

# **Environmental struggle, working class and anarchist communist tactic**

By Dimitri (personal capacity)\*

We, anarchist communists know that capitalism is a socio-economic system over-producing products for a minority who can afford them to buy and consume. Capitalism is breeding a destructful -primarily at the expeence of the environment- competition between bigger or smaller private owners of productive means the goods of whom are made by exploited and/or over exploited wage slaves and then exchanged through a market for profit and perpetual growth.

The driving force of capitalism is directed towards making the biggest profit possible and therefore it is not employ efficient, sustainable productive practices. Because of its very nature, capitalism is producing things based on exploitation and always for sale, it is under-producing for the needs of the people generating constant crises.

The State, as the political decision making chapter of capitalism, is also responsible for the extensive environmental destruction. As Warren McGregor (from Zabalaza Anarchist Communit Front of South Africa, says in his "Linking Environment Activism and Other Struggles: An Anarchist Analysis" in <http://zabalaza.net/2013/02/11/linking-environment-activism-and-other-struggles-an-anarchist-analysis/> ) "competition between States for power and control over people and land leads to the development of huge war industries and war technology adapted for industry. These have obvious serious negative implications for people (injuries, death, refugees, etc.) and the environment (the terrible effects of current nuclear technological failures, etc)".

The States and the governments simply do not want to take protection laws against capitalist bosses and themselves as owners against this environmental destruction because these will shorten the profits and the states' own tax revenue.

The various movements, groups, coalitions and other initiatives for ecological awareness are contributing realy strongly and importantly to the social understanding about all of these issues as well as the rise of awareness of the effects of industrial production and consumption. However, some of these initiatives are not based and link their social agenda and efforts on how to involve with the working class and all the social movements for freedom, because for them it is enough to pre-occupy themselves with single issues and struggles like this, without feel the vital need to connect their effort with the whole working class movement and its allies. They also do not feel the need to question the States, to challenge the goverments and all those who employ the system of domination about the roots of ecological devastation, social inequality and exploitation.

So, how we, anarchist communists can link environmental awareness to working class movement and poor people's affairs and demands making them relevant to the majority of the society we live in? How we can achieve this task as ecological protection must be linked to the general fight for social, political and economic freedom, as ecological destruction has a decicive and immediate impact on all our lives and especially those of the working poor people? And, of course, having in mind that is only a working class-led social revolution against social and economic domination that can ultimately guarantee and develop a world that not only meets all our needs and desires, but a world in which sustainable co-existence with nature is fostered and secured.

Because we, anarchist communists seek to fight against all forms of hierarchy and social domination, class is not only defined in terms of whether or not you own the means of production, but also whether or not you control the means of social administration and coercion. And we know well, that the ruling class is made up of the huge and fat capitalists and the wealthy and healthy managers of the State – in the government, military, state-owned enterprises (parastatals), police and the judiciary, and the working class is that which does not own nor control – it produces wealth for the benefit of rulers and owners. But the working class includes also the unemployed,

home-based workers (women especially), migrant workers etc., who with the peasantry, who are exploited by landlords, banks and the –again– the State, form the popular classes. We, as anarchist communists believe that it is in these popular classes as such where we can see a revolutionary potential to reorganise society.

We could be satisfied to imply that just one revolution is necessary: the socialist revolution, as various socialist and left organisation say. This is completely correct and we fully agree with. But beyond the question of owning the means of production and abolishing wage labor, we must raise the question of humanity's ecological footprint. And this prospect must make us thinking about what revolutions we can put forward the modes of production, trade and consumption that the planet needs.

This is why we must employ and put forward:

#### **- A revolution in trade, by putting an end to globalisation**

Global warming is caused by the totality of human activities emitting greenhouse gases. The transportation sector is the principal pollutant, and there is no doubt that on a planetary scale the problem is similar, because of the explosion of trade with capitalist globalization. Today, the de-localization of production is such that the various components of a product, over the course of its manufacture and distribution, travel tens of thousands of kilometers. Transportation thus plays a key part in capitalist globalisation, and the class struggles going on in this sector are therefore all the more important. So, the questioning of capitalist globalization thus does not only have a social and anti-imperialist motivation, it also has a fundamentally ecological motivation: there will be no massive reduction of greenhouse gases without a questioning of the international division of labor, a re-localization of production, and economic independence for the various regions of the world.

#### **- A revolution in the modes of consumption**

In addition to being a system of exploitation, capitalism is also a carrier of an inherent death-logic for humanity. Any alternative to it will have to take an ecological dimension into account, contrary to the preceding experiments of authoritarian socialism (or state capitalism).

The concept of degrowth, as such, does not bring any solution if it is not associated with a break with capitalism. The solution to the ecological challenge means an economic upheaval implying a redefinition of:

- the purpose of production: organized only to satisfy the needs of humanity
- the best possible use of technological innovations: to eliminate the most pollution, to spread the practice of recycling, and to produce practical goods, not designed to break down after a few years
- the means of transportation (automobile, public transit system, road, rail, air)
- packaging and advertising
- energy choices (fossil fuels, renewable energy, energy saving).

