





# **ECOLOGY: CAN WE SURVIVE UNDER CAPITALISM?**

GUS HALL

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First Edition, 2023.

New Outlook Publishers  
1808 Hylan Blvd, Suite 1009  
Staten Island, NY 10314-0434  
+1 (718) 979-6563

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## DEDICATION

We dedicate this book to all cadre who believe with their hearts, minds, and actions in a true Bolshevik Revolution!

For one to be a true Bolshevik, one must desire wholeheartedly, without reservation, to free themselves and their fellow workers from the bonds of class antagonisms. A true Bolshevik is one who understands the foundations of Marxist-Leninist teachings; one who understands that their sole purpose in life is to crush capitalism.

We dedicate this collection of works to you in the hopes that the truths expounded in this book and others will inspire you, the reader, to work to help build Communism.

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## FOREWORD

Gus Hall was born Arvo Kustaa Halberg on October 8th, 1910, in Northern Minnesota. He grew up in a rural community on the Mesabi Iron Range. Hall's parents were Finnish immigrants who were involved with the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and eventually became early members of the Communist Party USA (CPUSA). Hall's first language was Finnish, but because he did not know any Finnish political words, he used English when discussing politics. At 15 years old, Hall left school to work in the lumber camps, mines, and railroads; and at 17 Gus was recruited by his father to join the CPUSA. At this time, Hall became involved with the youth leagues, and in 1931 earned a scholarship to travel to Moscow where he studied at the International Lenin School. Hall was a member of the USA Navy from 1942 until 1946 and rose to the rank of Machinist's Mate during WWII. In 1948, indicted under the Smith Act, Hall spent 5 years in prison. Soon after his release, he was elected General-Secretary of the CPUSA, a position he held for 40 years. During this time, he ran for president four times as the Communist Party candidate, twice with Angela Davis as his running-mate. Hall passed away at

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the age of 90 on October 13th, 2000, because of complications from diabetes.

In Hall's *Ecology: Can We Survive Under Capitalism?* a grim picture is painted. We see a world where capitalism is destroying the environment, where the worker is being abused both by their bosses and by the hazards of their workplace, and where it is asked whether these issues have passed the precipice of repair and brought us towards an inevitable destruction. There is, however, more to this story than meets the eye. We also learn of the triumphs of the Soviet Era, and we can see that actions have been taken to combat this seemingly inevitable destruction.

Hall seems to be years ahead of his time in the questions he asks. His analysis of modern issues and of potential future issues feels almost prophetic as we look back 50 years to when this was written. There are topics discussed that young people today may not even know about as they have been nearly eliminated in modern times. In one part, Hall discusses the potential dangers of asbestos and the rising rates of cancer attributed to it. Young people today may not even know that this was once a devastating problem for construction workers and Naval personnel of the 80's and 90's, who saw an increase in cancer rates so dramatic that this compound has been eliminated from our lives entirely. There are problems that have not been addressed since this was written, and we can see that if only the world paid attention in the same way that Hall did, we would have a safer place to live and breathe. Hall talks about parts per million pollutants, and notes that the Soviets allow a mere percentage of the output in their factories that the capitalists allow. We know that this problem has become exacerbated through our society's lack of action, and we can only wonder what Hall would say today about all the fresh

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water in the world now testing positive for microplastic molecules.

This book is not all doom and gloom though. Hall was never one to present questions without reaching for answers. In chapters 8 and 9 we see a real attempt was made to ask how we move forward from where we have found ourselves. These questions, and at times demands, are still relevant today. Society is not complacent, and we are not happy with just the knowledge that wrongs have been done to us and our future generations. Hall highlights some of the questions that we all should be asking when we search for a solution to today's climate problem, and where does he find the answers? In centralized planning, in socialist society, and in a world where the environment is not treated as something expendable that can be tossed to the wayside, all so that capitalist industry can extract a few extra dollars at the cost of the living and future generations.

It is a strange time we live in when we can look back at a book about the environment that is 50 years old and say that it not only does it apply to our world today, but also that these issues have become even worse in many cases. We believe that Hall would not have liked to hear that his writing had prophesized the issues of 2022. In fact, we believe he would have preferred this book be a silly relic of history, a story of destruction that we look back at and can't even associate with today. Sadly, this is not the world we live in. Hall's writing is as important now as it ever was. Many of the issues have grown worse, not better, over time. We must look to the past to learn from those who have not only asked why we are allowing this destruction of our world but have demanded that it stop. Hall's writing proves as important today as it ever was, and we would

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be wise to learn from his assessment of the problems and his demands for their solutions.

PCUSA Environmental Commission

# I. INTRODUCTION

Our nation is being poisoned with the ultimate threat of extinction by pollution and destruction of our environment, the main factor in which is the plunder of our natural resources. Everybody appears agreed on this. There is a widespread tendency to blame this dangerous situation on science and technology. But the real source of the problem must be sought elsewhere. It lies in the very nature of the social system under which we are forced to live.

The main impulse of our social system is the quest for profit. The result is unplanned, anarchic production, which allows the pollution and indiscriminate plunder of our natural resources. The ones responsible are the monopolies, the corporations, who have made enormous profits while they pollute and destroy our environment. It is estimated that hundreds of billions of dollars will be needed just to remedy the pollution and destruction wrought by the monopolies and their predecessors.

The major victims are the working people, who suffer from the effects of pollution every minute of their lives.

The irony of the situation is that the only remedies now being proposed will bring additional profits to the corporations, through producing the means of halting the pollution

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and destruction of the environment. But the working people must pay for this by an addition to their tax burden and by a hike in the prices of commodities produced under the new conditions.

The only ultimate solution, of course, is the creation of a planned society in which the quest for profits has been abolished and the results of our science and technology are used for the benefits of the masses of the people of our nation.

This does not mean that the people can do nothing to halt the deterioration of our environment now. United effort by all the victims, the vast majority of the people, can force the federal, state and local governments to wrest from the monopolies reparations for the vast damages already done, to see to it that the costs of the remedies come out of the profits of the monopolies, and to guarantee that none of the costs of the remedies are foisted on the people through increased prices for commodities produced under the new conditions.

To this point, humankind has exploited nature without experiencing catastrophe. Nature has been able to counteract and clean up the mess mankind has created and thereby, through renewal, maintain a livable environment on this earth. Resources have appeared limitless. It was once possible to exhaust nature in one area, abandon the debris and move on to another. The aftermath of the scorched earth policy of the private corporations can be seen in the craters and gutted mountains in the mining areas and in the hurricane-like scenes where once beautiful forests stood. In the United States the forests once occupied 900 million acres of land. And today there are only 40 million acres of forests. That era is ending.

This seemingly eternal interplay between human society and nature can no longer be taken for granted. Without a planned, scientific approach the environment will choke.



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Contamination and pollution levels are reaching the danger point. The rapid advances of technology, the acres of new factories that sprout each year, have thrust us into a crisis of the environment. And the fields of possible exploitation shrink. The crisis of the environment has brought into sharp focus all of the criminal and irresponsible practices of the private corporations that ignore all human and social concerns in their mad drive for profits.

Pollution is not only a serious social problem for the future but it dangerously affects the lives and health of people today. It threatens all life on this planet.

Preserving a livable environment is also a class problem. The most polluted areas are inside the factories where the workers work. The most direct victims of pollution are the workers, the people who are forced to live in the racial and industrial ghettos, the poor and the oppressed generally. Ironically, where capitalism reaches its greatest productive capacity pollution rises to the highest level.

