Asia and Cuba.

Nevertheless, there are a number of additional reasons which cause these countries to be especially hard hit by the ecological crisis.

Capitalist production, though it cannot escape natural laws, enters in some respects into fundamental contradiction with nature and its processes of development. Social production is a complex of processes involving the exchange and conversion of materials and energy. This complex is determined - within limits set only by the earth's relation to the rest of the universe - by the laws of thermodynamics. According to these laws energy and matter can neither be created nor destroyed, but can only change their form. Moreover the processes which bring about these changes are irreversible and tend to a universal and random distribution of energy and matter (the law of entropy). Under capitalist conditions, the organization of nature is increasingly deformed by economic needs. It is ever more finely divided into components that can be organized to produce commodities. The quantitative aspect of the law of value - the labour - time/money relation - overrides all else. Qualitative, "holistic" relations cannot enter the equation.

At the same time capitalist production is based on the shortest possible reversible processes through which capital invested can expand. The incessant repetition of capitalist production, squeezing the last drop from resources, and its increasing compartmentalization as a precondition for economic "quantification", raise entropy unnaturally fast. The result of this contradiction is that the capitalist mode of production imposes an alien rhythm on natural processes. The exploitation of existing resources cannot take the time needed for their natural production and regeneration, and commodity production can pay no heed to the existing forms of social life it encounters. The territorial expansion required to maintain production, secure new energy sources and transport routes must ignore natural environments and plant and animal communities. The cause of this destructive type of development is therefore not capitalist irrationality, but precisely its own inherent logic. Social-democratic demands for "qualitative growth" are thus caught up in "utilization logic": qualitative growth and the law of value are mutually exclusive.

Whilst capitalist production is determined by an increasing compartmentalization of the existing environment, the social order and property and power relations within it are marked by increasing centralization. Today a group of multinational concerns determines the fate of the most remote corners of the earth. The capitalist conceptualization of time and space is further reinforced: the earth is divided up into industrial zones, tourist areas, trade zones, bases of raw materials, and so on. Concern for the past is as lacking as provision for the future.

Capitalist rationality determines the actions of individual capitals. Because of competition between different groups of capitals, however, the system as a whole is irrational. The ingenuity involved in developing production, as well as in the economical use of resources and environmental protection, stops at the factory gates. This results in the environmentally damaging effects in all those areas where “nobody” considers themselves responsible: air, water and soil. Competition also leads to the regular crises of overproduction; enormous amounts of energy and materials are invested in commodities that cannot be sold. In addition, the market also imposes products such as advertising, drugs and armaments, superfluous as use values, but yielding hefty profits as exchange values. In the end, competition and the struggle for profit and extra profit is the source of actions illegal even according to capitalist rules - ignoring environmental restrictions, poisoning products, skimping on product testing, falsifying the description of contents, illegal waste dumping, and so on.

Over the last 150 years, the capitalist mode of production has already resulted in enormous changes in the composition and distribution of the soil, raw materials, water and in particular of the atmosphere, which prove that the rate of entropy increase caused by capitalism is reaching levels no longer compatible with the continued existence of the earth and the human community. At the same time, alternative paths of development are being prevented and actively combatted.

### **The environmental crisis in the imperialist metropolises**

The “economic deformation” of pre-existing natural social and historic conditions is at its most advanced in the developed capitalist countries. The compartmentalization of production and the simultaneous centralization of property relations has reached its highest level in these countries. Commodity production has become the absolutely determining force throughout society. At the same time, social processes of production are broken down still further up and property relations - kept in motion by competition between the owners of the means of production - become ever more centralized. This has led to the same major environmental problems in all the imperialist states - proof that these problems are not the result of “breakdowns” and “failures” but are the international result of the logic of the system.

– Economic development down to the last square centimetre, with industrial zones, trade centres, shopping centres, dormitory towns, tourist or leisure centres and administrative regions, lengthens travel time even though needs are relatively fixed. This, along with transportation policies based on individual transport via internal combustion engines, has resulted in a chronic over-reliance on the automobile in all major cities and the threat of the total breakdown of the transportation system.

– Centralized property relations, particularly in the field of energy supply, have resulted in an orientation towards large-scale fossil fuel or nuclear power plants. This means an energy supply which places a huge strain both on the atmosphere and on human health, and which is also thoroughly irrational with respect to the economical use of energy. The need to sell as much energy as possible is diametrically opposed to a policy of minimal entropy increase.

– The increasing compartmentalization of production and the self-centred rationality of individual capital bear decisive responsibility for the waste problem. It is becoming increasingly “cheaper” to throw away, deposit or incinerate things not needed for production. Mountains of waste and toxic waste in particular have become the symbol of the capitalist

version of the affluent society.

– Under capitalist conditions, the chemical and pharmaceutical industries have become an embodiment of the effects of the compartmentalization of the production process. Elementary biochemical processes and materials become independent bearers of profit-making. The consequences are on the one hand a major change in the natural distribution of materials - the much-quoted creation of a second “artificial” nature - and on the other hand, the acceleration, inflation and increasing independence of biological processes, without so much as a clue about the potential consequences.

But the consequences of these fundamental environmental problems do have names: urbanization and the destruction of the landscape, transport collapses and air pollution from individually-owned internal combustion vehicles, toxic pollutants from and dependence on the chemical industry, destruction of the atmosphere by power stations burning fossil fuels and by radioactive pollution from atomic energy, ever-growing mountains of waste. Capitalism is not able to reverse this “mistaken development”. That would mean the careful use of resources becoming the sole guide to action, something which contradicts the fundamental principle of capitalism. If resources in capitalism are “freely” available, like water, air, soil, then they are used, wasted, poisoned, largely without the controlling authority of the dominant social relations. They are - not only in the economic sense “external factors”. If however they are “tied in” in the capitalist sense, i.e. the object of private profit interests, or in other words, if they are “economically quantified”, then the fundamental scarcity of resources is only experienced by the buyer. Those who offer them for sale have a fundamental interest in expansion and resist all savings or economies.

