

## CHAPTER 9

### ECOSOCIALISM

If we imagine that decrees are all that is needed to get away from competition, we shall never get away from it. And if we go so far as to propose to abolish competition while retaining wages, we shall be proposing nonsense by royal decree. But nations do not proceed by royal decree. Before framing such ordinances, they must at least have changed from top to bottom the conditions of their industrial and political existence, and consequently their whole manner of being.

Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*<sup>i</sup>

#### **The General Model of Ecosocialist Transformation**

Revolutions become feasible when a people decides that their present social arrangements are intolerable, when they believe that they can achieve a better alternative, and when the balance of forces between them and that of the system is tipped in their favor. None of these conditions is close to being met at present for the ecosocialist revolution, which would seem to make the exercise upon which we are about to embark, academic. But the present is one thing, and the future, another. If the argument that capital is incorrigibly ecodestructive and expansive proves to be true, then it is only a question of time before the issues raised here will achieve explosive urgency. Indeed, precisely this has begun to happen since the first edition of *The Enemy of Nature* appeared in 2002, in the rapidly surging anxiety about, and interest in contending with global warming, a phenomenon certain to grow more agitated with each passing year, and which necessarily brings to the fore the problem of capitalism, and hence the solution represented by ecosocialism. It is most definitely high time therefore to take up the question of ecosocialism as a living process--to consider what its vision of society may be and what kind of path can be made toward it.

We call ecosocialism that society in which production is carried out by freely associated labour and with consciously ecocentric means and ends. When such production takes hold across the society as a whole, we are able to call it a *mode* of production; thus ecosocialism will be a society whose mode of production is ecocentric. This does not mean that no other forms of production co-exist. Indeed certain markets, and therefore commodities, are bound to continue within ecosocialist society for the foreseeable future. However, the coordinated agencies of society—state, civil society, culture, religion, etc—are centered about ecocentric production; and this centering also hems in markets and keeps them functioning according to ecocentric ethic rather than profiteering. Use-value and quality are valorized over exchange-value and quantity, and the economy is now embedded within society rather than, as under capitalism, standing over society.<sup>ii</sup>

Humans do not only produce things; they also produce themselves. Capitalism, as a society dominated by an alienating economy of exploitation, creates the addictive character types whose unfulfilled lives fuel its cancerous overconsumption. The freely associated labor of ecosocialism, by contrast, is sensuous, deeply gratifying and non-repressive. The very foundation of need itself is transformed so that the presently intolerable “footprint” of the affluent capitalist societies may be lifted from the ecosphere.<sup>iii</sup> This is the only rational way of approaching the stark problem of the North’s overconsumption that haunts the ecological question.

A society made by freely associated people can have no blueprint laid down in advance. But the character of the labour which is its foundation will mark the result. Since freely associated labour implies face-to-face interaction the logic of ecocentric production leads to a fine-grained, site-specific kind of cellular base to society, linked with loosely configured coordinative bodies regulating trade, communications, provision of justice and arbitration, as well as those functions that are simply better done centrally, such as specialized medical centers, research institutes, universities, concert halls, and so forth. The logic will be one of a dialectic between parts and whole, each of which requires the other; and although there will necessarily be tension between the various levels, as there must be in any dialectical process, the presence of freely associated labour as the ground of society keeps the intrusiveness of the state at bay. There is an autonomy and self-reliance to freely associated labor that will not be pushed around by massified and totalizing institutions.

Will ecosocialist society be trouble free? Of course not; nothing human is. Twenty-five years in the study of psychoanalysis amidst seventy years of observing life in the world has stripped me of all sentimental illusions about human nature. But I know, too, that we are creatures of manifold possibility, and that what conduces to the goodness of will within the human condition is the free association of labour. It is this that allows life to be expressed, and gives us dignity. What makes a person strong is the capacity to give, to reach out, to be engaged in the flux of life—and also to for-give, both oneself and others. These are all functions of freely associated labour. They allow us to overcome our madneses, including the desire for revenge. They can all be given ecocentric values and are embodied in policies such as the prohibition of capital punishment, the insistence upon radical democracy and respect for the rights of all creatures, including, to be sure, human beings. The whole notion of human rights derives from freely associated labor, which is ultimately the expression of our true being.

The notion of ecosocialism is a kind of wager that freely associated labour will generate ecocentric ends; and that the latter will imply, indeed demand, freely associated labour. Hence the two streams of an ecosocialist process are mutually generative; they develop and propagate themselves in a process whose imaginative envisioning we have called “prefigurative.” What prefiguration sees before us is an *integral human ecosystem*; this forms itself into larger unities—“solidarities,” to use a basic term drawn from the labour movement, and which that foresees labour’s free realization. Thus ecosocialist formations coalesce in nature’s great formativity and drive toward that “another world which is possible” which the World Social Forum movement has intuited as the suppressed dream of humanity.

The “another world” is at present no more than a dim possibility, and one would have to say, not even likely, given the mass of violent institutions, crippled human beings, and ruined ecosystems encountered in the reign of capital. But to worry about that is a luxury that cannot be afforded. It saps the will to act, to fight for the only world worth fighting for. No doubt, we are capable of suppressing ourselves through what Blake called “mind-forged manacles”: after all, a monstrosity such as capitalism does not arise simply through coercion or indoctrination. Even though it is not in human nature as such, it most certainly expresses a potential within human nature. But though we suffer from a permanent liability toward delusion and self-destruction, this remains paired with an affirmative, integrative power which is the birthright of every person thrown into the world.

### **Toward an integral commons**

The general motion toward ecosocialism is this: that as the contradictions of society unfold, cracks in the system appear, moments of rupture when the possibility of new configuration arises. Then the integrative power that is the prefiguration of freely associated labor confronts this opening, along with the semi-inert, ecosystematically torpid, dimly conscious, frayed and fragmented ensemble of elements thrown forward from the past, and seeks to transform them. It infuses the fragmented ensemble with consciousness and form, and gives it a degree of ecosystemic being.

In these ensembles, the “past” is not something to be thrown aside; it is also a living repository of tradition, memories of lost or abandoned dreams, remnants from the whole prehistory of a people, and indeed, of humankind. This is the juncture in which nature appears. To the human being, nature and the past are different aspects of the same thing; they are what is prior to the production that defines the present moment, and therefore can enter into the transforming of production. And since *production* is the forward-looking making of things, in these conjunctures, past, present and future are brought together. In this, there are creative possibilities, as ecocentric labour is applied to the ensemble, and sees in its fragments the lineaments of a latent wholeness; it is visionary, and recognizes an emergent form; it sees history embedded within nature, and nature infusing history with intrinsic value. This is how ecocentric labour acts prefiguratively and, a process of recognition, makes an integral human ecosystem out of a semi-inert ensemble—an ecosystem that stays connected to nature, intrinsically primed to widen and deepen its range of connections, an ecosystem that prefigures ecosocialism itself.

Prefiguration is not the shallow postmodernism that mines the past for the advertising and entertainment industries, nor is the fascist rendering of the past into myths of legitimacy for patriarchal authority. It is a continual process of rediscovery, a restoration of dignity to what “has been” to find what is “not-yet.” First-epoch socialism, with the exception of William Morris, failed to grasp this principle. The same may be said for the shallow “progressivism” in which much of the contemporary left is mired. In its indifference and even contempt for the past it reveals nothing so much as embeddedness in capitalism.