The rich executives of monopoly corporations who are the direct polluters have moved into the distant countryside. They are now in the process of shifting their corporate business offices into the less polluted areas. The residents of the racial and industrial ghettos are left behind as prisoners within the poisoned cities.

The federal government's safety standard for poisonous carbon monoxide in the air is eight parts per million. On an average day a New Yorker breathes air with 17 parts per million. The government safety standard of sulphur dioxide in the air is four parts per million. On an average day a New Yorker breathes air with 16 parts per million of sulphur dioxide.

People in Chicago, Los Angeles, Boston, Cleveland or Atlanta are no better off. Over all of the industrial cities, clouds

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of stifling poisonous gas and aerosols hundreds of feet thick hang like a blanket most of the time.

The Cuyahoga River running through the heart of Cleveland is a fire hazard because of the industrial pollution flowing on its surface. If anyone falls into Lake Erie, medical authorities on both sides, Canada and the United States, suggest immediate tetanus injections. The abundance of marine food from the Great Lakes is vanishing.

Mr. James Wiggins, speaking for the United States at the United Nations General Assembly (December 3, 1968) regarding this problem, dramatically stated:

“A brief glance into American history reminds us of what a change we have wrought in our national environment, especially our waters. The Hudson River ... was described by Henry Hudson in 1609 as ‘clear, blue and wonderful to the taste.’ In colonial times salmon were plentiful in that River. A hundred years ago giant sea sturgeon were caught and stacked like cordwood on Hudson River wharfs, and their caviar, not yet popular in this country, was exported by the ton to Russia. Ten to 20 million pounds of oysters were harvested in the lower Hudson as late as 1880.

“Today most of the lower Hudson, from Albany to the sea, is so polluted with the wastes of cities and factories that it is unfit for drinking or swimming and of little value for fishing or even boating. Oysters and clams have disappeared. The worst stretches of the river have been described in such phrases as ‘a torrent of filth’ and ‘one great septic tank.’ It will take a thousand million dollars and a ten-year program, only now getting under way, to restore this once beautiful river. The Hudson, by the way, originates in the Adirondack mountains in a lake called ‘Tear of the Clouds.’ No wonder that cloud weeps.

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“ . . .When Captain John Smith . . . first saw the Potomac River, its waters were so clear that he could see the bottom in several fathoms. He described it as ‘fed with many sweet rivers and springs’ and frequented by otters, beavers, martins and sables, and fish so thick that he and his men attempted to catch them in a frying pan. He wrote: ‘Neither better fish, more plenty or variety, had any of us ever seen in any place.’

“A description of that same Potomac 350 years later appears in a recent report of the President’s Council on Recreation and National Beauty:

“ ‘As the Potomac slowly flows through the nation’s capital, its load of silt, filth and acid from farms, mills, and mines blends with discharge from overloaded sewers to nourish an algae bloom and a summer stink that rises from the river for miles below the metropolis.’ ”

The problem is worldwide in scope. Atmosphere and water recognize no national boundaries. But the scientists of the world estimate that well over 50 percent of all pollution and contamination in the world’s atmosphere comes from the industries of the United States.

The majority of the people of the United States have accepted the task of forcing an end to U.S. aggression in Indochina. Now we must also accept our share of the world responsibility of ending the destruction of the environment. We will have to do battle against the same greedy forces of private profit.

Science is capable of safeguarding the environment. What has emerged as a serious question is whether that is possible as long as monopoly capitalism rules the roost in a number of industrially developed countries.

The burning issue of preserving a livable environment has added a new urgent reason why capitalism as a social system has outlived its time and usefulness. A new weighty argument

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has emerged as to why the people of the United States and the world must consider the bringing into being of a responsive social system, a system that will be geared to resolving this universal danger.

The crisis of the environment, like other crises, has its roots in the inherent characteristics of capitalism. The drive for private profit which insists on exploitation and racism, and promotes war and domestic violence also includes an utterly reckless disregard for natural resources and the consequent contamination of the environment.

Mass struggles can prevent capitalism from totally destroying civilization either by nuclear war or by uprooting the environment. But the threat is ever present because of the predatory character of capitalism.

That threat can be erased for good only when capitalism, with its anti-human outlook, is discarded and replaced by a social order that is motivated and propelled only by the consideration of public welfare.

The serious crisis of the environment—in the viewpoint of responsible scientists—demands immediate, remedial action. Time is not on the side of the people in this case.

In a general sense, this crisis exists because the environment that sustains life on this earth is being destroyed. The sky is getting grayer; the leaves on the trees are getting browner; the rivers and the lakes are getting murkier. At an alarming rate, animals, trees and plants are becoming extinct. These are but the danger signals that life in any form on this planet is in danger.

An environmental time bomb is being constructed.

The genetic mechanism controlling the hereditary processes is being reprogrammed by blind forces. Radiation

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and contamination may result in an explosion of abnormalities and deformities in the generations that will follow.

There is a crisis because in most of the really dangerous processes the invisible accumulation may stand revealed only at the point of no return.

There is a crisis because in the United States and in the rest of the capitalist world, we are dealing with the problem of the environment within an outmoded social and economic system dominated by a class whose policy is maximum private profits regardless of human cost.

There is a crisis because the same basic policy of monopoly capitalism that is expressed in Vietnam, which led to the brutal massacre at My Lai, is reflected in its basic policy toward the environment.

There is a crisis because capitalism is not motivated by human needs or desires.

The extinction of all forms of life on earth is not going to take place this year or the next or even during this decade. This fact, however, should not lead to complacency about the urgency of a solution.

The processes now in motion do carry within them a point of no return.

But the problem is also immediate. Pollution is causing sickness and death now. With each day the death rate caused by pollution is increasing.

It may well be that human society will reach the point where it can detach itself and exist without the support of other living things. But such a possibility is in serious trouble if the environment of all living things including man is destroyed before technology and science reach such heights.

Oxygen is one of the vital elements of life but it is a fact that some of the industrially developed countries now consume

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more oxygen than green vegetation in their countries can return to the atmosphere.

For these countries, the point of no return has not been reached only because they are using the oxygen produced by vegetation in countries which have not been building such large-scale industries. It is another parasitic form of exploitation of neocolonial nations by the imperialist countries.

But the trend is toward industrialization in all parts of the world.

The total volume of atmosphere is not infinite and it is being consumed at an accelerated pace.

The crisis of the environment forces everyone to re-examine values, tables of priorities and the long-range outlook. Thus, the crisis has emerged as a new social and political problem which is interwoven with all other social and economic problems. Its solution cannot be intelligently explained without examining it within the structures of society. In the long run, patchwork solutions are not going to meet the challenge of the crises.

Pollution and the need to preserve a livable environment have become an issue in the class struggle. The pollution is heaviest where workers work and live. In keeping with their inherent nature, capitalist corporations refuse to take any responsibility for the pollution which they originate. They go to any lengths to cover up their guilt. The corporations are for doing something about the pollution if it does not in any way affect their rate of profit. When questions of their responsibility are raised they respond by threatening to close down the plants and move to new locations. Or they demand tax gifts in order to protect profits.

Pollution has become a new factor in runaway shops. Industry's first response to pressure on cleaning the

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environment is to create a job scare and a political crisis. They react to this pressure as they have reacted to union organization and to strikes.

Ecology has been seized upon as an issue by the political demagogue. It is another issue about which it is easy to make big promises with no intentions of ever doing anything. Frequently this takes the form of governmental policing agencies whose control is handed over to the polluters.