The imperialist states have equally demonstrated that system-immanent correction is an impossibility. Such correction is either connected with extensive social planning and regulation, which is resisted not only in the current capitalist campaign for deregulation, or is based on the erroneous assumption that the law of value is somehow able to distinguish between “good” (i.e. environment-friendly) profit and “bad” profit. The imperialist states are thus condemned to a policy of trying to patch things up after the event, which can only claim limited success in the realm of tangential repair and containment measures such as filters and the cleansing of exhaust fumes and liquid wastes.

However the imperialist states are also faced with the challenge of a growing movement for the protection of the environment. Under pressure from these movements, a number of state regulations and guidelines have been introduced which, although they have succeeded in noticeably reducing environmentally harmful production, have also been money well spent for the imperialist states in terms of damping protest.

Capitalist production also shapes the consumer. To this extent, individual human behaviour is a factor which adds to the environmental crisis and inhibits its solution. The credo of bourgeois ideology that “people are responsible for the crisis” plays directly on this factor. Individual changes in consumption however can only exercise a small influence on the fundamentally anti-environmental nature of capitalist production.

### **The environmental crisis in the dependent countries**

The sober conclusion of a study conducted by the UN environmental organisation, that the environmental problems of the “Third World” are problems of poverty, can only be said to be completely accurate when we include the fact that this poverty is not the result of some quirk of fate but the direct result of the policies and economic activities of the imperialist states. Although it is possible to turn the facts around and transform the environmental crisis of the imperialist states into a consequence of the “affluent society” instead of the market economy, the connection between the economic and ecological crises in the dependent states of Asia, Africa and Latin America is quite clear. For millions of people in these countries, the increasing destruction of the environment and their biospheres and the daily struggle for survival forms a direct and shared experience. Over 500 million people are malnourished; 40 million die every year of hunger or hunger-related illnesses. Almost two thousand million people have no regular supply of clean

drinking water, resulting in the deaths of 25 million annually. 1.5 million people suffer from an acute lack of firewood, which is often the sole source of energy. The supply of food, water and heating fuel - the three most important conditions for physical existence - is severely out of balance in these parts of the world. The UN estimates that some 500 million people are "environmental refugees," forced to leave their traditional homelands because of drought, floods, soil erosion, displacement by agricultural export production and other "environmental factors." The environmental crisis in these parts of the world is thus by no means a "time bomb" or some "future" problem, but an existential crisis in the here and now.

The decisive cause of poverty and the environmental crisis is the capitalist mode of production. The familiar dependencies on imperialism and the imperialist-dominated world market have subjugated the ecology in the dependent countries to a form of economic exploitation which is more direct and brutal than has been the case in the imperialist countries. The dividing up of nature according to the dictates of the world market and the interests of multinational corporations in these countries is in even greater contradiction to historically developed social structures and traditional ways of life. The effects of the "time-space regime" specific to imperialism in these countries can be fundamentally characterized as follows: an infrastructure that is almost exclusively oriented to the needs of the centres of imperialist-dependent economic activity. Bound up with this is the allocation of "raw materials centres", trade zones, tourist zones, plantations and pasture land for export production. The enormous pressure exerted on the victims of these processes and the displacement of other lifestyles and social functions literally onto the neglected rural areas is incomparably greater than the also largely involuntary processes of environmental and population transformation in the capitalist metropolises.

Thus, from an ecological point of view we can also see the fatal effects of "the law of combined and uneven development" in the dependent countries. The world market is transporting its environmentally destructive dynamic, its most highly developed contradictions with nature even into the most "backward" parts of the world. And the effects there are incomparably greater, the forces to oppose them incomparably weaker. We can establish a number of structural characteristics of this development:

- The direct exploitation of raw materials for the world market (minerals, wood, cotton, rubber etc.) and the concomitant development of the land by means of transport routes, railways, power stations, etc.
- The transformation of land into crop or pasture areas for export production via the rigorous clearing of forest land, characterized by a high degree of dependence on and pollution from artificial fertilizers and pesticides.
- Both of these processes make the land question the most pressing problem of most dependent countries. The rural population is being displaced to areas of land incapable of supporting long-term settlement and agriculture. They are forced to clear forested areas and apply farming methods which themselves accelerate the rate of land destruction and soil erosion. Deforested mountain slopes, burnt-out areas of tropical forest, settlements in drought and flood areas, the removal of fertile soil layers all result in long term climatic changes, famine and "natural catastrophes".
- Increased urbanization brought about by the specific economic structure and the land problem. According to UN estimates, the cities in the dependent countries are growing three times as fast as in the rich capitalist countries. The extent of the familiar environmental problems, so destructive to nature and life, are to be found in even greater proportions in these cities. Air pollution stemming from automobiles and the burning of fuel for heating and cooking purposes represents an acute threat. The quality of the water supply and the sewage disposal systems is the second major problem of the cities in the dependent countries. The third is waste disposal. In most of the major cities of Asia, Africa and Latin America, waste is simply thrown onto trash heaps or burned in the open.
- Energy supplies are a basic problem of existence for a large part of the population in the dependent countries. The annual labour time taken up by a million and a half people just in the search for firewood (or other combustible



materials such as dung, rubbish etc) has been multiplied many times over, in some cases up to 190-300 work days per year. In many places all of the wooded areas, particularly on the rural outskirts of the towns, but also in many other areas, have been destroyed, primarily due to lack of fuel.

– The most commonly named problem of the dependent countries is the debt owed the imperialist banks and governments. With regard to the environmental crisis, this means increased orientation towards export production and an increase in acute poverty and exodus from the rural areas. At the same time no means are available to finance conservation measures. The World Bank and the IMF are thus instrumental in making people and nature pay an ever greater price for the debt crisis.

This finds a cynical counterpart in a whole number of direct acts of destruction of the natural environment and other environmental crimes perpetrated by imperialist concerns. Dangerous production lines for example (especially in the chemical industry) are often transferred to the dependent countries, where there is not only cheap labour but also an environment which can be freely polluted. Toxic and radioactive waste from imperialist countries is frequently disposed of in the dependent countries.