The task for ecosocialism is to work consciously with ensembles as they have been thrown forth and to see in them the germ of integral ecosystems to come. Now we need a better word here than “ensembles,” which is too abstract and non-specific. There is such a term, which abounds in present-day ecological politics, and admits of a great variety of interpretations. We have used it before in this study; and now need to give it ecosocialist content. The word is *Commons*. The notion is redolent with history and betrayal; consider only its freezing into an arm of the bourgeois state as “The House of Commons,” or its subsumption into that legitimation of neoliberalism, Garrett Hardin’s, “Tragedy of the Commons” (which among its many defects never bothered to define what a Commons was).<sup>iv</sup> Or its relationship to “commune” (as in the Paris Commune of 1871—see below) and “communism.” Or its usage in such opaque constructions as the Global Commons, etc.

One prevailing theme of the Commons is that it is “enclosed” by the march of the formal, class-bound economy. This has a twofold meaning: that the people of the Commons, that is, the primary producers of society, are forcibly separated from their means of production; and that the rulers are made richer by the enclosing. In other words, closing the Commons means both the robbery and the alienation of the original people, as part the creation of private property; it is the precondition for the “primitive accumulation” of capital, and is continually reproduced in capital’s invasions. Note, too, that enclosure made commoners into “free” laborers, free to go to the city, free to live in appalling poverty and filth, free to become proletarians and sub-proletarians in the rising regime of capital, a process that still obtains throughout capital’s ecumene. From another angle, an enclosed Commons, like the commodity itself, is subjected to a kind of splitting from the whole of things. Enclosure furthers the metaphoric sense of an ecosystemic ensemble cut off from the whole and subject to splitting and degeneration.<sup>v</sup>

Let us take this sense of things, then, and use the term, Commons, as a sign of a kind of struggle, a moment of disruption from a relatively organic past threatened by a present organized about property and commodification, yet illuminated by the possibility of an ecosocialist future. On the ground the struggle will be between those who would enclose the Commons and those who would reclaim it. The former speak today in the name of capital; the latter meanwhile struggle for integrity of the ecosystem comprised by the Commons and its human community. In other words, the Commons is not a physical place but a kind of event that is happening in a human ecosystem and in which the integrity of that ecosystem is at stake.

Now we are able to specify the motion of ecosocialist politics more concretely. It consists of locating emergence of a Commons, and intervening to favor the victory of ecocentric forces. A great range of struggle can be seen in this light: the efforts of communities to de-commodify the conditions of life, such as water, or to resist the intrusion of polluting industry (in other words, movements toward “environmental justice”); the building of autonomous zones of production, in other words, relatively outside of capital; the struggle of labor to unionize (for what is a “union” but the ecocentric coming together of those caught up in capitalist production, with the sign of its flourishing that archetypal notion of ecocentricity—*solidarity*); the politics of non-violent struggle against globalization or militarization, with its *affinity groups*, also paradigmatic of ecocentric organizing. Each in its way is a battle for a kind of Commons, a piece of human ecosystem, more integral, more formed, more realized. Each points us toward ecosocialism.

### **Patterns of ecosocialist mobilization.**

#### The return of the Paris Commune

For two months in the Spring of 1871 the people of Paris ruled the French capital, striking fear and consternation into the hearts of ruling classes everywhere and standing forth as a perennial inspiration for radical leftists, whether socialist or anarchist.<sup>vi</sup> The Commune arose out of complicated machinations in the course of the French defeat by Prussia; and what it signified was the ability of ordinary citizens to self-organize and exert power in a directly democratic and non-violent way--albeit configured by a constant threat of murderous destruction, which eventually became a bloody reality once the forces of the state rallied and projected their “legitimate” violence—memories of which haunt Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris, where, near the graves of Proust, Oscar Wilde and Chopin one can find the plain brick wall against which the Communards stood as they faced the firing squad.

The Commune drew on extensive exposure of the working people of Paris to socialist and anarchist influence. Its great legacy was to demonstrate the power of freely associated labour.<sup>vii</sup> It was neither the first nor the last effort of “common” people to run their society, however, only the most famous. In its

name as well as substance it looked back to medieval methods of self-organization, and beyond that, in the deep recesses of time, to the original classless societies. Since 1871 something of the sort has been repeated on innumerable occasions all over the world, both in revolutionary contexts and also as the rising of semi-autonomous communities in the interstices of various existing states.

Under conditions of ecological crisis various ruptures are bound to appear within the late-capitalist world accompanied by some disintegration in the state. In these lacunae, or to use the derisive term applied to countries like Somalia or Haiti, “failed states,” we can see the same kind of processes as eventuated in the Paris Commune itself, namely, a relative absencing of state authority and within the newly opened space an opportunity for the emergence of a form of the Commons with more or less freely associated labour and ecocentric intention. We briefly list four instances, to give an idea of the range of possibilities:

1. The catastrophe visited upon the city of New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina has already been discussed. This was truly a kind of instance of a failed state, whose downfall had been prepared by various disintegrations brought about by capitalism and racism over many years and brought to a head in the second Bush administration. In the immediate aftermath of the storm a great wave of volunteers, college students, community activists, Greens, and other people of good will gathered in the city and, working with and often under the leadership of the battered inhabitants, began to rebuild civil society outside the baleful influence of the degenerate capitalist state. A considerable, even inspiring, amount of good was done in the course of this, a portion of which still stands as of this writing. However the efforts failed to propagate into the prototype of a new society like Paris of 1871; and as we have observed, a year and a half later the great city is in some ways more miserable than ever.

There was no one cause for this doleful result, but a cacaphony of many: the scale of the shock to the material underpinning of the city (something that did not obtain for Paris during the Commune); the rapid return of capital to exploit the destruction for purposes of ethnic cleansing and building of new, higher-value real estate while using the city now as a theme park image of itself for the benefit of the tourist trade (this would be equivalent to the return of the French army to Paris one week after the Commune got started); the tremendous damage wrought over time by racism, poverty, systemic crime, and disintegrated communal life (again something foreign to 19<sup>th</sup> century European cities rooted in pre-capitalist communality); finally, the lack of a coherent political culture of the sort that gave solidarity to the Paris of 1871. What New Orleans strove for in the aftermath of Katrina was the reconstruction of a Commons; but what it lacked was the real foundation for such an endeavour. A prefigurative process therefore could not take hold and ecocentric community could not propagate. And so the venture collapsed. It became an exercise in voluntarism, often heroic, almost always admirable, yet unable to stand against the disintegration of New Orleans.

2. In the wake of the triumph of the African National Congress and its allies over South African apartheid, the newly minted democratic state of 1994 embarked on a brilliant process of reconciliation with its racist past, guided by a Constitution that was the most advanced in the world. But at the same time the new regime signed on, hook, line and sinker, to the project of global neoliberalism, became a regional subimperial power, and took the IMF for its guiding spirit. The predictable happened: class divisions widened, splitting the blacks from each other; and great numbers of the masses fell into the abyss capital reserves for those who do not contribute to the production of surplus value. Meanwhile the upper reaches of South African society have been able to live lives of First World elegance, comfort, and charm. Having triumphed over the scourge of Apartheid millions of South Africans felt a uselessness and despair that rivalled and in some ways exceeded the ravages of apartheid days.<sup>viii</sup> The results, in terms of crime (where South Africa is considered the world leader, with a rate some 8 time the average) and one of the very worst AIDS pandemics on the planet, are what could have been expected.

In this case the failed state did not collapse or withdraw so much as create a subclass for which it had no use. What is remarkable, however, is that a subset of this same underclass has behaved differently, opting to recreate Commons in the most unlikely of environments—the shack towns in which they have been forced to live. One such group, the Kennedy Road community in Durban, has the further misfortune to live adjacent to one of the largest toxic waste dumps in Africa. And yet live they do, and have organized themselves into a modern simulacrum of the Commune.