Capitalism is a doomed system. It is on its way out. Capitalism's record of social responsibility is very thin indeed. This, its imperialist, last stage of development is totally devoid of even pretenses of social responsibility. The void is being filled more and more by the working class. It is the working class that now shoulders the social, the public interests. This shift in class responsibility shows up in attitudes to the present and future of society. Capitalism behaves as if the future of human society is unalterably bound to its decaying and dying system. The only thing that concerns it is the maximum profits of today.

The working class does not tie either its own future or the future of human society to the declining destinies of capitalism. That is why the working class is the force to replace capitalism with a system that has a future. That is why the working class has a different attitude to problems and processes that are putting into question the future of human society. They want to produce a livable environment in which to build a decent social order. That is why as a class they are the main force for socialism. One should not get side-tracked by the demagogues or the corporate maneuvers. Ecology is a class issue.

There is a crisis quality to most problems rising from present day reality. There is a crisis quality to the current moment in history. Human society is passing through a



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revolutionary transition from one economic and social order to another. The crisis is a reflection of the scope and nature of this transition. Civilization has passed through other periods of transition, but this is a transition with a qualitative difference. The changeovers from slavery to feudalism to capitalism were revolutionary shifts. But their scope was limited because they were transitions from one system of exploitation to a more modern system of exploitation. One rich class of exploiters was replaced by another rich class of exploiters and one class of the exploited was replaced by another class of the exploited. The essence of the new systems were all based on the few getting rich by exploiting the many.

We are now passing through a transition with a qualitative difference. Capitalism is the last of the social and economic systems in which production is motivated by private profit. In a socialist society no one gets rich by exploiting others. This transition opens up a wholly new path for human development. That is why this changeover is so explosive. That is why the moment has a crisis quality about it.

The new levels of science and technology always fire the boilers of a transition. But they also have always provided tools of combat.

The boilers of the changeover have developed a heavy head of steam. Science and technology have taken a qualitative leap: With the new technology has come a qualitative leap in the means of destruction. Human society has come to a crossroads. It can now provide abundance for all or it can now destroy every living thing. Nuclear, chemical and bacteriological stockpiles can now kill every living thing 100 times over. For the first time the human race is forced to consider the difficult question: How can it proceed with social progress, with the transition to a higher social order without a nuclear disaster?

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The struggle against nuclear war of course must be placed in an overall framework. Human society will not accept a status quo. It is rejecting values and priorities based on exploitation and private profits. It will not accept imperialist oppression as a way of life. The struggle for social progress will go on. The transition to a new economic and social system will not wait. This struggle must now be joined with the struggle against a nuclear war. This only adds a new dimension to the crisis quality of the moment.

The struggle against both nuclear and environmental disaster are closely linked. The root causes are the same. The lineup of class and political forces on both sides are the same. They are critical problems peculiar to this moment of transition.

## II. THE EGGS AND CHICKENS ARE BEING DESTROYED!

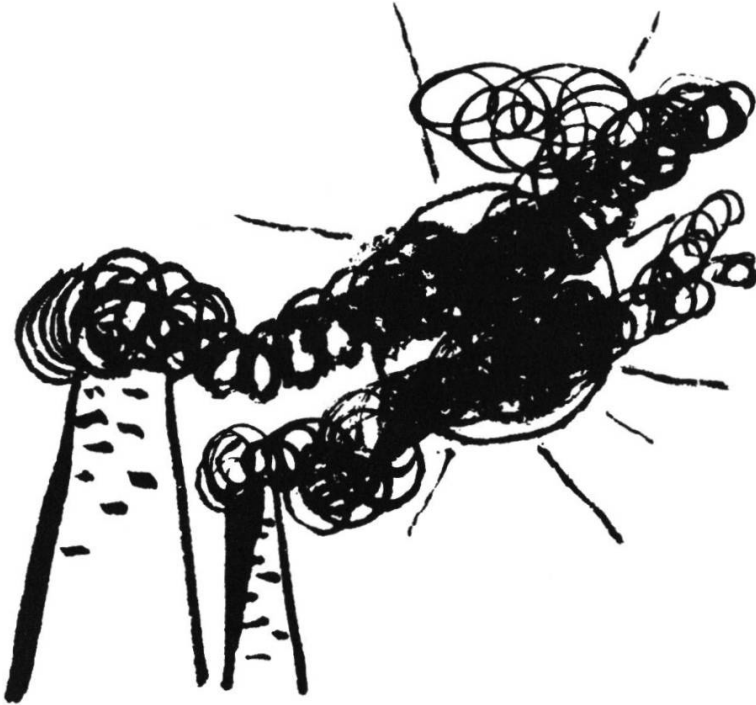
“If there ain’t no chickens there ain’t no eggs,” was one of W.C. Fields’ witticisms. But it pales to deadly seriousness when applied to the present environmental crisis. It is no longer a hypothetical one-liner.

Human society and all forms of life on this planet are confronted with a new and most critical challenge. It is a choice between the earth continuing as a celestial body that sustains living, growing matter, or an earth that will join the moon and countless planets that are dead and desolate. If human society continues as at present, the outcome is more and more debatable. In some areas, we are speeding to an environmental disaster. The processes that are propelling the crisis are in motion now. They are fundamentally affecting living, growing things now. They are killing now. They are in the process of preparing the environment for a dead planet *now*. Such appraisals are the conclusions of a growing number of serious-minded scientists.

Ralph Lapp, a well-known scientist, has written:

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“No one, not even the most brilliant scientist alive today, really knows where science is taking us. We are aboard a train which is gathering speed, racing down a track on which there are an unknown number of switches leading to unknown destinations. No single scientist is in the engine cab and there may be *demons* at the switch. Most of society is in the caboose looking backwards.”



After a commission of a world organization studied the development of science in the United States it declared: “We come to the conclusion that we were looking for something which was not there—a science policy.”

Soviet academician, Igor Petryonov, writes:

“The alarm raised by environmental pollution is well grounded. We cannot count on the biosphere’s ability to adapt itself to this revolution.

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“Nor can we hope that man will become accustomed to a polluted environment, that our not too distant descendants will enjoy breathing gasoline fumes and bathing in sewage.”<sup>1</sup>

These are stern warnings. The destruction of the environment is, of course, related to the technological revolution. But the cause for the crisis is not in the breakthroughs in science and technology. The “demons” at the switch are not the scientists. Curbing of science is not a solution to the crisis.

Pollution of the environment did not start in our time. The flow of industrial wastes into the rivers and lakes is as old as industry. But there is something critically new that has appeared on the horizon. This process has reached a critical turning point. The dramatic breakthroughs in science and technology have brought with them corresponding levels of destruction of a livable environment. This new level of pollution is being added to the accumulation left over from past pollutions.

Industries have poured mercury wastes into the lakes and rivers for decades. But we are only now seeing the cumulative effects of that pollution in the poisoned fish that have become inedible. Mercury pollution went unnoticed until it began to kill human beings as a poison. How long it has been the cause of sickness and, indirectly, the cause of death no one knows. And if mercury pollution were totally stopped its poisoning would not only continue, but would escalate for the next thousand years. No one has come up with any proposals on how to gather up the mercury that now lies in the bottom of rivers and lakes. Each year it will poison more fish.

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<sup>1</sup> Soviet Life, May 1971, p. 13.

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Up to a year or two ago all scientists assumed that the discard of industrial mercury would sink into the soil of river and lake bottoms and lie there in a harmless state. No one suspected it would be transformed into a killer poison that would enter nature's food chain and kill human beings because the process was not evident to the human eye. No one had any idea of its effects on the soil, plants, animal or on human beings.