This is why we need to think about a general redefinition of what is necessary, and what is superfluous, in the economic system. Our objective is not an impoverishment of humanity, but a revolution in our ways of life: a drastic decrease in the consumption of material products and an enrichment of social and cultural life—a development of social relations, of culture, of art, and of knowledge.

#### **- A revolution in the modes of production**

The only positive aspect of "sustainable development" is to have on our agenda, the issues of recycling, clean production, energy saving, green fuels, water saving in agriculture, renewable energies, ecological housing, etc. All these technological innovations should be on, while we remain aware that they are only one aspect, and not the totality, of the solution to climate change. The question of energy will inevitably be at the center of the debate. And before the end of fossil fuels, the debate around nuclear power will start up again. But nuclear power is not a solution to the greenhouse effect. The share of nuclear power in the world's consumption of energy is indeed marginal (3%). To imagine slowing down climate change with the construction of thousands of new nuclear power plants across the globe is completely foolish, because of the known health and environmental risks, and because current geopolitical tensions make power plants military targets of choice. Even if questions remain about how to end nuclear

power in a over-dependent on the industry country, we still must remain against nuclear energy, which burdens our society with disproportionate health and social risks.

So, what we anarchist communists require, is an economic growth and development that takes into account human needs and the availability of resources. For this we need anarchist social economics and of course an anarchist society. The problem we face it is not the excessive consumption, since most people, especially the popular classes, are short of housing, decent health, jobs, transport, education, etc., but rather the wasteful production by and for the world's ruling minority. It is not technology and its development in and of itself that is problematic, but rather capitalistw and state uses of technology that systematically under-invest in useful, necessary and ecologically sustainable technology in favour of "high pollution-high profit" technology and weapons of war for elite power and control. We also reject a purely "developed" versus "developing world" argument that states that poorer countries (in the so-called "Global South") are made poor and their poverty and underdevelopment is sustained by richer countries (the so-called "Global North") who are also the biggest polluters. These arguments also fail to incorporate a localised class analysis and thus fail to see hierarchies of control within all countries. Because capitalism and the state always result in the accumulation of wealth and power in the hands of a few, this means that there is huge inequality in the countries of the "North" between its ruling and working classes.

As Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group (MACG puts is in a Statement of Shared Positions (in <http://melbacg.wordpress.com/2013/11/12/200/>): "A commitment to ecological sustainability does not mean enforced poverty in living standards and even less so does it require a return to a hunter-gatherer society. We therefore reject Malthusians of all varieties and especially in their primitivist manifestation. Production of a wide variety of goods and services needs to be increased, not decreased, in order to abolish poverty and want from the face of the Earth. We hold that it is capitalism, not human nature, that is responsible for the wanton environmental destruction which has occurred in the last two centuries and is threatening the very liveability of the planet which we inhabit".

A libertarian communist, that is an anarchist society will resolve the current conflict between the need to increase production and the need to limit the environmental damage that capitalist production imposes by:

- (a) Producing for rationally determined needs, rather than for wants generated by advertising;
- (b) Producing quality goods which last, rather than shoddy ones which break down quickly;
- (c) Using only renewable energy;
- (d) Using closed loop manufacturing processes, with 100% material recycling and zero waste;
- (e) Rationally planning the satisfaction of social needs in the most energy and resource efficient manner;
- (f) Using the most modern technology to institute efficient small-run production of a wide variety of goods, thus eliminating a large part of the need for long distance transport and
- (g) Planning cities, and the means of transport within and between them, on ecologically sustainable and energy efficient lines.

As well as the current so-called "population crisis" is an illusion caused by the inefficient, unjust and unsustainable practices of capitalism. While there is a natural limit to the carrying capacity of the planet, we believe that this limit is impossible to determine until after capitalism has been abolished and its destructive practices eliminated. If

population reduction is called for after the planet's carrying capacity is established, it can be achieved gradually through social consensus.

Concluding, the environment is not simply a "humanist" question deprived of political stakes. To act concretely, we must analyse it in connection with class struggles, capitalist strategies, relations of production, imperialist power struggles around the world, and so on.

Libertarian communism must reach a point of balance between the capacities to produce, the needs of populations, and the limits of the biosphere. And beyond rational management of natural resources, the environmental question must lead us to fundamentally reconsider humanity's place on the planet. This is because we cannot build our future against that of the rest of life. Here, too, the ideology of domination must be broken, so that humanity can find a future.

*\*In this article extracts from position papers and/or arguments of Alternative Libertaire, Zabala Anarchist Communist Front and Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group (MACG) have been used. Dimitri is a member of MACG and Anarkismo.net and A-Infos editorial collectives. His website No God-No Master is dealing primarily with the history of the anarchist movement in Greece and in The Balkans. Here are some of his articles in English translation <http://ngnm.vrahokipos.net/index.php/translations>*