“Abahlali baseMjondolo” means “the people who live in the shacks,” in Zulu; and that is what they call themselves.<sup>ix</sup> In the case of this creation of the Commons, several threads have been woven into the fabric

of a rather vital community. First, there are traditions on which they draw—the tradition of anti-Apartheid struggle, and before that, the tradition of Zulu self-determination; second, there is a fortuitous relationship with an institute at the nearby University of KwaZulu Natal, the Centre for Civil Society (CCS), a multi-ethnic and eclectic body of radicals whose prime goal is to give support to projects like this; finally, there is the tradition of struggle in Durban itself, where Gandhi originated Satyagraha, where powerful trades unions keep the university itself at bay, and where the World Conference on Racism was held in 2001.

The combination of these elements keeps the community alive and in constant agitation directed against the South African state. This latter, having betrayed the hopes of 1994, puts the squeeze to conditions of life such as water, sewage and electricity and shows every sign of wanting to drive the shack towns out entirely. The situation is complicated by all kinds of internal conflicts within the shack community and with CCS itself, as well as with other ethnic groups, such as the nearby Indian community. It is hard to predict a positive outcome for this project, for the simple reason that there is so little in the way of productive activity that can sustain Abahlali baseMjondolo; indeed, their chief workplace the waste site itself, and many defend fiercely the right to employment there. Yet a community that can march about under a banner called, “The University of Abahlali baseMjondolo,” and attends the conferences of the CCS, periodically livening up the heavy Marxist discourse with poetry, chants and dancing, gives testimony to that fiery, elusive but essential ecosocialist category, the human spirit

3. Ecosocialism will be international or it will be nothing. And when its history is written, a starting point will be noted as January 1, 1994—the day that NAFTA went into effect and the EZLN replied with revolution of the oppressed in Chiapas, Mexico.

The EZLN has been the most prefiguratively successful example of a reclaimed Commons in the image of the Paris Commune. It is on rural ground, comprising over a thousand communities organized into 32 autonomous municipalities, all within the boundaries of Mexico yet not a part of the state. It is now thirteen years since the EZLN, after eleven years of prior *sub rosa* organizing, came out of the rainforest to shock the world. This longevity, which has recently radiated its effect to the neighboring province of Oaxaca and uses advanced modes of communication to retain its lines of contact with internationalists everywhere, is proof positive that autonomous zones of resistance can arise within capitalist nations, albeit in special circumstances that are not reproducible everywhere. But that is just the point: no conditions are reproducible everywhere. Therefore the builders of ecosocialist alternatives will have to learn how to be site specific. And like the Zapatistas, they will have to organize patiently to build their political culture and its productive relations.

The EZLN has been called the first “postmodern” rebellion, but this term merely describes its refusal to play by the rules of previous dogmas. Where post-modernism in the metropolis describes a kind of ransacking of tradition and a deliberate courting of the chaotic, the Zapatista movement, as ecosocialism, creates positive content through definite ways of creating freely associated labor and definite ways of pursuing ecocentric goals. These are not conjured out of air, but arise through a deliberate appropriation and transforming of tradition. One of its core features has been to overcome the gendered bifurcation of nature by reaching into the pre-patriarchal past to valorize female forms of production. This has been one of the core features of Zapatismo, which has transformed the lives of women to a greater degree than anything comparable in the politics of either North or South.

As for ecocentrism in Chiapas, let me quote from a fundraising letter seeking support for schools—nine having been built in 2006, and four more sought for 2007: “This letter is being written in the midst of an almost impossibly ambitious state-wide agro-ecology/health educational tour where mental fences are falling and hope growing during inspiring discussions spoken in Tsotsil, Tseltal, Cho, Zoque (with a smattering of Spanish) about human dignity, democracy, and saving the planet. Healthy little Neem trees are bridging borders across the state and Zapatista corn is being tested for GMO contamination by indigenous agro-ecology activists. After months of planning and preparation this environmentally focused educational journey is a truly inspiring and deeply rewarding experience.”

The EZLN provides the first model of revolutionary ecosocialism on a bioregional scale.<sup>x</sup> Despite constant harassment by an army vastly superior in firepower, the Zapatistas retain a kind of ecosystemic integrity. They form a society within a state and without a state, productively united in resistance. What Marx said of the Paris Commune, that it lived the idea of the “dictatorship of the proletariat,” could be said, therefore, of the Zapatista path to ecosocialism, with the wider lesson that there can be no single path valid for all

peoples. The peasants of Chiapas, after all, are not by any definition, proletarians. But peasants, proletarians, informal workers, housewives in the North, etc, etc, are all producers in one degree of antagonistic relationship or another to the global system of accumulation, and all are now brought together by ecological crisis. This is not to say that all these instances recognize their common mission against the "Great Satan." Such is scarcely the case at present, indeed, frequent misunderstandings and bootless antagonisms emerge, and will have to be overcome in the name of solidarity.

4. The last example is different in that it does not involve reaction to immediate oppression. It is rather an example of an ecosocialist initiative done, so to speak, for its own sake, using as its state-free space a terrain neither abandoned by nor wrested from the state, but where the state never bothered to go in the first place because the land was so barren. Thus it defines another dimension of communal arising.

Gaviotas is an intentional community built in a remote zone of Colombia's highlands. Here, beginning in 1971, one of the harshest environments on earth has been transformed by freely associated labour using ecologically rational technology. On what was once a blighted and arid plain, the soil toxic with naturally occurring aluminum, today stands a reforestation project larger than all the rest of Colombia's forestry projects combined, some 6 million trees, a source of resin and musical instruments. These and other commodities are produced outside of capitalist circuits, and without a capitalist state—in other words, with enhanced use-values and reduced exchange-value—on an island of non-capitalist and ecocentric production which could become part of an archipelago of prefigured ecosocialism.<sup>xi</sup>

It is worth noting that Gaviotas, a town arising *de novo* in the middle of nowhere, uses the past to appropriate emancipatory tradition, not, however, from Colombia but from Paraguay, whose eighteenth century Indian communities, organized by Jesuits, underwent more than a century of autonomous development until empire claimed the territory. One connection is the making of musical instruments, a form of production that sits lightly upon the earth. As Paolo Lugari, the visionary founder of the Gaviotas community, said of the Paraguayan world: "Everyone . . . was taught to sing or to play a musical instrument. Music was the loom that wove the community together. Music was in schools, at meals, even at work. Musicians accompanied labourers right into the corn and *yerba mate* fields. They'd take turns, some playing, some harvesting. It was a society that lived in constant harmony—literally. It's what we intend to do, right here in this forest."<sup>xii</sup>

What the Paraguayans did reminds of the happy interrelation of play, song and construction in the life of children, as, for example, at a good nursery school. If we think of this comparison as disparaging adult work settings, then we have missed a central point of ecosocialism. For children and adults alike have an inherent, spontaneously emerging need to sing, dance and play. This enters directly into ecosocialist production, whether its use-values are restored from capital's degradation or created *de novo*. The machinery of capitalist production does not only bind the body temporally; it also expresses the life-denying character of male domination, which enforces repression, stifles the flowing of life-forces, and has cursed production with pain since the expulsion from Eden. The overcoming of male domination also restores to production its intrinsic pleasure. There will be plenty of hard work to do; but hard work freely chosen and collectively carried out is a great joy. It is this gratification that replaces the curse of *having* that dominates capitalism with a society organized around *being*, that can live lightly upon the earth. Because the expressiveness of music or poetry is intrinsically unattached to things but emerges from within the human being, it moves from subject to object and enters the ground of ecocentrically realized practice.