The governments of most of the dependent countries are helpless in the face of the environmental crisis. Their attachment to imperialist interests and their own class interests and privileges serve to increase economic dependence and exacerbate the environmental crisis. Even certain international aid programs (against famine, environmental catastrophes or the latest proposals for a partial cancellation of debt in return for environmental measures) end up becoming a welcome source of additional income for the ruling elites in the dependent countries.

A solution to the environmental crisis in the dependent countries is unthinkable without independence from imperialism. If the solution to the most urgent social problems in the form of modernization “bought” with credits and debt has proven to be a failure and has actually worsened the problems it set out to solve, then the effect on the environment has been even worse. Poverty and economic dependence forces millions of people into environmentally highly destructive forms of behaviour which represent their sole chance of survival under the present circumstances. The process of anti-imperialist, “permanent” revolution will necessarily have to take on the problems of the environment and link them with the program against capitalist exploitation in order to successfully build alternative, socialist relations of production.

### **The environmental crisis in the transitional societies**

The wave of political transformations in the transitional societies since the accession to power of the Gorbachev faction in the USSR has made clear that the situation of the environment under the conditions of a bureaucratic centrally-planned economy is by no means better than elsewhere. At least with regard to air, water and soil pollution and the problems of the urban centres, the situation is even worse than in the imperialist metropolises.

One, but only one, reason for this is the fact that these societies were only partially able to overcome the capitalist law of value and the accompanying objective pressures it exerts on production. In a significant number of key sectors of production, there is an unbroken dependency on capitalism and the world market. The economic quantification and exploitation of natural resources for an export-oriented economy and dependency on capitalist products and technologies have also led to fundamental destruction of the environment in these countries, to an extent that is even comparable with the situation in the dependent countries.

At the same time, a considerable amount of natural and social resources had to be used in the direct defence against imperialist aggression. From Churchill's “the Bolshevik baby must be strangled in its cradle” to “cutting the head off the Soviet chicken” in the statements of the US government on the “contra” war in Nicaragua, the necessity of

centralized military defence has had a decisive influence on the development of the transitional societies and on the orientation of their production.

All of the currently non-capitalist societies began their development under conditions of economic underdevelopment, or even of great poverty. Their “socialism” was a distribution of want, whose difficulties grew with their failure to topple the imperialist powers. “The battle for production”, the short-term improvement of economic results with scant regard for ecological goals - assuming these were even acknowledged - determined the starting conditions of these societies.

It is therefore not wrong to claim that capitalist production is also fundamentally responsible for the environmental crisis in the non-capitalist societies.

A number of causes of the environmental crisis in the transitional societies are also to be found in the specific structures of these societies, in the establishment of a bureaucracy which appropriates a considerable part of the social surplus product for its own personal consumption and privileges and maintains its monopoly of power by means of a ubiquitous repressive apparatus and an ideology which falsifies the ideals of socialism. From the time of its foundation, the Fourth International has analyzed and criticized these relations, which determine the system of the transitional societies. Today, in the wake of the existential crisis of Stalinism, they are becoming known throughout the world and are allowing people for the first time to get an idea of the real situation.

The planned economy is an attempt to develop an economy of labour which is directly social in character. In contrast to capitalism, where it is the market which decides on the usefulness (i.e. “saleability”) of labour, the non-capitalist societies attempted to determine social need first and plan production accordingly. It is self-evident that this can only succeed when all of the different needs and interests of the people are drawn together in a process of democratic decision-making. The need for democracy becomes even more essential when it is a question of distributing objectively present shortages across society. The bureaucratization of the transitional societies however systematically reduced democracy. The multiplicity of social and national, cultural and economic needs of the people were unified by force in a central plan dictated from above. The fundamental features of this plan had to consist of purely quantitative standards and growth rates, since all the qualitative aspects had been buried along with democracy. Hence, the transitional societies' orientation towards quantitative increases in production was almost greater than that of the capitalist societies, initiated as it was solely by government or party decree and enforced by means of repressive measures. The protection of resources and the environment only occurs in such plans in quantitative terms (number of sewage plants, filters, amount of budget expenditures, etc). Such planning is by its very nature full of mistakes and enormous errors with a corresponding wasting of resources, which are only discovered when those “at the top” take notice.

The exclusion of the mass of people from social planning and the establishment of a repressive and hierarchical power structure lead to the stifling alienation of the people from production. The interest in social property was reduced or even repressed. At the same time there developed a system of hypocrisy and deceit in which “plan fulfilment” was “achieved” in a purely illusory way with countless tricks and swindles. This system of illusory plan fulfilment and shadow economy is the cause of an enormous waste of resources and the deliberate ignoring of ecological relations.

The individual parts of the plan are also dictated by the interests of the bureaucratic blocs behind them, resulting in the systematic gigantism so typical of the Soviet Union and comparable countries. The bigger, the more centralized and global a project (e.g. the river rerouting projects in Siberia) the more it expresses the power of the bureaucracy. Bureaucrats for environmental protection have only been in existence since the 1970s, but they are without influence, little departments stuck like afterthoughts onto the main administrations. Such bureaucracies offered no room for ecological self-interests to grow. The brown coal mines of the GDR or the irrigation projects in the USSR are

examples of the resultant planning failures and destruction of entire landscapes.

The ideology of the bureaucracy preaches a kind of obligatory optimism and faith in progress. The result of this ideologically ordained, top-down “socialism” was an internalization of its opposite, i.e. of capitalist consumerism in the minds of the masses. The answer to this consisted of promises like the “competition between the two systems” or the “overtaking” of the western societies. Capitalism's ecologically devastating consumption and modernization models were rehabilitated and adopted as centrally important ideological goals, consequently determining the form of the central plan.

And even when alternative ideas and models of socialism which took the environment into account did exist, they were administratively opposed, repressed and eliminated. Every form of opposition, no matter what issue it centred on, was a threat to bureaucratic rule. The only models accepted by the bureaucracy were those based on the quantification of natural resources (i.e. similar models to those of conservative bourgeois economists). But these were not very successful, because quantitative accounting of the value of forests, air, the environment etc. were either arbitrary or so “dynamic” that they did not fit into the rigid plans of the bureaucracy.