Now there is a growing concern about lead and other elements in the food chain.

The most critical processes accumulating death are unseen and many more are unknown. And the most criminal are the deadly processes known but deliberately covered up and hidden from the public by corporation executives and government officials.

There are processes affecting the total supply of the earth's oxygen. Whether this will reach a point of crisis is not known. In fact, it is not being seriously studied.

There is a developing crisis of radiation. Of the presently known dangers, radiation is the greatest hazard to life and health in present and future generations. "For the first time in human history, civilization knows what will kill it within twenty years." Such statements may be exaggerations. But among distinguished scientists there are those who speak about reaching the point of no return within 25 or 30 years.

The danger from radiation is of utmost gravity because it is unseen. Its effects accumulate in the same invisible manner. When the effects of these processes become visible and calculable in most cases they have reached the point where remedy appears almost hopeless. It is estimated that something like seven percent of all cases of cancer and leukemia are caused by natural radiation. That is about 20,000 cases a year. But because of the genetic effects it is estimated that 50,000 and

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more deaths result from this every year. This is the cumulative effect of radiation from natural sources.

In 1963 a ban was placed on nuclear testing because it increased the radiation levels. But today, for the peaceful use of atomic energy, the federal government allows 20 times as much radiation for the average American as he could have received from the weapons testing fallout before the test ban. These standards have been increased without any scientific proof of their safety. The invisible genetic damage from this radiation could explode 15, 20 or 25 years from now in massive epidemics of cancer, leukemia or other causes of death or deformation. There is no proof to the contrary. There is growing indication that it is a serious danger.

But the contamination continues, each process adding to the cumulative results. The testing of the nuclear bombs goes on—some underground and some in the atmosphere. If the contamination of the environment is to end, as a first step all testing of nuclear weapons in the air or underground must be stopped.

The dumping of atomic industrial wastes into the seas and oceans of the world is unchecked. The European Atomic Energy Agency reports that in the year of 1968 alone Britain, Belgium, West Germany, France and the Netherlands dumped 11,000 tons of radioactive wastes, packed in unproved containers, into the Atlantic Ocean.

In spite of worldwide protests, on August 18, 1970, the United States sank 418 large containers of nerve gas into the Atlantic Ocean. There is no one in authority anywhere who knows or guarantees what is going to happen to these containers a year from now, or ten years from now. If they break up they will dangerously contaminate the North Atlantic Ocean from Florida to Europe. Further, these containers were

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placed in the Gulf Stream which will carry the poisonous substance far beyond the Atlantic.

The contaminated water used to cool the atomic reactors at Hanford flows along the Columbia River into the Pacific Ocean. The atomic installations of Great Britain discharge their poisonous wastes into the Irish Sea, and the French plutonium installations flush their poisonous wastes into the Rhone River that contaminates the fisheries in the Mediterranean Sea. Thus all oceans and seas of the world are affected. There is no hiding place from radioactive wastes.

In the United States there are some 20 atomic- power electric generating plants. Ninety-two new ones are now under construction. There are no scientists who will say that the possibilities of "accidents" in these plants do not exist. In fact, most say the possibilities of a major accident are clearly present. In the few years of operation there have been many small and near-major accidents.

Not one private utility corporation built an atomic plant until Congress put through a special law that relieves these corporations from any liability in case of an "accident." The utilities say the plants are safe—but they do not put a money guarantee behind their statements.

When the law was passed the utilities began to build plants. But even today not one private insurance corporation will give coverage to any of these atomic power plants without government backing. The private utilities and insurance corporations will not risk one penny on the possibilities of serious accidents in their nuclear power plants. They will not risk their money, but by building these plants they risk the lives of the residents.

Every U.S. scientist—even the most ardent supporters of private utilities and nuclear energy—insists that these plants



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should be built underground. This provides some measure of protection. But they are mostly being built in populated centers and above ground. To build them away from the populated centers and underground would affect the profit margin of these corporations.

One such “accident” in any of the plants around New York City would contaminate not only that city, but an area 150 miles in each direction. The question emerges—where and how would you transport, shelter and feed many millions of people within hours? The public utilities are not concerned about such human matters. That there is no solution to safeguard the lives of millions is not their concern.

Not only are there no assurances against the hazards from these plants but public utilities are not spending their money on research for safeguards. Major public utilities spend more money on advertising than they do on research. Research to clean the environment, research for safeguards is not profitable. They are of benefit only to people.

The natural background mercury level in some foods averages 0.2 percent. Without proof of any kind the Food and Drug Administration of the federal government has set the permissible mercury levels at 0.5 percent. This is a level about halfway between that found in fish that

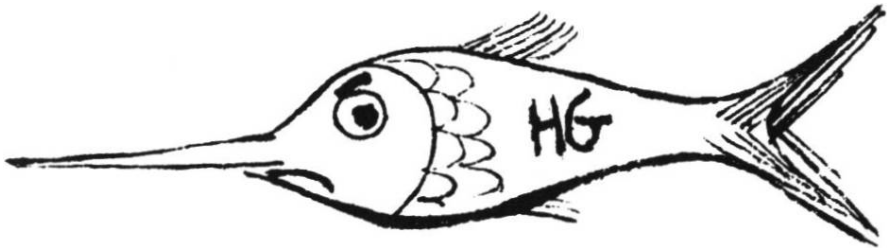
killed people in Japan and the average level that comes from natural causes. No one knows whether the 0.5 per cent level results in sickness or in slow deaths. No one knows what the invisible hazards are. But the pressure is on to raise even the present permissible level because there are no “reported deaths” and because the 0.5 per cent level has “badly harmed the swordfish industry.” Just how dangerous mercury is to the unborn is not yet known.

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A Swedish scientist reported that government has to take *social and economic* factors into consideration and so in Sweden they doubled the 0.5 per cent permissible level. This includes the fish that is exported to the United States. "Social and economic factors" is nothing more than a way of covering up for the profit factor.

There was a public outcry. The mercury-contaminated cans of fish were taken off the supermarket shelves. But they were not destroyed. Now the public concern has diminished. The contaminated cans are finding their way from the warehouse back to the retail outlets.

There is no end to facts about pollution. But there is a shortage of solutions and program.



Here, for example, is one of a multitude of hazards:

"An extremely prevalent type of city pollution is airborne particulate matter. This comes from burning coal and oil and from various industrial processes. Particulate pollution is well known for its ability to soil buildings and clothing. In addition, statistical studies have shown that dwellers in urban areas with high particulate concentrations have a higher incidence of stomach cancer and cancers of the esophagus, prostate, and bladder.

"Asbestos is a pollutant which is rapidly becoming more common. Its use has grown a thousandfold in the past fifty years. It enters the air with the wearing away of brake linings and clutch facings, and as buildings are constructed or razed

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(because of its extensive use in building materials). Asbestos is also launched into urban air when construction workers spray fire-proofing into steel girders. We know it as a remarkable material which is high resistant to heat, which does not burn, and which is, in fact, virtually indestructible. It is this very indestructibility, however, which allows asbestos to remain in the lungs for very long periods of time. As the cleansing mechanisms of the lung try to remove this material, 'asbestos bodies' are formed. These are often harmless growths but may become cancerous. A report of the incidence of cancer in persons whose occupations subjected them to moderate amounts of asbestos showed a marked increase over that expected in the general population. Lung cancer, the most common form of tumor found in this group, was seven times more often than expected normally. Cancer of the outer lining of the lung (mesothelioma) occurred in four of the 225 men studied. This is an extremely rare form of cancer; for it to be found at all is surprising.