#### Zones of ecocentric production

Gaviotas is a productive collectivity along the lines of the Paris Commune in that it is an ecosocialist society built outside the state. But a multitude of productive collectives arise within the pores of capitalism. Each can prefigure ecosocialism according to their anti-capitalist intentions, the free association of the labour that makes them go around, and their ecocentrism. Some begin with the earth, like community gardens or other initiatives in community-based agriculture like farmer's co-ops. Others move within spaces of advanced technology.

As an example of the latter type consider the alternative media community, situated at the Archimedean point of capitalist legitimation and control. Here prefigurations of the new society in the form of "Indymedia" centers have arisen over the last decade, initially as collectives of radical media activists in the cities visited by anti-globalization protests. Often the independent centers stayed on after the waves of

street protests receded; meanwhile others autonomously arose using the same model. Their way having been prepared by a generation of media activists, the centers manifest a flexible and open structure, a democratic rendering of the use-values of new technologies like the internet, and a continual involvement in wider struggle against the regime of accumulation and empire.<sup>xiii</sup> They grow and gather into national and international collectives, forming nodes on a web unified by anti-capitalist vision. The same force that binds together the movement for democratic media also tends to keep it ecosystemic, i.e., democratically communitarian, and to that degree, unwilling to compromise with the powers that be. In this way the spontaneously developing collective evolves into a *community of resistance*, one, defined by praxis rather than place. It would be better perhaps to say that their place is everywhere, prefiguring the global scope of ecosocialism, and, in contrast to the plan of traditional green theory, cosmopolitan to the core.<sup>xiv</sup>

In these communities, labour has become relatively freely associated. However, actual ecosocialism requires that the entire international division of labour be overcome, including that of proletarians, or wage labourers, and this is a problem the difficulty of which can scarcely be overestimated. Capital's domination of labour is predicated on separating workers from the means of production, and also from each other. This is the foundation of its triumph, and has become sedimented into the labour movement itself, which, being dependant upon jobs within existing capitalist workplaces, often shares with capital resistance to environmental protection, while being divided nationally or regionally, North and South having many separate agendas. In the process many labour organizations have become sclerotically bureaucratized and mere fossils of their transformative selves.

This is an urgent problem for the “red” branches of the red-green movement engaged in prefiguring ecosocialism, in particular, the numerous offshoots of Fourth International Trotskyism. One at times hears complaint from this quarter that the argument advanced in this work downplays the “privileged” role to be played by the international proletariat in socialist revolution. Well, yes, it is true that the imminence of planetary eco-collapse reconfigures the project of resistance to capital. That is simply manifestation of the need for Marxists to keep in touch with a changing reality. However, the ecological crisis certainly does not mean that the effort to counter capital in those workplace where surplus value is produced should slacken—indeed, it is unthinkable that an ecosocialist society can be built that ignores the reality of proletarian labour and the need to incorporate this great body of humanity into the new way of production. But the fact remains that effective organizing of labour needs to take into account the radically new conditions of the ecological crisis. In response, red socialists need to incorporate the ways of ecocentrism into their theory and practice, and reach out to wage laborers with an enhanced consciousness of “what is to be done”; this implies as well, “what is not to be done,” which is to say, continuing on the suicidal path of industrial capitalism and endless, cancerous growth

Autonomous zones of production are not privileged over struggles in capital’s “dark satanic mills,” except for having the good luck of being able to offer more direct routes to ecosocialism, while traditional organizing of labor must engage in a more complicated process of re-education of workers and institutional demolition along with building a new world.<sup>xv</sup> But this can be seen as a form of privilege, in that the offshoots of first-epoch socialism must be, so to speak, “special forces” chosen to undertake so difficult a project. In any case, there is no hereditary privilege in the effort to overcome capital just as there are no blueprints for the ecosocialist society. If the advocates of the primacy of traditional class struggle as the engine of history wish to prove their point, the way lies open to them. Nobody within the ecosocialist movement can or should stop them from doing so.

As to the compatibility of actually existing socialism for ecosocialism, bear in mind that in those parts of the world where a degree of authentic socialism has taken hold, prefigurative paths to ecosocialism have also appeared. We have already mentioned Cuba’s introduction of ecocentric agriculture on a national scale; and should add that in “Bolivarian” Venezuela under the Chavez government considerable attention is being given to ecocentric development.<sup>xvi</sup> It is too soon to predict the outcome. All that need be said here is that in contrast to the “Paris Commune” model of autonomous development where state control has broken down—and renewed state violence is the ever-present threat, under this latter circumstance, a strong, more or less intact, socialistically-oriented state<sup>xvii</sup> plays a leading role in the process. Here the threat is that it eventually becomes too strong and stifles the emergence of freely associated labor, causing the movement toward ecosocialism to stall.

### **Taking on the whole**

Global warming is not the only aspect of the ecological crisis to have reached planetary proportion, nor is it the only one with the potential to actually destroy the human species. But it definitely has the most power to seize the world's imagination. This is because of global warming's literally spectacular quality, the way it manifestly affects other aspects of the crisis—for what on earth can evade the influence of climate?—and last and certainly not least, for the way in which global warming puts the entire history, and the prehistory as well, of industrial capitalism into the dock. Here the leading culprits are in full view: the whole petro-apparatus, from the pushers of “automobilia” to the imperial apparatus that wages endless war to keep the carbon<sup>xviii</sup> flowing from the ground, where it belongs, to the atmosphere, where it will destroy us. In a word: a moment for the global realization of ecosocialism has arrived.

That the struggle about global warming is also a class struggle and therefore to be overcome through ecosocialism is needless to add, suppressed in normal discourse. Here all eyes are on the legions of technocrats and their effort, undoubtedly important, to figure out just how global warming might unfold, and how to mitigate its effects, that is, how to get carbon out of the atmosphere and keep lethal doses of greenhouse gases from entering. But the heart of the problem is not technical; with all due respect to Al Gore, there is a *really inconvenient truth that cannot be dealt with technologically* in the struggle against global warming.<sup>xix</sup> As the authoritative Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC] put it in their final report of May, 2007, the worthy measures needed to bring down the carbon level in the atmosphere can be seriously disrupted by “vested interests” who will fight efforts at capping carbon.<sup>xx</sup>

No amount of greenwash can obscure who those interests are. For even if the oil firms also make solar panels, and no matter that the automobile industry will exploit market demands for cars with better fuel economy, the giant corporations who profit from hydrocarbons still have hundreds of billions in fixed capital invested in keeping the carbon flowing, and they are no more able to set that aside for long-term benefit to the world than you or I are able to wilfully stop breathing for ten minutes in a higher cause. The brain stem will not permit a voluntary diminution in oxygen metabolism; and the survival mechanisms of capital dictate the same with respect to interruptions in accumulation. To underscore: the vested interests act as capitalists and not as human beings—and it is as capitalists that they have to be fought. And the battle against petro-capital needs to be waged throughout the whole domain of capital, which is to say, globally: through the state by intervening where the state needs to act, and in such a way that shifts the balance of forces away from capital; and in civil society, to build countervailing institutions of resistance and alternative production, institutions that prefigure the ecosocialism to come.