The Stalinist bureaucrats thus made a major contribution to extending the influence of capitalist production way beyond what was objectively necessary. Their whole model of society combined pre-capitalist, “feudal” elements of privilege and despotism with promises to be more successful than capitalism. The development of genuinely socialist social relations was systematically prevented.

Only today, after the democratic opening of the bureaucratized societies and their profound crisis, are environmental groups and a socialist opposition emerging and showing what could be possible under a democratically-planned economy and self management. Up against the secretly cultivated “advantages” of capitalism in the minds of the masses, however, it is increasingly - if tragically - obvious that they do not (yet) have a chance.

## IV. Ecology and the workers' movement

The founders of scientific socialism, Marx and Engels, discuss society's relation to nature at several key places in their works. The Critique of the Gotha Programme (1875) sums this up as follows:

“Labour is not the source of all wealth. Nature is just as much the source of use values (and it is indeed of these that material wealth is composed!) as labour, which itself is merely the expression of a natural force, namely human labour power.” (Translated from the German edition of Marx and Engels Works [MEW], Vol.19, p.15).

The formulation “labour is the source of all wealth and all culture” is classified as an empty “bourgeois phrase” which has no place in a socialist program.

In his trenchant analysis of the “civilizing role of capital” in Capital Marx notes that:

“Capitalist production therefore only develops the technique and combination of the social process of production, by simultaneously undermining the source of all wealth, i.e. the earth and the worker.” (MEW, Vol.23, p.529)

It cannot and should not be denied that even the Marxist classics were marked by an “overly optimistic” view of things. Occasionally at least, one detects the notion that through the development of the natural sciences,

environmental problems will largely be eliminated.

“The enormous strides made by the natural sciences in this century have increasingly enabled us to recognize even the more remote after-effects at least of our most normal productive activities, and thus to control them.” (Frederich Engels, “Dialectic of Nature”, MEW Vol.20, p.453).

The generally speaking well-thought-out position of the founders of scientific socialism on the relation of society to nature was increasingly buried under the parallel advance of reformism in the ranks of the workers' movement. Just as reformism was integrated step-by-step into bourgeois society and came to accept its central institutions (state, army, laws, etc.), so it also took on point for point those productivist models, those “bourgeois phrases” against which Marx's verdict was directed.

In a telling statement of the social-democrat dominated German Metalworkers' Association at the turn of the century it was asserted that:

“The quicker the development of technology, the sooner will the capitalist mode of production have reached the point where it makes itself impossible and will have to be replaced by a higher form of production.”

The objective room for political manoeuvre of the leadership of the young Soviet Union was undoubtedly very limited. Civil war raged, several imperialist powers were intervening militarily, the country's economy was in ruins. The situation was characterized by famine and scarcity of even the most essential goods. The speedy development of production was therefore an urgent necessity, on which the fate of the revolution depended. The victory of the German revolution would have opened up the possibility of international cooperation. Yet the Soviet Union remained isolated.

The increase in productivity was achieved largely by traditional methods (iron discipline of the workforce, dictatorial powers for plant managers, competition, piecework, Taylorism). The objective difficulties and pressures of the situation were generally played down, a virtue made out of necessity. Lenin was highly aware of the ambivalence of bourgeois progress. This understanding of the contradictory nature of bourgeois technological production completely disappeared in the Stalin era. Productivistic idolatry reached a grotesque climax and the reckless over-exploitation of people (the Stakhanov system) and nature (the projects to reroute the Siberian rivers) became the standard.

The fact that up to the present day the socialist revolution has been unable to win a victory in a single developed capitalist country and the resulting necessity of concentrating on the development of the forces of production, repairing (civil) war damage and containing famine and poverty was a considerable contributing factor to the failure to further question the way in which the structure of the productive forces was conditioned by bourgeois productive relations.

No surprise then that a working class politically weakened by fascism, Stalinism, cold war and the “economic miracle” did not stop to question the historically given model of production. It was rather scientists, small groups, local movements, the Club of Rome, etc, i.e. people and organizations outside of the workers' movement, who warned of the consequences of the idea of “nature as a supermarket”, in which you could just help yourself. The general political positions of these critics was often confused, even reactionary, which made it easier for the traditional leaders of the workers' movement to denounce them and write them off as “crazy”.

And so it was only with the arrival of the anti-nuclear power movement that the traditional leaderships were confronted with broad progressive forces beyond their control.

The continual recurrence of ecological catastrophes, the growth of movements for the protection of the environment and their (partial) successes and processes of political formation (Green parties) etc. have all led - with parallel differentiation in the bourgeois camp - to a range of positions in the workers' movement. Apart from isolated revolutionary groups who subject the current relation of society to nature to a fundamental analysis, and deduce from this the need for a "break" with the given framework of political, social and technological conditions, we can make out three main currents in the workers' movement:

- The "stonewall faction", which wants to carry on as though "nothing has happened". Even this faction has had to make certain changes to its positions in the light of the catastrophic ecological developments. They therefore call today for exhaust emission standards, catalytic converters, state regulation, etc. They have in no way changed their short-sighted perspective, but merely agree with environmental "repairs", especially when there is money to be made out of them.

- A technocratic current believes that environmental problems can be dealt with via high-tech solutions. In reality, this often means merely passing the problem on to someone else, with no explanation for example of what is supposed to be done with the huge amounts of used filters, sludge from sewage works and other "residues". Peter Glotz of the SPD opts for cooperation with the "end-of-the-pipe-technology" faction of capital. An "alliance between the traditional left, the technical elite and the thinking minority of growth-oriented capitalists" is supposed to lead to "socially directed innovation". He explicitly warns against questioning private ownership of the means of production.

- The third current, which can perhaps most readily be described as "ecological reformists", is also very careful not to talk about property relations. Capitalism, described rather shamefacedly as "industrial society" is - once again - to be cleansed of its "excesses", this time with regard to its crimes against the environment. Erhard Eppler, a past president of the "Basic Values Commission" of the SPD, notes in this context that:

It is more than ever social democracy's task to undertake a new reform policy of democratic, humane and ecological corrections to industrial society.