"It should be pointed out, too, that asbestos bodies are found in persons who are not occupationally exposed to the pollutant. Of the people autopsied in Pittsburgh in 1964, 41 per cent had such growths in their lungs. In Montreal, the total was as high as 48 per cent. In three New York City hospitals, nearly half of all lung tissue samples showed asbestos bodies."<sup>2</sup>

There is increasing evidence that air pollution is the biggest contribution to most respiratory diseases, such as emphysema and chronic bronchitis, two of the fastest growing causes of death in the United States.

The study of what effects airborne chemicals have on birth defects is only getting under way. The initial results are already cause for serious concern.

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<sup>2</sup> Esposita, John, *Vanishing Air*; Grossman Publishers: New York, 1970, pp. 14-15.

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“There is reason to fear that some chemicals may constitute as important a risk as radiation, possibly a more serious one. Although knowledge of chemical mutagenesis in man is much less certain than that of radiation, a number of chemicals—some with widespread use—are known to induce genetic damage in some organisms. To consider only radiation hazards is to ignore what may be the submerged part of the iceberg.”<sup>3</sup>

The list of potentially dangerous materials keeps growing. It includes such heavy metals as beryllium, copper, antimony and arsenic. Lead, chromium, cadmium, barium, cobalt and nickel are also on the list.

There is no escaping from air pollution. It is only possible to escape from the most heavily polluted areas.

For years people have been running from polluted New York City to Staten Island. But tests now show that men over 45 years of age, who live in that part of Staten Island that is closest to the Bayonne-Elizabeth industrial complex of New Jersey, die from respiratory cancer at the rate of 55 per 100,000 people, while for those who live on the far side the death rate is 40 per 100,000.

The danger to a livable environment appears in all areas. New, vast areas of contamination are rising in the world's oceans. The rivers are like huge sewers overflowing into the oceans with the pollution of cities, industries and farms. Metals, poisonous chemicals, acids of every description pour into the seas. The oceans receive one-half as much iron as is used in the production of steel; over six million tons of phosphorous each year; over two million tons of lead. Pollution enters the oceans by water and by air. Not only Lake Erie is “dead.” The oceans

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<sup>3</sup> Epstein, Samuel S., “Chemical Hazards in Human Environment,” in *Ca, A Cancer Journal for Physicians*.

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near the shore and the industrial centers are now becoming "dead seas." In these areas the environment for marine life has been destroyed. Some chemicals kill marine organisms outright, increasing the load of decomposing matter that eats up oxygen; others stimulate the surviving plants and animals, adding to the oxygen demand; and still other chemicals and oil products themselves demand oxygen from the water.

Michael Harwood wrote in the *New York Times Magazine Section* (October 24, 1971):

"Thus, the fish smother and lobsters, crabs and other marine life has been found to develop cancerous growths and other pollution related diseases.

"The pollution of the oceans has set into motion processes. They endanger the balance set and maintained by nature. They are time bombs that very well may go off at the point of no return. It is very doubtful whether human society can live on a planet surrounded by dead seas."



### III. THE OLDEST CRIME

The problem of overall environment has focused attention on the oldest and most brutal of all of capitalism's crimes. It is the mass murder that has been going on in the factories and mines for over a hundred years. The number of victims runs into the millions. The crime is hidden behind the biggest of all lies, the "death certificates" signed by medical authorities bought off by corporations.

This mass murder, because it takes place within the industrial processes, has always been acceptable to capitalist society as necessary and normal. Workers' lives have always been expendable for the corporations. Sixty die from industrial accidents every day. Thousands are maimed and crippled. This, industry cannot deny. In spite of the overwhelming evidence to the contrary, the coal companies still try to deny that the black lung disease, from which hundreds of thousands of coal miners have died, is related to the unhealthy conditions in their coal mines. Corporations in other industries are no different. On the scale of profits, human lives are worthless.

What follows are excerpts from testimony based on personal experiences given by workers in the chemical industry in New Jersey. This testimony is from the minutes of a Conference on March 29, 1969, called by the Oil, Chemical and

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Atomic Workers International Union, *Hazards in the Industrial Environment*. The discussion was about the deadly pollutants in the factory environment. These remarks are only a small indication of the crime committed every day by most manufacturing corporations. Environment is a life and death question for most workers. Here is what one worker said:

“And there was one song called ‘The Silicosis Blues.’ I was very interested in this song because it affected one of our locals in Boomer, West Virginia, the Union Carbide Local. When they were building a tunnel, called the Gauley Tunnel, that would supply water to this plant, 600 miners died of silicosis. And out of that tragedy grew a song. Most of us probably never heard of the Gauley Tunnel. Most of us probably never knew that 600 human beings lost their lives in building this particular aqueduct that would carry water to a plant where OCAW members are employed today.

“And, in the same State of West Virginia, probably the most dramatic evidence of lack of concern on the part of the Government, has been the situation with the mine workers. Let’s just review that question for a moment. In the State of West Virginia, we have 30,000 miners employed in coal mines. We know approximately 80 percent of them will die of Black Lung, pneumoconiosis. Eighty percent of the miners who go down into the pit will die of this disease. Possibly the other 20 percent will die from falling rock, cave-ins, and the like. Now that’s a staggering figure.

“The State of West Virginia did not even have Black Lung as a compensable injury, and it was virtually impossible to collect compensation for it.”



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Another worker observed how socialism reacts to such problems:

“In examining this book on which American law is based, I was really amazed to see that they list a worrisome chemical, being used in our oil refineries, with a standard of 225 parts per million, under the Walsh-Healy Act. And they cite, in this very book that’s part of American law, that the Russian standard is 25 parts per million. Now I don’t know who’s correct; whether the Russians are correct or the Americans are correct. However, I say, if there has to be an error, let the error be on the side of the worker, instead of on the side of the boss. Two hundred and twenty-five parts per million as opposed to 25 parts per million? I say, let’s have the lower level, and if it’s over-safe,

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fine, because once you've been exposed to the higher level, it's irreversible."

The standards are dramatic comparisons of the two social systems, one motivated by private corporate profits, the other by concern for human beings.

Another worker made a plea for enforceable federal laws:

"This is what's happening to our people. We need a law. We can't do it as one union; we can't do it as one company, because we don't know. It takes the type of investment that only the Government can make. It takes the type of scientific personnel that are not on the payrolls of companies. The National Safety Council—I know we have many members here who participate in it—is good on auto safety and good on some superficial training programs in the factory, but it runs out on us on the fundamental question of health and welfare."

The testimony continues:

"The plant makes pigment for paint and one of the chemicals that they use in the making of the pigment is carbon monoxide. They are supposed to have monitoring devices around the plant to measure the levels of carbon monoxide. There is a level set, above which men are not supposed to be exposed for an eight-hour day. Carbon monoxide is a fairly well known pollutant; there is actually more on carbon monoxide in this book here, than there is on most of the other chemicals, because it's been known to be poisonous for at least decades, if not centuries. There are devices around there, but there had been a series of accidents. For example, there was one death where a valve had been left open and a door had been left shut, and there was no monitoring device and a man died of carbon monoxide. There were four serious accidents; two men who collapsed on the job; two others who collapsed and went to the hospital unconscious, where, at least with one of them, as I heard the medical report, there was severe brain

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damage because of carbon monoxide poisoning. As I remember, the oldest of these men was twenty-five. . . .”