The struggle is differentiated into Northern and Southern campaigns, notions that refer not so much to fixed geography as to the distinction between capital in the metropolis and the periphery, where most resources are extracted from nature.<sup>xxi</sup> In the North we see emergence of campaigns such as:<sup>xxii</sup>

- initiatives to build public works whose impact is reduction of dependence upon petroleum, for example, light rail networks; this is not a technological fix, as the technology is already well known: it is a struggle for the state, a political struggle; similar struggles would be toward demanding of the state that it regulate fuel efficiency more strenuously; or stop airport expansion; or get rid of subsidies for fossil fuel extraction, superhighway construction, pipelines, rebates for SUVs, etc, etc;
- replace these with subsidies for renewable energy development; inducing the development and purchase of high-efficiency autos such as hybrids; methods of efficiency enhancement; promotion of local community initiatives to conserve energy, etc. Ideally, these subsidies should be drawn from heavy taxation of oil superprofits (it clears the mind to realize that the five leading oil companies “earned” \$375 billion in profits in 2006).
- force the state to provide subsidies to workers laid off by the moving away from the carbon economy—a key consideration in overcoming the hostility of traditional labour organizations to environmentalism;
- the above are demands upon the state; there is also need for direct struggles to preserve the integrity of relatively intact ecosystems, such as old growth forests, against the “Clean Development Mechanisms” [CDMs] of the Kyoto regime;
- litigation to force corporations, especially energy corporations, to bear the costs of these transitions;

None of these is in itself more than a reformist gesture to democratize the state and bring the corporate sector under control. Taken as a whole in the present context, however, they comprise a profound shift in

orientation. Further, they slow the accumulation of atmospheric carbon and gain precious time for more radical measures to take hold.

In the South, meanwhile, struggle is of the “environmental justice” type, comprising more or less direct defense of the Commons against intrusion by capital and its many calamitous effects. Actions such as the below dramatize this fact and build precious solidarity :

- the threat by Indians in Bolivia and Ecuador to commit mass suicide if big oil (including Occidental Petroleum, a company partly held by Al Gore’s family) invades their territory;
- Legal action against Chevron by Ecuadoran Indians to try and recoup damages for the terrible pollution and harm done to their lives;
- Similar challenges by Inuit from the North Slope in Alaska;
- Bans on petro-extraction won by the people of Costa Rica;
- Protests by people of the Niger River delta, ranging from militant nudity by women to armed guerrilla movements, all operating under the outrageous assumption that the wealth under the ground should be under the control of the people who live on the ground.<sup>xxiii</sup>
- And finally, further linking North and South and placing the struggle against petro-capital on an ecosocialist path, the anti-war and anti-imperialism movements.

Two major strategic themes can move activists along the path. They are both animated by the need to see the demands of carbon reduction as constituting a goal which can only be met by resolutely radical action. If, as the best opinion holds, it will be necessary to reduce world carbon emissions by 60% and those of industrial society by 90% by the year 2030 if we are to evade the fatal scenario of “runaway global warming,” that is, where positive feedback loops supervene and the situation is out of control, then it is compelling to recognize that such a goal cannot be met in the context of industrial capitalism, and its compulsion to expand chaotically, nor can it simply be seen as bourgeois commentators would have it, as a technical question. It is rather a clarion call to move rapidly toward a kind of society where the capitalist system is radically brought down so that it cannot block this course of action. In a word, the crisis of global warming is capital’s *Gotterdammerung*; it is the moment where the profound maxim of Rosa Luxemburg, that we live in an age defined by the choice between “socialism and barbarism,” is truly realized, except that history has now defined this in terms of “ecosocialism and eco-catastrophe.” Concretely, this implies the following:

First, a unified perspective against the regime of the Kyoto protocols (see Chapters 3 and 7), which define the newly minted markets for trading emission credits along with the CDMs in which Northern corporations employ various gimmicks in the South to offset continuing emissions. The emissions markets are get-rich-quick schemes; while the CDMs are exercises in neo-colonialism that further enclose the Commons, destroy indigenous lifeworlds and drive people into the mega-slums of the South. All aspects of Kyoto, to repeat, are primed to not work, being indeterminable and endlessly subject to manipulation and fraud, precisely because Kyoto signifies turning the administration of climate change over to the very corporate powers who created the problem in the first place.<sup>xxiv</sup>

As Kyoto is discredited, the possibility of a socialist alternative emerges, and with it, the second theme enters. The deciding matter is the question of sustainability. Capitalism is unsustainable as a total system, not simply because it overproduces, but because the whole world it makes is incompatible with ecological balance. As we have seen, capital generates a society of addiction, as an overweening ego reproduces itself along the fault lines of destabilized ecosystems. As a result, an immense degree of self-deception and denial is built into the debate on climate, which tends to minimize the degree of damage to come, along with the degree of change necessary to build a world that no longer spews intolerable amounts of carbon into the air.<sup>xxv</sup> Hence the craving for the technological fix that will enable continuing lives of reckless consumerism within the cocoon provided by capital. Trusting blindly in its innovative powers, people defend themselves against the “really inconvenient truth,” that capitalism led us into this nightmare and does not have the least clue as to how to free us from it.

Everything hinges on whether detachment from capital can take place. Ruthless critiques of its ecodestructivity and nihilism—as in the instance of anti-Kyoto campaigns—are necessary but insufficient

in themselves unless coupled with a credible hope that ecosocialism provides a real alternative, with its combination of freely associated labor and ecocentric practice signifying liberation from the tyranny of possession. The “wager” described at the beginning of this discussion, in other words, needs be put into practice in the concrete effort to prove humanity capable of rising above the bondage placed by capital on our powers, and the nightmare of runaway global warming this portends.

For this to happen, all the various campaigns mentioned above will have to be extended further and interrelated, and increasingly grounded in the production of non-industrial values and regimes of energy alternatives to the hydrocarbon economy. We can imagine this occurring focally, in one country, or in an archipelago of liberated ecosocialist zones, like a net of Chiapas’s, and propagating along various axes until the planet is ecosocialist. Under conditions of global warming, with many unpredictable calamities to come and the everpresent looming of right-wing and even fascistic measures to hold the system together, a very rough and bumpy ride is certain. How many will perish, what will be the map at the other end? All this is anyone’s guess. . . and an occasion for some further speculation as to how to proceed.

### **The Ecosocialist Party and its Victory**

Two models of party-building dominated the last century: the parliamentary parties of the bourgeois democracies and the “vanguard” Leninist party of the Bolshevik tradition. Neither model belongs to the ecosocialist project, which cannot be voted into power, and dies stillborn if internal democracy is not made integral to its growth. Leninist parties succeeded in installing first-epoch socialism chiefly because they were configured to the largely pre-capitalist societies in which their revolutions succeeded. Those capitalisms vanquished by first-epoch socialism were either imperial offshoots of metropolitan capital, or backward regimes grafted upon a largely precapitalist society. They encompassed neither the internal penetration nor the external global reach of capital’s present order, both of which radically change the revolutionary project.

Modern capitalism legitimates itself by invoking “democratic values.” This is spurious, as we have seen, but however unfulfilled, it remains a real promise that rests upon a definite foundation. By fragmenting life-worlds and traditional hierarchies, capital sets humanity loose into an unfree freedom of formal liberty and stunted development. The uneasy balance is kept going in capitalist institutions, which bind it for purposes of accumulation. To go beyond capital, one begins, then, with the betrayed promise of freedom and builds from there. It follows that the means of transformation have to be as free as the ends. That is why vanguardism, where the party is separate from as well as ahead of the people, is a non-starter. Only a freely evolving praxis of participation can mobilize the imagination and bring together the innumerable points at which anticapitalist struggle originates. And only a “party-like” formation which postulates a goal common to all struggles without constraining them from above, can organize this into “solidarity solidified” and press toward power. Thus the party is formed from its own dialectic; it is a “holding together” both objectively and subjectively--the former being the provision of material conditions, the latter being the attunement to intersubjective and relational nuance, all subsumed into the practical notion that dialectic is a matter of artfulness and subtlety—and the lived fabric of ecosystemic being.