On the positive side, it can be noted that in a number of countries entire trade unions or at least sizeable minorities in them are opposed to the "peaceful" use of nuclear power (the CGIL in Italy, the NUM in Britain, etc) and are also showing increased sensitivity to ecological issues in other areas (the CUT in Brazil, IG Metall in West Germany, etc.).

The current policies of perestroika and glasnost in the Soviet Union are creating contradictory conditions for ecological issues. On the one hand, there is more room for control, ecological initiatives, protest movements, etc. On the other hand, the forced introduction of the "market economy" means that profit criteria are gaining ground on ideas that orient towards the use value of goods.

## V. Achievements and limitations of the ecological movement

The fundamental achievement of the ecological movement, which has brought about a profound change of consciousness with regard to environmental questions, is the recognition of the significance of the destruction of nature by capitalism. The destruction of nature has taken on dimensions which threaten the whole of humanity. Here - as in the question of the prevention of global nuclear war - it is a "question of survival for the whole human race." Yet in contrast to nuclear destruction, this is a question which is always "news," and which is daily getting worse and ever more obvious in its manifestations: climatic changes, the ecological disequilibrium of the Mediterranean and the North Sea, etc.

Yet at the same time, this fundamental achievement is also - viewed dialectically - its fundamental limitation. The recognition of the importance of these issues for the human race as a whole is accompanied by the attempt to solve them in a class collaborationist way, precisely avoiding the appropriate means of struggle (class war against capitalism).

Another gain of the ecological movement is the questioning of the notion of Progress. This also showed up a weakness in the Marxist analysis of late capitalism: we can no longer speak of a positive development of the forces of production, as was the case at the beginnings of capitalism, only restricted by the framework of capitalist appropriation or rather developed to the disadvantage of the proletariat. Capitalism, which has "survived" for a lot longer than ought to have been historically "necessary" for the development of the forces of production, is beginning increasingly to transform the productive forces into destructive forces, in order to thus divest them of their "explosive force" with regard to the relations of production. That also means however, that they cannot simply be "freed", i.e. used for the good of all in a socialist society, but that a critical selection is necessary. This is no mere theoretical question, but a profoundly practical one with regard to the plans of the Stalinist bureaucracies to "overtake capitalism." In addition, there was for the first time a more detailed analysis firstly of the material side of production (the use values), looking at which products are ecologically and socially desirable etc; and secondly of alienation in labour: the blind isolation of work on the production line versus smaller more "comprehensive" units. Yet even these achievements have their dialectically negative aspects in the rejection of "large-scale industry", "economic growth" and the literally reactionary desire to regress to simple commodity production and exchange.

The ecology movement brought the "utopian" dimension back to politics after the retreat of the movement formed by the 1968 upsurge. It took up the discussion around fundamental change of the social system and different ways of living and producing. In the above-mentioned discussion on the use-value side of products it picked up on ideas of socially useful production, developed new social utopias as well as propagating concrete "plans for change."

Yet such utopian projects were all too often to remain limited due to the lack of clarity about the nature of the capitalist economic system. Thus without the conscious propagation of anticapitalist positions the Utopias of the ecological movement have the inherent tendency to slip into petty bourgeois utopianism (comparable to the early socialists).

An undeniable achievement of the ecological movements was (and still is today, only in a more limited way) the mobilization and at least partial radicalization of broad masses, especially in countries where the working class is or was on the defensive and the class struggle generally underdeveloped. In countries such as Austria, but also Switzerland and West Germany, the development of such concrete and militant forms of struggle as large-scale demonstrations, blockades, occupations as well as the use of political forms such as mass petitions, days of action and referenda were closely connected with the development of the ecological struggles. In spite of a continuing lull in the class struggle there were still a number of gains made in this area (successful referendum against nuclear power in Austria, etc), which had a generally positive effect on resistance culture in these countries and at the time of the large mobilizations also strengthened the radical left.

At the same time however these mobilizations were in most cases also directed against the traditional workers' movement, which tended to side with capital in the defence of ecologically destructive projects. The isolation from and even hostility to the organizations of the workers' movement is therefore the major weakness and limitation of these mobilizations.

In a number of countries, the ecology movement pushed through numerous reforms which had the effect of partially decelerating the explosive increase in environmental destruction. This can be seen in the almost total stop in building new nuclear power plants, in the reductions of individual chemicals (halogenated hydrocarbons, fertilizers, etc), in the development of exhaust emission standards for cars and industrial plants, etc. A growing capitalist environmental

industry has developed, and demands for ecological reform are even put forward and fought for by bourgeois parties. In this respect, a section of the ecology movement underestimated capitalism's ability to integrate oppositional movements and committed the old mistake of believing in an "automatic" development of the crisis.

Yet at the same time, and in spite of all the reforms and environmental industries, the global damage to the environment is greater than ever before. The pollution of the seas, the destruction of the tropical forests, the destruction of the ozone layer clearly indicate that the reforms are at most merely serving to imperceptibly slow down our progress on the road to global catastrophe. From this perspective, ecological destruction points beyond all attempts at reform towards a fundamental transformation of our society.

A section of the ecology movement, including parts of the peace and women's movements, has organized itself as a political party. The necessity of a solution affecting society as a whole has been recognized, and organization is taking place beyond the level of committees, etc. On the other hand the Green parties (with various differences) also clearly manifest the fundamental limitations of the ecology movements: in part they see themselves as "classless" and have no concept of the working class as a revolutionary subject, hardly any contact with the trade unions, etc. The limitations in terms of content and social composition thus determine the boundaries of the ecology movement. Given that it neither has a comprehensive revolutionary program, nor does it base itself on the working class as revolutionary subject, it falls well short of its aim of being a new revolutionary movement and a force which can replace, or at least inherit the place of the working class. Nonetheless it remains, except for the numerically very small explicitly bourgeois or reactionary groups, an important ally for revolutionaries in the global struggle against the capitalist profit system.