To fully appreciate the nature of the expose contained in the remarks of the next worker who took the stand, read the explanation of Glenn Paulson of Rockefeller University who participated in the conference:

“If you go into New York City and put a carbon monoxide meter in the center of Manhattan, during the working day you can measure carbon monoxide levels of about 20 to 25 ppm. Now I ought to say what a part per million is. A part per million (ppm) is a very small amount. It’s about the measure of a shot of whiskey spread all around a 9 X 12 living room—but you all know that if you take the shot of whiskey and deliver a localized shot, say to someone’s stomach, it can have an effect. With some of these chemicals you don’t have to have much to have an effect. About the 20-25 ppm on the streets of New York, I am concerned.”

With that explanation as a background, now read the testimony of the next worker about how the corporations get around safety laws and safety devices:

“They showed us all the monitoring devices and where they were located. At this time the maximum level was supposed to be 50 ppm. I’m kind of curious about machines, so I started to look around at the machines and I found one where the alarm was set to go off at 100 ppm. The management people got very embarrassed by that and they immediately changed it. Tony looked around. He found one that was set to go off at 200 ppm. And, I think it was the safety officer at the time, who started to look around at them. He found one that was set to go off at 400 ppm, which is a level that if somebody breathes that for a few hours, they’ll fall unconscious. Now there were also lots of places where there were no monitoring devices yet, where the

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carbon monoxide lines were going through, where the ventilation characteristics were not that good, and where one didn't know what the carbon monoxide levels were."

Another asked for a new kind of workers' watchdog safety committee:

"The greatest pollution is in the workplace. And the tragedy is that the labor movement has not realized that this set of standards, which is referred to as the threshold levels, was set up basically by doctors and technicians working for management. Now I've found that, looking into the radiation problem what these fellows did was, first they made the choices between the 2 and the 3, and when does it begin to show. That's an arbitrary judgement, and so they did it at the level at which management wanted them to, because, on the committees, there are representatives of the operating side of management."

In simple terms a worker stated how the working class is a victim of industrial pollution 24 hours of each day:

"Well, Saran Wrap is the product which contains polyvinyl plastic, which is being used as a commercial product, and which we now find is producing a potential very dangerous environmental pollutant. When Saran Wrap is accumulated as trash, and is burned in incinerators, it produces phosgene gas. And phosgene gas is one of the gases that was used in gas warfare in World War I. Fifty ppm, on very short time exposure, will produce fatality. We're producing approximately five billion pounds of vinyl plastic, which has this potential, in our industry now, with the expectation that we're going to increase the output this year by about 7 percent. We're producing an awful lot of phosgene in our society, and here's a potential environmental contamination which I think both the scientists and the medical profession have to look at. When the accumulation is in a community that contains a large amount

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of apartment house incinerators, we're really fouling up the air of the neighborhood."

Another worker dramatically exposed the total nature of the industrial role: "...though the medical society are great advocates of the free practice of medicine, there is no greater captive medicine than there is in the State of New Jersey. Anyone who's involved in a health problem, particularly in our industry, has to be submitted to the doctors that the companies choose and, whether they're killing us or curing us, we have no recourse until they bury us, or discharge us. . .



The testimony continued:

"As far as noise. Tom's already mentioned this, but there's a series of papers recently on noise that indicates that hearing loss in industrial workers is very, very high. At very early ages, people who work in various kinds of industries, develop significant hearing loss, and in the few places where measurements have been made of the noise level, you can measure 80 to 90 decibels, which is high enough on sustained exposure for a short period of time to cause hearing loss in guinea pigs, and, presumably, also in people. Now you can consider noise a kind of air pollutant, I guess, because it goes

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through the air. I didn't mention that earlier, but this is a much more widespread problem than has been recognized until very recently."

Still another worker observed:

"I walked into a Group Health Insurance Office in New York yesterday, to see someone, and one of the vice presidents was proud to show me the new work that they're doing. This was the former Herald Tribune Building. They ripped out all of the presses and they built floors. And the State of New York requires three coats of asbestos sprayed on the steel beams. This is an enclosed area and they sprayed an awful lot of asbestos. There are thousands of office workers in that building, with asbestos going up through shafts, and we know that those little tubules get lodged in the lung and can produce cancer."

Further testimony:

"Years ago, when I worked with this area, to give an example, when I went home at night, when I kissed my wife when she greeted me at the door, she always used to be able to tell me what chemicals I had been inhaling that particular day. And that's a fact. Sometimes it was alcohol; sometimes it was acetates; sometimes it was a very sweet-smelling chemical."

And another:

"The company gave them assurances that there was nothing wrong with what they were doing, and we hear this time and time again. The company assures you everything is O.K. and the companies don't know, themselves; don't know enough about the product to start with, and if they do know, they're not telling."

A worker pointed to the profit motive:

"... we have one heck of a company to work for when it comes to safety. You cannot say they're neglectful; they're

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criminal, absolutely criminal, and I want the record to show it. Their doctors deserve some sort of a medal because of the millions of dollars that they have saved this corporation."

Another worker sharpened the class point of view:

"Now some people say that the operators and mechanics, they're not paying attention; they should do this; they should do that. Now these are strange words to me, because every time I talk to the company, they tell me they have a right to run their plant until it comes to safety. All of a sudden, it's our job to make sure that our people follow all the rules and all the regulations. This seems to be the one part that management does not assume its responsibility in running the plant. They always turn to us and expect us to enforce all of these rules and regulations. I do not say we don't have a responsibility here. Of course we do, but it does seem strange that this is the one issue that management is willing to give up its rights on. All they can do is tell us what we do wrong."

Other charges were mentioned:

"Finally, earlier was mentioned malathion and parathion. Those, as you all know, are insecticides. They're very closely related to the nerve gases that killed the sheep in Utah about a year ago, when they had that accident when the stuff was released."

The expose continues:

"Now I wanted to bring a question here about a couple of products that we don't have much information on. One is DMSO, dimethyl sulfoxide. This is a colorless, supposedly odorless, product, that has been experimented on by Merck, and they used animals to experiment. However, after it was removed for a while, even for experimentation, by the Food and Drug Administration, I found out that the company had

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been using at least two workers in the plant as guinea pigs and was using the product on them.”

The representative of one local union proposes:

“But our proposal is that the union safety committee have the authority to shut down any operation that they deem hazardous. Now the company, of course, takes a dim view of this, and, if our past experience is any criterion—in fact, we had a negotiating meeting yesterday; the plant manager said, ‘Well, even if you get it in the contract, that doesn’t necessarily mean it’s going to happen.’ This was referring to another item. So, this is the attitude they have. You go in and negotiate what appears to be good language to protect you, but in reality, they find ways around it.”

“What I’m trying to bring out is, most of our problems are respiratory. This plant has been in operation for over forty years and not one man is living that’s on retirement. Not one. And the ones that are living, that are working there now, the majority of them, that’ve been there any length of time, the doctor gets most of that overtime money; the doctor gets most of it. And when you come out of there at night your eyes are blue, your tongue is blue, your teeth are blue, and sometimes, especially in the summer, if you sweat, you have it in your system. They made a gentian violet for strep throats and what not—you’ve probably heard of it—and if you knew the ingredients that go in some of these things, you might not want to take medicine again.”