Though open to individuals, the ecosocialist party should be grounded in communities of resistance/production. Delegation from such communities will supply the cadre of party activists as such, and the assembly that is its strategic and deliberative body. The party is to be internally funded through contributions by members, structured in such a way that no alienating force can take financial control. The delegates and such administrative bodies as may arise within this structure are to rotate on a regular basis and to be subject to recall. Further, the deliberations of the assembly, indeed all the activities of the party except certain tactical questions (for example, the details of a direct action), are to be open and transparent. Let the world see clearly what the ecosocialist party stands for--if this is worthwhile, it will only draw in more participants; if not, one needs to find out sooner rather than later.

As a general rule, parties calling themselves socialist have remained largely unable to transform their political thinking in an ecocentric direction. By contrast, the various green parties have been defined as an ecocentric movement to begin with. Experience has shown, at least in the United States, that by defining themselves as a progressive populism within the framework of bourgeois democracy, Greens are congealing as a kind of intermediate formation that stops considerably short of what is needed for transformation. Green activists continue to make valuable contributions; but their parties lack a prefigurative vision surpassing the given society. As a result, green parties tend to lapse into narrow

reformism and anarchic bickering. And when they have achieved some state power, as in Europe, Greens, with some notable exceptions, have tended to prove loyal to capital, giving it a shield of ecological responsibility.<sup>xxvi</sup>

One sign of the limits of green politics as presently practiced has been a severe inability to reach out to communities of non-European origin. Frequently chastised for their lily-white makeup, greens regularly inveigh against the problem and resolve to do better. Yet little changes. The reason cuts to the core of the Green dilemma: the parochial values intrinsic to localism. Unless the notion of community is advanced in a universalizing way, it loses transformative power and, despite good intentions, drifts toward ethnocentricity. Therefore the greens' vacillation on questions such as immigration and prison reform, and their general inability to appeal, at least in the United States, with more than token gestures to blacks and Latinos, is no oversight. From this perspective, a politics against and beyond capital needs to be as firmly rooted in overcoming racism as it is in environmental mending. The two themes intersect directly in the "environmental justice" movement, grounded in the defense against capitalist penetration and pollution by communities of color, and often led by women, hence immanently ecosocialist and as we have seen, drawn into the campaign against petro-capital.<sup>xxvii</sup>

But the chief defect of green politics, in the United States and to a degree, elsewhere, has been an inability to recognize what capitalism is and means. This defect deprives them of a view of the whole of society, and cripples their interventions. Hence green parties need to be anti-capitalist (as obtains in the UK among a goodly fraction of greens), even as red parties need to incorporate ecocentricity. Combined, the "red-green alliance" can set forth to build ecosocialism.

If such a political formation arose, combining all the tendencies developed to now, including the fidelity to building a global movement toward a new carbon economy, it could generate a dialectic that can rapidly accelerate the motion toward ecosocialism. There will be tens of thousands of local and regional experiments and practices who would respond to its call, and come together to join strategies. These tendencies would join with communities of activation to make this possible, and their power would be accordingly magnified by it.

There is no point in predicting a scenario according to which this will expand, beyond the core condition that it occur in context of capital's incapability to regulate the ecological crisis, and the unifying perspective given by the struggle against petro-capital and to overcome climate change. At some time within this span, the communities arising from the process may be imagined to grow to a point of relative autonomy such that they can begin providing material support for activists, with bases of operation and, in the case of those considerable number of communities producing food, wool, hemp, solar technology, etc, the actual means of subsistence for people engaged in revolutionary struggle.

Now, it may be imagined, the movement of events is self-sustaining, rapid and dramatic. Communities of place and of praxis increasingly coalesce to form miniature societies; and these enter into relations with others both inside and outside the national boundary. Capital may be expected to respond with heightened efforts at repression. A heroic phase begins, with much sacrifice. The global might of the capital system now encounters a set of factors it has never dealt with before:

- The forces against it are both numerous and dispersed;
- They operate with changed needs, and on the basis of a mode of production capable of sustaining itself with small inputs, alternative energy and labour-intensive technologies; and they have secure bases and "safe houses" in intentional communities of resistance, now extending across national boundaries;
- Their many allies in the interstices of the mainstream society are capable of forming support groups and "underground railroads";
- As with all successful forms of revolutionary protest, the oppositional forces are capable of shutting down normal production through strikes, boycotts, and mass actions;
- The forces of capital have lost confidence, and are further undermined by support for social transformation within the alternative parties and their various niches in the state. This extends to armies and police. When the first of these lays down their arms and joins the revolution, the turning point is reached.

- The behavior of the revolutionaries is spiritually superior; and the examples they set are given credibility and persuasiveness by the brute facts of the crisis and the gathering realization that what is at stake here is not so much the redistribution of wealth as the sustenance of life itself.

Thus it could be that in an increasingly hectic period, millions of people take to the streets, and join together in solidarity--with each other, with the communities of resistance, and with their comrades in other nations--bringing normal social activity to a halt, petitioning the state, refusing to take "no" for an answer, and driving capital into ever smaller pens. With defections mounting and the irreducible fact all around that the people demand a new beginning in order to save the planetary ecology, the state apparatus passes into new hands, the expropriators are expropriated, the 500 year regime of capital falls, and a survivable world can be built.<sup>xxviii</sup>

### A Usufructuary of the Earth

From the standpoint of a higher economic form of society, private ownership of the globe by single individuals will appear quite as absurd as private ownership of one man by another. Even a whole society, a nation, or even all simultaneously existing societies taken together, are not the owners of the globe. They are only its possessors, its usufructuaries, and, like *boni patres familias*, they must hand it down to succeeding generations in an improved condition.<sup>xxix</sup>

Thus Karl Marx, in the third volume of *Capital*. The notion of usufruct is an ancient one, with roots going back to the Code of Hammurabi, though the word itself arises in Roman Law, where it applied to ambiguities between masters and slaves with respect to property. It appears again in Islamic law, and in the legal arrangements of the Aztecs and the Napoleonic Code--indeed, wherever the notion of property reveals its inherent contradictions. Interestingly, the Latin word condenses the two meanings of *use*--as in use-value; and *enjoyment*--as in the *fruitful* pleasure expressed in freely associated labour. As commonly understood today, a usufructuary relationship is where one uses, enjoys--and through that, improves--another's property, as, for instance, community groups would use, enjoy and improve an abandoned city lot by turning it into a garden.

Because we are human to the degree that we creatively engage nature, the self is defined through its extensions into the material world. We become who we are by *appropriating* nature, transforming and incorporating it, and it is within this frame that the notion of property logically arises—to be set against that property which is the result of *expropriation*, and which forms the scaffolding of class dominative society. In any case a person with no possessions whatsoever is no individual at all, as s/he has neither radiations of the self nor particular grounding in nature. It follows that in an ecologically realized society everyone will have rights of ownership--a place of one's own, decorated according to taste, personal possessions, such as books, clothing, objects of beauty, likewise--and of special significance, rights of use and ownership over those means of production necessary to express the creativity of human nature. This latter most definitely includes the body--whence the reproductive rights of women are logically secured, along with the rights of free sexual expression.

The notion of property becomes contradictory because each individual person emerges in a tissue of social relations, and in John Donne's words, is never an island. Each self is therefore a part of all other selves, and property is inexorably tied into a dialectic with others. This may be imagined as a set of nested circles. At the center is the self, and here ownership exists in relatively absolute terms, beginning with the body, intrinsically the property of each person. As the circles extend, issues of sharing arise from early childhood on, each potentially resolvable according to the principle that the full self is enhanced more by giving than taking. For a realized being is generous. The more lightly do material possessions weigh upon the self, the more fully can one give, and the richer one becomes.