## **VI. The ecological crisis in bourgeois class rule**

The destruction of the vital basis of human community by the nowadays familiar effects of capitalist production on the climate and the quality of the air, water and soil has reached a new dimension for bourgeois class rule and its ideology. The reasons for this are:

- The global nature of the ecological crisis, which can only be identified as a common evil within the competitive logic of capitalism
- The origins of the ecological crisis are partly to be found way back in history, and are partly the result of the combined development of a number of individual factors, i.e. it is difficult to precisely define its temporal and physiological origins. The overcoming of the ecological crisis also requires amounts of time and investment that would render all ideas about bourgeois input-output cycles completely inoperative.
- Finally, the oppressed and exploited classes can only be made to foot the bill for the ecological crisis to a relatively small extent - in contrast to the classical economic crises, the social evils of capitalism and even the consequences of military conflicts. Even so we must be clear that particularly in the dependant countries the consequences of the ecological crisis will necessarily be borne first and foremost by the poor and oppressed classes; all the more so given the combined effects of social, economic and ecological crisis.

The growing recognition of the environmental crisis and the resulting emergence of the environmental movement from the early 1970s to the present day has meant a massive attack on one of the central concepts of bourgeois ideology, namely on the idea that bourgeois property relations and the capitalist economic order would make "progress for all" possible, and that the ongoing subjugation of nature was per se a good thing, and that all the

problems connected with that were capable of being solved.

Even if the criticism of the environmental destruction and the mass protests against individual environmentally harmful projects only rarely attacked the capitalist order directly, a broadly-based mistrust in the bourgeois idea of progress established itself nonetheless, along with the search for a new model of social development and a “new way of thinking” which quickly attracted a large number of scientists and experts.

The bourgeois governments answered the protests and mass mobilizations with the familiar repressive arsenal; faced with this ideological challenge, the Seventies saw a series of attempts to modernize bourgeois ideology regarding destruction of the environment. The first of these attempts to become internationally known was the 1972 Club of Rome report, which detailed the increased environmental destruction and demanded an international policy coordination on the questions of population growth, waste of raw materials and the destruction of the environment. The report, entitled “The Limits of Growth” was joined by a whole number of similar studies, the best-known of which being the “Global 2000” report to US President Carter. The effects of this report cut both ways. On the one hand, bourgeois science and ideology started to talk about the environment and started arguing about predictions and demands. On the other hand, this lent greater strength to a pessimistic vision of the world's future thus stimulating the ecology movement even more. The concrete order of global capitalist economy lost its image of superiority and finality, its functioning was beginning to be questioned from the inside outwards. At the same time, the practical political consequences of these studies were comprised of catalogues of demands for global planning and political regulation of the economy. This brought them into sharp contradiction with the capitalist market economy and the economic liberalism and deregulation attempts of the governments, which were globally on the advance at the time.

By the mid-1980s at the latest a second offensive in bourgeois environmental politics was required, which this time was able to take on the contradictions primarily in the field of practical politics. One expression of this can be found in the Brundtland Report (“Our CommonFuture”) passed by the UN General Assembly in 1988. This is already completely determined by bourgeois self-consciousness and asserts that despite the unfortunate fact that capitalism pollutes the environment, the necessary repair measures can be developed. The report demands forms of global development that take greater account of environmental questions. Its proposed solution to the crisis is comprised of a combination of repairs, limits on the production of toxic substances and on further destruction of natural resources as well as the development of new, “soft” technologies. This is also explicitly seen as a source of economic growth, i.e the multinationals will be able to make good profits out of it. These are supposed to be the elements of further, well-balanced “sustainable growth”.

A number of bourgeois governments explicitly welcomed the Brundtland Report. The parties of the Socialist International in particular felt their stance confirmed by the inclusion of many social democratic ideas in the report (environmental protection as a future growth industry, more and more binding treaties, state redevelopment programmes, etc). From an ecological viewpoint the repairs suggested by the report are extremely limited. Nowhere is there mention of the radical solutions necessary even for the largest problem areas (protection of the rain forests, the Antarctic, nuclear energy use).

Nowadays practical environmental policies are a fundamental part of the work of every bourgeois government. As a rule this is comprised of establishing limits for air, water and soil pollution. On top of this there are the plans for step-by-step reduction of the upper limits and the disposal of hazards from past production. These are the subject of international agreements. Yet such politics are in the last resort mere patchwork - always insufficient from an ecological viewpoint and lagging way behind the real level of destruction. Of increasing importance however are the political and economic programmes which lay claim to represent some form of “ecological market economy”. The attempts to get the capitalist economy to orient to practical environmental conservation of its own accord have so far remained mere theory. Conservative economic theoreticians (especially in the USA and FRG) are propagating the idea of an environmentally friendly market economy via the introduction of certificates which would entitle the bearer to a certain amount of pollution. These could then be bought and sold like shares, and their price would thus regulate



the protection of the environment. Previously “free” nature could thus be “utilized” and would then find its place in the company accounts.

Only marginally more tested in practice are the environmental taxes called for by both conservative and reformist politicians. A levy on the use of energy, air, water and important raw materials is intended to encourage savings. Yet without intervening into price policies (and hence increased state control) such levies will be a tax on the incomes of the masses, who will bear the brunt of it all. Politicians however steer well clear of such follow-up measures.

Equally theoretical are the primarily social democratically influenced programmes for worldwide capitalist recovery via state programmes for environmental redevelopment and development of new technologies. The idea of environmental conservation as the motor for a new wave of capitalist “modernization” will certainly remain an illusion, even if such policies were able to make any headway against the proponents of conservative deregulation and the short and medium term interests of the companies.

In addition the field of bourgeois state environmental policy is marked by the enormous disparity between the poor and the rich states. If the imperialist states have succeeded over the last decade in containing at least some of the more serious forms of pollution and destruction, then the lack of funding in the poorer states - together with the individual interests of firms making profits precisely from the damage they do to the environment - has meant the failure of even the most elementary necessary steps.