“So, I go to work and, as I said many times, I’m fresh. I relieve another fireman, and the guy is getting dizzier and dizzier. So, we start complaining. We go down there. So, they done us a big favor; they extended the stack four feet, thinking this is something, and yet, when it’s a windy day, it still comes down. See. So, we feel a little better, but we want that stack as high as a man can go. Let her go high; then we’ll be safe. Now this can be done if we put pressure on the company.”



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This is dramatic testimony about the criminal corporate pollution on the job. Most factories and mills are poison chambers. They cripple, they kill. The process is continuous; it is covered up by formal death certificates that stamp the cause of death, "heart failure," "respiratory problems," etc.

After the worker goes to his home, he rests and sleeps in the most polluted section of the town. In most cases it is the same pollution from the same factories.

The testimony of the oil and chemical workers is a protest; it is an expose, it is a plea to the trade unions, to the public—stop the killing that takes place in the industrial process!

This testimony by shop workers not only exposes the conditions in the factories, it is a devastating indictment of capitalism. It is an expose of the brutal anti-human nature of the people who own and run these factories. It is an indictment of a class and a system. It is an expose and a condemnation of the values, priorities, and the morality of a system where private profit is priority number one. These are the voices of the victims of a social and economic system that is propelled by the greedy drive for profits by a small minority class.

These are the voices of the working class. They are the voices that will get ever stronger and louder.

There is one more lesson that is explicit in this testimony. What the corporate managers do to the environment in the factories they are doing to the environment in general. They are destroying it. They are as irresponsible, as callous about the overall environment as they are about the lives and health of the workers in the shops and factories.



## IV. "KILL EVERY LIVING THING"

The realization that the human race faces a critical challenge from pollution brings with it a rising consciousness about other crises and dangers. In Vietnam, indeed in all Indochina, the United States is hard at work trying to do there what pollution threatens to do to the world. The orders at My Lai were not at cross purposes with the U.S. military policy for all of Indochina. Millions of tons of napalm have burned the flesh off the bones of hundreds of thousands of living human beings. The aerial bombardment has never differentiated between military and civilian villages. The death toll of civilians is in the millions. This is the result of a policy of "kill every living thing that moves" and "destroy everything that grows."

There is a chemical called 2-2-5-T. It is used in the United States for killing weeds. When some of this killer chemical was blown by the winds into a flock of sheep and goats in Nevada, 60 percent of the offspring were born dead or deformed. The rest died. In 1968 in this same area 6,400 sheep died because the winds carried a whiff of nerve gas being tested by the army. About 45 percent of the land area in South Vietnam has now been sprayed with 2-2-5-T that is 13 times more powerful, more concentrated than that permitted in the United States. It has

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now been proved that these chemicals produce human cancer, possibly for generations, in an escalating spiral. Is there a more heinous crime in all of history? The fires of these crematoriums will burn for generations to come.

This is as deliberate and premeditated as the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It is no less a crime than the death camps of Hitler fascism. Hiroshima, Buchenwald, My Lai—they are all offspring of a morality that is generated by the very nature of capitalism. In the struggle to end the destruction of the environment the people are going to have to fight against the same class having the same morality.

In the matter of lethal weapons, American capitalism has scant regard for its own fellow countrymen. Myron S. Waldman of *Newsday* has disclosed an admission by the Army that 200 nerve gas projectiles were stacked in 1966 at the Gerstle River test site in Alaska. They were to have been destroyed but the order was never given. When the ice melted, the deadly containers sank to the bottom of the lake.

In 1969, hearing rumors of the missing shells, the lake was ordered drained by a new commanding officer. One of the shells leaked and a soldier, injecting himself with a protective hypodermic needle, was able to save his life.

The nerve gas involved is so lethal that a single drop is deadly to a human being.

How many more of these storage areas have been set up in our country and throughout the world? That information is stamped "Top Secret" by the authorities who fear public exposure.

Most Americans are under the illusion that the Nixon Administration has restricted the use of chemical and biological weapons. Most believe the Pentagon is destroying the stockpiles of these heinous weapons. Nothing could be further

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from the truth. This is another of Nixon's calculated frauds. The 1971 military budget set aside \$25.3 million for the procurement of chemical and biological weapons. In the 1972 budget the request is for \$50.8 million. In the October 11, 1971 issue of *The Nation* Arthur Kanegis and Lindsay Richards write:

“Such disposal operations may lull the public into thinking that the military is removing lethal chemicals from the U.S. stocks. It is not so. ‘We are maintaining our lethal chemical deterrent,’ stated Lt. Col. William E. Dismore, the newly appointed commander of Rocky Mountain Arsenal. In an interview obtained for this article on September 10, Lieutenant Colonel Dismore acknowledged a report that even when the three-year disposal project is completed, a 250-acre ‘toxic yard’ will be maintained at the arsenal .... When asked why some nerve gas weapons are being retained while others, such as the M34 cluster bombs, are being destroyed, Dismore answered that the M34s are ‘obsolete,’ ‘not compatible with today’s high-performance aircraft.’ They are not being destroyed, he said, because of any government policy change or protest from Congress and the public. ‘We would be disposing of these in any event. They are of no value; there’s no market for the product.’ ”

Nixon makes speeches renouncing the use of chemical and biological weapons. The Pentagon has brought its training manual up to date. The emphasis is on their use with other weapons. They are working overtime on how to use germ warfare “discontinued.” The updated manual states:

- (1) Use of agents with different incubation periods could prolong the period of required treatment.
- (2) Use of agents requiring different treatment could also prolong hospitalization.
- (3) Use of agents with the same incubation period could confuse diagnosis.

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There are a number of reasons why biological anti-personnel agents may be used to complement or supplement another weapon system such as chemical, nuclear, or high explosives:

- (1) Resistance can be lowered by bodily injury from another weapon. If an individual's resistance is lowered, the pathogen may overcome body defenses with less effort.
- (2) In metropolitan areas, food and water supplies, as well as sanitation facilities may be destroyed by other weapons. As sanitation declines and individual resistance drops, the opportunities for biological anti-personnel agents to invade and produce disease are increased many-fold.
- (3) Casualties created by disease would place an additional load on medical facilities used for diagnosis, treatment and evacuation.
- (4) Biological agents in aerosol form will probably be unnoticed if delivered during attack by other weapons.

No one knows how long the various poisons and germs spread on Indochina will continue to kill, to destroy and to mutilate the newborn—even after the war comes to an end. More bombs have been dropped on Vietnam and Laos than on any area in world history. If the corporations cannot control and exploit Indochina, they will try to “kill every living thing and destroy anything that grows!” The policy calls either for U.S. domination of Vietnam or to turn it into a land that will not sustain or grow anything. Is this not an extension of the policy of exploitation and profits that is the very meaning of capitalism? Because of this, an end to the policies that are destroying the environment must start with an end to the policies that are destroying Indochina.

There is another similarity between the policy of destroying the people and the lands of Indochina and the destruction of

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the environment. The people of the United States are against both policies, but the policies continue. The lesson is obvious. A more militant struggle must be waged. An essential part of that struggle is the need to expose the roots of the social system that bears these evils. We must indict the creator of misery and murder and not limit ourselves to the immediate horror.







## V. THE ROOTS OF THE PROBLEM

Countless books on pollution are flooding the market. Many of them describe the effects, but most, if not all, sidestep and avoid coming to grips with the central problem. Without defining the real cause there can be no basic solutions.

Many point the accusing finger at “the new technology.” Their “solutions” are simple. Technology got us into this mess and technology will get us out also. This, of course, is no solution. Technology is what people make of it. Technology is an instrument. It can be harnessed and used either for positive or for negative results. It can be controlled and used for social good. Or it can be controlled and used to pile up private profits. So, technology in the abstract is neither the cause nor the cure for the problems of the environment.