The domain of use-value will be the site of contestation. To restore use-value means to take things concretely and sensuously, as befits an authentic relation of ownership--but by the same gesture, lightly, since things are enjoyed for themselves and not as buttresses for a shaky ego or occasions for profiteering. Under capital, as Marx famously saw, what is produced is fetishized by the shroud of exchange-value--made remote and magical. In the fetishized world, nothing is ever really owned, since everything can be exchanged, taken away and abstracted. This stimulates the thirst for possessions that rages under capitalist rule. The unappeasable craving for things--and money to get things--is the necessary underpinning of accumulation and the subjective dynamic of the ecological crisis. We have seen that the circuits of

capitalist society are defined by *having*--and excluding others from having--until society becomes a collection of gated communities inhabited by lonely egos, each split from all and the atomized selves split from nature.<sup>xxx</sup>

Ecosocialist society is defined by *being*, achieved by giving oneself to others and restoring a receptive relation to nature. Ecosystemic integrity is to be restored across all the nested circles of human participation--the family, the community, the nation, the international community, or, with a leap across the humanity/nature membrane, the planet, and beyond it, the universe. For capital, property rights of the individual Ego are sacrosanct, and become solidified into class structures, whence they succeed in dispossessing masses of people from their inherent ownership of the means to produce creatively. This is only the legal aspect of a regime of fetishized relations. Within ecosocialism, the bounds of the individual ego are surpassed as use-value overcomes exchange-value and opens a way for the realization of intrinsic value.

In the new society, the right of an individual to freely appropriate the means of self-expression is paramount. Society is structured to give this primacy by differentiating ownership between individual and collectivity. Although each person--and each family as the extension of personhood into reproduction--has an inalienable right to good housing, the ownership as such of the housing and the land upon which it stands is collective, and granted by the collectivity. In this way, there arise distinct limits on the amount of property individuals can control, both from the standpoint of domestic usage as well as that of the control over productive resources. No person is to be allowed to arrogate such resources, therefore, as would permit the alienation of means of production from another. There will be no such arrangement as now obtains, where well over a billion absolutely landless people, along with several billion more who must sell themselves on the market because they are effectively without control over more than the slenderest threads of property, confront a tiny fraction who own virtually all the wealth-producing world and the means of violence to enforce this. Extending further out along the nested circles, we find that those things essential for social production are to be shared by all and not owned by the few.

The extension proceeds, as Marx realizes, to the planetary level, and devolves downward from there to govern the particular laws of ecosocialist society. Taken all in all, the earth we inhabit should be regarded, not as our collective property but as a wondrous matrix from which we emerge and to which we return. Perhaps it will be easier to dislodge the ruling class from their cancerous ownership if we remind ourselves that this is not done to transfer ownership to "the people" or some surrogate. Indeed, ownership of the planet is a pathetic illusion. It is plain *hubris* to think that the earth, or nature, can be owned--and stupid to boot, as though one can own that which gives us being, and whose becoming we express. The notion of standing over and against the earth in order to own it is at the core of the domination of nature. A usufructuary is all we can claim with regard to the earth. But this demands that our species proves its worth by using, enjoying and improving the globe that is our home. From that reigning principle can be derived those individual regulations that are to subserve the metabolism between humanity and nature called ecosocialism. No class ownership of the means of production stands at one pole; absolute ownership of one's self as the other--for the self is the earth emerging into consciousness at this one point of individuality; while the institutions of ecosocialist society exist to set going the ways of using, enjoying and improving our common firmament.

The society that emerges from the storm of the revolution will at first be only marginally capable of fulfilling this project. Its highest priority is to set things going in a truly ecosocialist direction and its first goal is to secure the "free association of producers." Each term here needs to be respected. The association is *free* because in it people self-determine; hence society must make means of production accessible to all. It is a free *association* because life is collective; therefore the relevant political unit is a collectivity drawn together by mutual productive activity. And it is of *producers*, which is to be taken in the human-natural sense and not economically. This means that the whole making of the human world is to be taken into account rather than just that which contributes or controls exchange-value. Since a core goal of ecosocialism is the diminution of exchange-value's domain, it valorizes forms of productive activity to the degree that these foster ecosystemic integrity, whether this be the raising of beautiful children, the growing of organic gardens, the playing of excellent string quartets, the cleaning of streets, the making of composting toilets, or the invention of new technologies for turning solar energy into fuel cells.

To secure the association, we need ways of preventing the emergence of alienating agencies. Private ownership of means of production has been shown to be the chief of these under capital, but the Soviets showed that the state can just as well fill this role. And since the gain of state power by the revolution is essential for redirecting society, so must the revolution give high priority to building ways of dissolving that power and preventing the state from turning into a monster over society. A key principle is the internal development of true democracy, the absence of which crippled all previous socialisms. That is why alternative party-building in the pre-revolutionary period is an essential--not to win state power in the here and now, which is out of the question, but to democratize the state insofar as possible, and to train people in the ways of self-governance so that when the revolution is made they will be in a position to sustain democratic development. Another essential principle is the enfranchisement of productive communities, enabling power to flow from the producers--or, since everyone produces and has multiple productive affiliations, from those collectivities that best express their free association and the enhancement of ecosystemic integrity.

As the revolution begins its work, we find society comprised of four fractions. First, are those who have engaged in revolutionary practice, either as political agents and/or as members of communities of resistance. Second, are those who did not participate actively yet whose productive activity is directly compatible with ecological production--the housewives, nurses, schoolteachers, librarians, technicians, independent farmers, etc, along with the very old, the very young, the ill, and those on welfare or otherwise marginalized (including many of those in prison). Third, are those whose pre-revolutionary practice was given over to capital--the bourgeoisie, proper; along with those legions involved in work more or less worthless from an ecosocialist standpoint--the PR men, the car salesmen, the ad executives, the supermodels, the cast of "The Apprentice" and like shows, financiers, security guards, wealth psychologists, and so on. Finally, we find arrayed between the second and third categories, the great body of workers whose activity added surplus value to capitalist commodities, whether as industrial proletarians, field hands, truckdrivers, and so forth. Many of these latter worked in polluting, ecologically destructive settings; others in industries that have little or no place in an ecologically rational society, for example, weapons factories or those making diet sodas. All will have to be provided for and retrained if society is to be rebuilt.

Clearly, it will be no easy matter to reallocate productive activity among so vast an assemblage. The following broad principles may be useful:

- An interim assembly of delegates from the revolutionary communities of resistance constitutes itself as an agency to handle the redistribution of social roles and assets, to make sure that all are provided for out of common stocks, and to exert such force as is necessary to reorganize society. The assembly will convene in widespread locations and send delegations to regional, state, national and international bodies. Each level will have an executive council with rotating leadership, recallable by votes from the level below.
- Productive communities (and now they may be authentically called "co-operatives"), whether of place or praxis, form the political as well as economic unit of society. The priority of those groups who made the revolution will be to organize others and create paths for the rapid assimilation of other workers to the network of productive communities. This includes all able-bodied people, the ex-perpetrators of capital as well, who--with a few egregiously criminal exceptions--will be allowed to participate in building an ecosocialist world.
- During the transition, incomes will be guaranteed, using the reserves now in possession of the revolution. This is combined with transforming other sites considered outside the value-producing economy of capital, for example, child care, into productive communities, thereby giving reproductive labour a status equivalent to productive labour. At first the old money will be used, though given new conditions of value, namely, according to use- and the degree to which ecosystem integrity is developed and advanced by any particular production. Thus determination of ecocentric value becomes the ultimate standard, rather than abstract labour time.<sup>xxxii</sup> Although no one in ecosocialist society shall do without, actual remuneration, and more importantly, approval and sense of worth and dignity, comes with the fulfillment of use-values. This is what is meant by Marx's famous maxim, "from each according to abilities, to each according to need."
- In each locality, one such community would directly administer the area of jurisdiction. For example, town government would be considered a collective whose product is the provision of ecologically sound

governance--and also an assembly elected by all the inhabitants of that area. Each area, therefore, may have several assemblies--one for administration, another for wider spheres of governance.