## VII. Political organization in the ecology movement

The era of purely ad hoc activity in the ecology movement is long gone. More and more countries have Green organizations or parties. In Western Europe they are represented in the parliaments of such different countries as the FRG, Austria, Sweden, Italy and Portugal. There are also Green parties in the dependant countries (e.g. Brazil and Turkey) and in the transitional societies (GDR, Hungary, Czechoslovakia).

The emergence of Green organizations and parties cannot be sufficiently explained by the reference to impending or future ecological dangers. Any analysis of their origins must include at least the following contributive factors:

- The general lack of perspective of the traditional leaderships of the workers' movement (especially in the face of increasing signs of crisis) and the widespread continuation of their blinkeredness, not only in ecological questions.
- The lack of a revolutionary breakthrough in Western Europe after 1968, the fragmenting of the radical left and the general decline in radical politics; the long-term suppression and the “burn-out” of diverse opposition movements in Eastern Europe.
- Our own political mistakes and our failure in many countries to become a hegemonic force on the radical left.
- The understanding that the existence of disparate “movements” is in itself insufficient and that an overall political alternative is necessary (without questioning the autonomy of the different movements).

It would be a mistake to try to lump all the different aspects of Green politics together. They all have their own specific character, depending on their country of origin, political culture, concrete historical origins. The spectrum

ranges from a strong bourgeois and petty bourgeois influence, through reformist groupings right up to the dominance of left alternative, eco-socialist currents. In general, and with all due caution, we can say that:

- They are an attempt at political organization to the left of the social democratic and communist parties, and in most questions are to the left of the traditional leaderships.
- Although they often have a social composition of up to 75% dependent wage workers, they do not consider themselves as part of the workers movement.
- Not least because of their antipathy towards the “old” workers’ movement their ideology is often muddled and confused (“we are neither right nor left”, and borrows considerably from “small-is-beautiful” theories etc).
- Although often originating as a loose electoral platform with the ecology question as a central point of reference, once voted into parliament, the Greens have often developed critical positions on a number of other questions (e.g. social policy, the arms race, the “Third World” etc.).
- In most cases, the parliamentary faction of the Green party stifles the activities of party as a whole, which only serves to increase the tendency towards parliamentary trivialization of the partially revolutionary positions of the “movement”.

In this respect the Greens are an almost classic example of a transitional phenomenon. Arising as they did in a period of generalized crisis in the workers’ movement, the Greens have up till now been unable and indeed unwilling to see the proletariat as the decisive agent of social change. Their actions are thus marked by a combination of correct criticisms of social in-iquities in certain areas together with illusory “reform” strategies. In the day to day politics of the West German Greens for example the main emphasis is on mere reforms instead of fundamental social change: they are increasingly becoming bogged down in the organs of parliamentary representation, and place less and less emphasis on extra-parliamentary mobilization, thus developing elements of a “substitutionalist” politics. Uncritical retention of this trend would lead the Greens to a complete loss of their utopian element and put them on the road to becoming yet another “reform party.”

Without a doubt, the Greens will sooner or later be faced with the necessity of “showing their true colours”, i.e. with acute situations which require an unambiguous class stand. It is however fruitless to speculate on when such situations might arise, the course they might take and to what extent the decisions of the Greens might come together to change their character.

Revolutionary Marxists do not judge political protagonists primarily by what they say, what their program is or how they see themselves, but by their real function in the class struggle. In general it can be said that the emergence of Green parties and organizations has not had a retrograde effect but has in many cases increased the left’s room to manoeuvre.

We maintain our fundamental position that there can be no short cut around the traditional workers parties and that for this reason the united front orientation remains valid. In a whole series of countries, revolutionary parties with a strong mass base will only emerge when there are splits in the social-democratic and communist parties and class-struggle currents emerge in the trade unions.

Given the present level of class struggle in Western Europe and the degree of political differentiation there is currently no country in which such process is directly on the agenda. However in some countries green protest

movements and parties have arisen, which have managed to attract the votes of and to some extent have even organized the majority of the society's critical potential. It would be fatal to ignore these parties. We should, by contrast, develop an active political orientation towards them: joint actions, discussions of their theoretical positions, etc. Each section should concretely examine whether entry and encouraging the process of differentiation from within is a valid option.

## VIII. The Fourth International and the environmental crisis

As shown in section IV, there is a precedent in Marxist thinking for a radical ecological critique of capitalism. Nonetheless, this issue was not noticeably present in the early period of the Fourth International, as was the case with most of the forces in the workers' movement. It is for example quite pointless to look for mention of the issue in the Transitional Programme of 1938, the International's founding programmatic document.

In the period following the Second World War, revolutionary Marxists were well aware of the destruction of the environment and of air and water pollution, but they saw it as one of many destructive consequences of an exploitative and inhuman system and not as a global phenomenon which was destroying the fundamental conditions of life of the planet.

This changed in the early 1970s when the self-destructive tendencies of capitalist productive relations became a broadly-discussed topic, taken up even by bourgeois ideologists. At the same time, articles and studies written by members of our movement appeared.

The major test for the parties of the workers' movement came however with the emergence of the mass movements against atomic energy, in particular in Japan, Western Europe and the USA.

Practically every section of the International was involved in this mass movement, yet only a few sections were able to successfully consolidate their work on ecological issues when it came to the decline of the movements.

The experience of these movements did however make its presence felt in the debates of the International's last World Congresses. Whilst there was no mention of environmental issues in the resolutions to the Tenth World Congress, this was to change by the Eleventh Congress in 1979. Here the struggle against nuclear energy is seen as a "question of survival for the working class", with the task of the International and its sections being "to strengthen the movement, by drawing the industrial working class into the struggle". The positions were elaborated further for the Twelfth World Congress in 1985. The resolutions undertook a relatively extensive analysis of all three sectors of the world revolution and the main resolution called on the International and its sections to "take up the environmental question increasingly in propaganda and general activities" and to undertake "joint actions with the environmental movement".