- Each productive community participates fully as soon as it demonstrates its fidelity to ecosocialist principles. And as it joins, it plays a political role in its local assembly, sending delegates and votes to the next level.
- Two vitally important functions will devolve onto the more central assemblies. The first will be to monitor the degree that communities under its jurisdiction are contributing to ecosystemic integrity; and to give a kind of weight to communities according to their contribution. This supervisory body potentially has considerable power, limited, however, by the fact that it serves at the behest of the productive communities themselves.
- The second function pertains to the general coordination of activities, the provision of society-wide services like rail systems, the allocation of resources, the reinvestment of the social product, and the harmonization of relations between regions at all levels, including the international. But this we leave for the future, confident that those who have won through to an ecosocialist world will have the strength and wisdom to solve its problems. As ever, the key lies in the degree to which democracy, now realized as freely associated labor, has become a living presence in society, which it imbues with the intrinsic value owed to nature and its wayward human children.

---

<sup>ii</sup>Marx 1963: 107. I became acquainted with this passage through Mészáros 1996.

<sup>ii</sup> This was the general conclusion of Karl Polanyi's *The Great Transformation*, Polanyi 1957. We should add that not all ways of production would be retained under ecosocialism. For example, serfdom or slavery, are ruled out by deeply established values – though these coexist quite readily in various niches within capitalism, like sweatshops and the sex industries. See also Mies 2000.

<sup>iii</sup> See Chapter 1, Introduction, Endnote #4.

<sup>iv</sup> Hardin 1968, one of the most reprinted works of the entire neoliberal era. This stemmed from his error, because by mistaking members of the commons for bourgeois self-maximizers, he cleared a way for authoritarian enclosures. For a thorough discussion, see Ross 1998, Naess, P. 2004.

<sup>v</sup> Marx 1967a, Luxemburg 1968, Harvey 2003.

<sup>vi</sup> The Commune was the actual launching point for violent anticommunist campaigns in the United States and elsewhere. Kovel 1997b. See Marx 1978d for a famous treatment.

<sup>vii</sup> As Marx, Lenin, and others pointed out, this is really what was intended by the phrase, the “dictatorship of the proletariat,” a readily misunderstood term, since in the 19<sup>th</sup> century “dictatorship” simply meant, emergency rule, and had none of the connotations given by the grim developments of 20<sup>th</sup> century socialism.

<sup>viii</sup> For a discussion of the corruptions of this process, see Bond 2006.

<sup>ix</sup> See Abhalali 2006 { <http://www.abahlali.org/node/237>}. The Wikipedia entry for the Paris Commune provides this link to Abahlali baseMjondolo as an example of the contemporary version of 1871.

<sup>x</sup> Marcos 2001 provides a good introduction to the EZLN.

<sup>xi</sup> Weisman 1998.

<sup>xii</sup> Weisman 1998: 10.

<sup>xiii</sup> There were 28 indymedia centers in 2000, and roughly 170 in 2006. One of their number, Brad Will, was killed in the streets of Oaxaca in Fall of 2006 while documenting street protests. Another, Josh Wolf, was recently released from U.S. Federal prison where he spent six months for refusing to turn over his sources.

---

<sup>xiv</sup> For the many aspects of the alternative media movement, see Halleck 2001. See also Stimson and Sholette 2007.

<sup>xv</sup> In 2007 the first conference on global warming and the trade union movement was held in New York, a major step forward. See ...

<sup>xvi</sup> GreenLeft-Australia 2007: "According to *Prensa Latina* on March 24, Venezuela has replaced some 45 million incandescent light bulbs with white light thrifty bulbs, benefiting more than 4 million households. The move is part of an energy saving program, the Energy Revolution Mission. More than 3000 activists have been involved in carrying out the bulb changes, and are aiming to replace about 54 million in total. The mission is also expanding renewable energy sources such as solar and wind, and beginning to replace petrol with gas to supply cars. *Prensa Latina* points out that while Venezuela is the fifth-largest exporter of hydrocarbons, it is encouraging the use of less contaminating energy sources."

<sup>xvii</sup> It being impossible to say more of the Chavez government at this point, given its emergence from a major oil economy, its dependence on the military, etc.

<sup>xviii</sup> And nitrogen, sulphur, etc, etc. We set the added details aside to draw the main point so far as the struggle for ecosocialism is concerned. The other greenhouse gases – including methane – add new dimensions but do not affect the logic of the struggle itself.

<sup>xix</sup> To advert to the title of Al Gore's video of 2006 which did much to catalyse the new level of awareness. See video by Cambiz Khosravi and Joel Kovel, *A Really Inconvenient Truth* (Khosravi 2007) for a critique.

<sup>xx</sup> And some not so worthy measures, for example, substituting nuclear energy for carbon-driven energy, and using lots of biofuels for the latter. Both are unacceptable, the former for well-known reasons of toxicity, the latter because it portends mass starvation, brutally exploits agricultural workers, and destroys such swathes of old-growth forests as to end up spewing more carbon than before into the atmosphere.

<sup>xxi</sup> A number of countries, South Africa, for example, but also Brazil, India and even China, contain major zones of both types. In Canada and the United States, as well as other large Northern countries like Russia and Scandinavia, there are far-North enclaves of indigenous folk like Inuit who bear this burden as well.

<sup>xxii</sup> See Lohmann 2006, pp 329-355. A portion of the factual basis of this section has been drawn from this source, adding, however, the implication of ecosocialist prefiguration.

<sup>xxiii</sup> Turner and Brownhill 2004. I am indebted to these scholar-activists for much of the information in this section. For the Nigerian struggle, see also Rowell 2005. Thanks to David Miller for providing this source.

<sup>xxiv</sup> The final IPCC report – see above – itself dismisses the Kyoto regime as likely to have little effect on the actual reduction of atmospheric carbon in the critical period ahead. Its only virtue is in setting the price of carbon and enabling other projects to go forward. Somehow the world's peoples are supposed to applaud this.

<sup>xxv</sup> The IPCC reports, for instance, leave out the effects of positive feedback, whether from innate or politically induced conservatism.

<sup>xxvi</sup> One such is the GreenLeft faction of the British Green party, which is consciously ecosocialist.

<sup>xxvii</sup> Faber 1998.

---

<sup>xxviii</sup> Or, to repeat, this could happen focally in the context of widespread chaos and collapse, the various focal alternatives coming together.

<sup>xxix</sup> Marx 1967b: 776.

<sup>xxx</sup> Marx 1967a: 71-83.

<sup>xxxi</sup> István Mészáros writes: "the socialist undertaking cannot even begin to realize its fundamental objectives without successfully accomplishing at the same time the shift from the exchange of products . . . to the exchange of genuinely *planned* and *self-managed* (as opposed to bureaucratically *planned from above*) productive activities. Mészáros 1996: 761, italics in text. These can be translated into ecosystemic terms.