Today the Fourth International considers the destruction of the environment as one of the most acute dangers facing humanity, a modern version of Rosa Luxemburg's famous "socialism or barbarism" idea. The International sees it as one of its major tasks to win the workers' movement and its organizations to the struggle against the destruction of the planet, and it wishes to show the way to joint actions between the ecological and the workers' movements, not merely against the various forms of environmental destruction but also against the system that spreads it. The International wishes to participate in the discussions of the ecology movement and destroy the widespread illusions in the possibility of a "clean" capitalism.

The International is also participating in current struggles in a number of countries, for example against the destruction of the rain forests in Brazil or against the Laguna Verde nuclear power plant in Mexico. Some of the Western European sections have contributed to the building of socialist wings within the Green parties, others play an important role in the ecological movement. In the analyses of the Fourth International, the ecology question is seen as one of the major issues around which the present restructuring of the workers movement is centred.

All this does not mean that there are no problems in integrating this “new issue” into the work of our movement. Many members have continued to see the environmental crisis as one of capitalism's many contradictions, which can only be solved by a proletarian revolution. They do not see the close connection with the daily struggle for the survival of the working class, against inhuman living and working conditions and against the threat of war. Most sections have only worked on environmental issues when other social forces have brought them to the headlines. It is possible that the improved base in the industrial working class has made some sections more susceptible to the ideological pressure of reformism, including its systematic neglect of questions of vital, existential importance - a brand of reformism difficult to take on, when there is a low level of struggle.

The result of this has been that the debate in the International has only developed relatively slowly. Whilst other currents and individuals have been examining the question of socialism and ecology for decades, revolutionary Marxists have been almost silent. It is increasingly clear that Marxists must make special efforts to apply their method to these issues. It is just not possible to take up a few of the elements of an ecological critique and to give them a coat of “red” paint.

The Fourth International does not just want to make a contribution to the discussions about concrete ecological policies, but also aims to take forwards the political and organizational steps necessary for mass activities. For it is only by means of mass mobilizations that the present conditions can be changed and the working class become the agent of social transformation, a class “for itself”.

## IX. Action programme

On a global scale, there are a huge number of initiatives and movements against the over-exploitation and destruction of nature. The Fourth International supports or is involved in these initiatives and movements - critically in part, given the often confused general political ideas of some environmentalists. The experience of the ecology movement shows that only broad mobilizations and mass protests can achieve widespread awareness and real change. The Fourth International therefore aims to make it a major part of its work to achieve the participation of the workers organizations in these struggles. Conflicts which endanger both the health of the workforce and the environment can offer, along with other struggles, the opportunity for joint action.

We are for the full independence of the ecology movements from the bourgeois state and the bureaucracies of the transitional societies. We work within them without wanting to manipulate them. Furthermore we believe that even in a free and pluralistic socialist society the ecology movement, like the women's' movement, must remain autonomous from the political parties and the state institutions, given that the socialization of the means of production alone can be no guarantee of dealing with the threat to natural resources.

In solidarity with, and as members of the environmentalist movements we wish above all to emphasize two aspects: firstly that even relatively small attempts at ecological improvements come into conflict with capitalist property relations, or the rule of the bureaucracy in the non-capitalist countries. It is not artificially grafting the idea of social transformation onto a radical ecological critique, but understanding that it represents its logical consequence. Secondly, that to put ecological critique into practice requires the historical subject which thanks to its objective

position is potentially capable of building a society free from the exploitation of human beings and nature: i.e. the working class. A working class, however, that sees itself as the champion of the fight for the protection of the environment. We want to fight for the creation of such a reciprocal link between the ecology movement and the workers movement.

The following is intended as an outline of some of the most pressing ecological problems, whose resolution represents a question of life or death for humanity. All these questions require internationally coordinated action. This is where we want to concentrate our resources - e.g. within the framework of transnational campaigns - to develop our alternatives and to show, as is our belief, that they can become reality.

### **Demands**

- A radical break with the exploitative system of agricultural export production in the dependant countries which produces famine and poverty.
- An immediate ban on the entire nuclear power cycle.
- An immediate ban on the production and use of toxic and dangerous substances such as chlorinated fluorocarbons and asbestos.
- No economic exploitation of the Antarctic.
- No to the destruction of the tropical rain forests and to the fatal pollution of the forests in the industrialized countries.
- Stop all agricultural practices which destroy the soil in the industrialized countries.
- Stop dumping waste into the seas, rivers and lakes.
- Prevent dangerous - and in the "Third World", with the slaughter of the Amazon Indians, even genocidal - nuclear power projects such as Kararao (Brazil) and Sardars Sarovar (India).
- Ban all toxic waste transports and on the transfer of hazardous production processes to the dependent countries.

### **Alternatives**

- A system of agriculture in dependent countries that is primarily oriented to securing the basic necessities of the population.
- Production of goods for civilian instead of military use.
- Useful and planned use of energy instead of over-exploitation of non-renewable energy sources: development of alternative energy sources such as solar and wind energy, energy from biological sources etc.

- Ecological farming
- Development of public instead of private, individual transport systems, especially local transport and railway.
- Filters and sewage works etc. are insufficient. What is required is a fundamental industrial conversion which forbids environmental pollution right from the start.
- A policy of recycling and radical avoidance of waste.

### **How can the alternatives be put into practice?**

- Thoroughgoing land reform in the dependant countries.
- Total cancellation of the debts of the countries maintained in a state of underdevelopment, and of the transitional societies.
- Development of alternative energy plans by the environmental and workers movements together with progressive scientists.
- Elimination of business secrets, which serve for example to disguise real emission levels of chlorinated fluorocarbons; compulsory introduction of records detailing materials involved in production and right of access to them.
- Programme of public works for the conversion of production.
- Set up “ecological dual power” via workers' control of production; workforce to have the right to veto production that is hazardous to health and the environment.
- Transfer of the key areas of the economy to public property under the control of the workers, consumers and environmental movement.
- Set up ecologically compatible production based on the principle of satisfying needs instead of the profit principle or the rule of the bureaucracy
- Fight for a free, democratic, pluralistic, self-managing socialist society.