Speaking about the problems of environmental pollutions, U Thant, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, sought the source “in the explosive growth of human population, in the poor integration of a powerful and efficient technology with environmental requirements, in the deterioration of agricultural lands, in the unplanned extension of urban areas,

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in the decrease of available space and growing danger of extinction of many forms of animal and plant life.”<sup>4</sup>

Such a statement while descriptive, reflects only part of the truth. It is true there is a “poor integration of a powerful and efficient technology.” But the real question is why is there such a “poor integration”? How must society rearrange its structure to guarantee “good integration” of efficient technology with the needs of human progress?

The *New York Times* editorially inadvertently came one step closer to the core of the problem when it stated:

“A corporate manager has his attention focused on the profit targets and production schedules. He has a *natural resistance* to taking into account environmental costs, some of which may be invisible, incalculable or very long-term.

“What is involved is a conflict of values. Nixon proposes many excellent environmental measures but he often talks the old fashioned language of the profit-first businessman.”<sup>5</sup>

What is important is that the “resistance” is inherent within capitalism. What neither U Thant nor the *New York Times* says (each for one’s own reasons) is that the “corporate manager” with his “profit targets” is an inseparable feature of capitalism. As long as we have capitalism we are going to have “corporate managers” who are going to “resist” taking into account the environmental risks. “Corporate managers” under capitalism cannot be separated from the “profits-first businessman.” These managers are going to continue doing so, especially where the risks and hazards are “invisible and incalculable” to the people. That is the very nub of the dilemma. Corporate managers will resist, government officials will “play ball” with

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<sup>4</sup> U.N. Document E/4667, 1969.

<sup>5</sup> *New York Times*, February 9, 1971.

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them, and the “invisible,” “incalculable” processes leading to a point of no return will grind away.

What is involved is a conflict of values. What is important? Profits for a few already rich, or an environment in which life on this planet can continue?

There is a basic concept, a fundamental approach—an attitude that underlies corporations’ responses. It is a response, a sense of values that is devoid of any social responsibility. Any entrepreneur who might dream of deviating from the rules of profit knows that this is the path of suicide. If he is to survive he must play by the rules set by the system. The root of the problem is not to be found in the evilness of individuals.

Corporate response reveals its true colors when there is public pressure against an industry polluting the environment of a city. Time after time they say, “You force us to spend money on ending the pollution and we will move our industry out of the city.” Time after time, they say in effect, “Take it or leave it! You have a choice of clean air, clean water, and no jobs. Or polluted air and water, shorter lives, and possible jobs.”

Bethlehem Steel is the biggest polluter of the Buffalo area in New York. The people of Buffalo and the surrounding areas started a movement to clean the air, the rivers and the lakes around the city. The executives of Bethlehem Steel called a public press conference. Through this means they publicly made the following arrogant demands. From the people they demanded lower taxes to be collected from Bethlehem Steel, higher productivity by the workers in their plants and an end to all “prodding” of Bethlehem Steel about cleaning the environment. In effect, these pillars of society cold-bloodedly said, “Either you, the people of Buffalo, accept our conditions or we close the steel mills in Buffalo for all time.”

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For years General Motors, Ford and Chrysler publicly argued that the pollution resulting in smog was only a peculiar Los Angeles phenomenon. When they could no longer continue that fakery they then claimed that it was not “technologically feasible” to cut down or to eliminate the pollution that comes from the automobile motors they manufacture. This claim is now also exposed as a fraud. It is a fraud sustained by a conspiracy between them. The reluctant Justice Department has had to issue a complaint against them. In this complaint the government charges that these giant corporations engaged in a fraud and a conspiracy dating back to 1953.

They conspired to eliminate competition between themselves on research, development and manufacturing of anti-pollution devices.

The conspiracy included an agreement for all of them to make the claim that it was not “technologically feasible” to install such equipment for years to come. The corporate conspiracy to keep on poisoning the environment, to keep on dealing in death and sickness went on for years while the anti-pollution know-how was registered in patents they refused to install.

The devices now being put to use are not new devices. In a speech in 1964, S. Smith Griswold, expert on air pollution controls, stated:

“I term it a great delaying action, because that is what I believe the auto industry has been engaged in for a decade. Everything the industry has disclosed it is able to do today to control auto exhaust was possible technically ten years ago. No new principle has been developed, no technological advance was needed, no scientific breakthrough was required. Crankcase emissions have been controlled by a method in use for half a century. Hydrocarbons and carbon monoxide are

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being controlled by relatively simple adjustments of the most basic engine components—the carburetor and ignition systems”<sup>6</sup>

In 1969 Milton Barlow, a union chief steward, testified before the Senate subcommittee on Air and Water Pollution. About the attitude of the St. Joseph Lead Company, he stated:

“My company will only make changes when it is forced to make changes. Health, community health plays second fiddle to increased production and bigger profits. For example, a State inspector announces the date of his inspection tour to the company, and it is very easy to cut production that day, cutting back the furnaces; there is no risk of a furnace blow-hole to pollute the air. After his trip, the inspector writes a good report and then there is business as usual.”<sup>7</sup>

That is not only the attitude of one corporation. It is the basic approach of capitalism—of all corporations to any problem that is in any way an obstacle to making more profits.

A leading executive of Reynolds Metals is quoted as saying, “It’s cheaper to pay claims than it is to control fluorides.”<sup>8</sup> This puts a price tag on the life of every American. For the corporations the issue is not whether people live or die as a result of their pollution—but rather what is the cheapest way to continue the destruction of the environment. The fines leveled by government bodies against corporate polluters is a joke. What is a \$50 or \$100 fine to a corporation that deals in billions of dollars? These fines, in fact, become licenses to continue polluting.

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<sup>6</sup> *Washington Post*, June 26, 1964.

<sup>7</sup> Hearing before Subcommittee on Air and Water Pollution, U.S. Senate, *Air Pollution*, October 1969, p. 161.

<sup>8</sup> *Reynolds Metals v. Lanpert*, 9th Circuit, 1963.

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In 1970, 13 corporations, including such giants as Dupont and Texaco were convicted for polluting New York Harbor. They were fined only \$750 each.

In a survey of the 500 largest corporations only 44 percent had any kind of anti-pollution budgets. Most of these were meaningless gestures.

The manufacturing process puts 300 pounds of pollution into the air each year for every living American. Under growing public pressure corporations now spend 1.65 percent of their capital expenditures on pollution controls and a fraction of that goes into research. They spend many times that on avoiding and hoodwinking the public about pollution problems.

There are other problems reflecting the same anti-human sense of values by corporations. The monopoly corporations in a basic sense dominate all governmental bodies. This domination has now been extended to problems of pollution control. A Colorado hearing on pollution of a stream was presided over by the so-called Pollution Control Director of the brewery that was polluting the stream under investigation.

There are anti-pollution boards in most of the 50 states. But a check shows that at least 35 such boards are dominated by representatives of the corporations who are the main polluters.

The most influential member of the Los Angeles Harbor Anti-Pollution Board is an executive of an oil corporation that is the biggest polluter of the harbor area.

Their presence on these boards is not accidental. The official rationale is that they bring with them "expertise and familiarity with pollution problems." The other excuse is that they should be on these boards "because of their civic importance." It is clear to anyone that their "expertise" as polluters is in covering up the polluted tracks of the corporations they represent. Their "expertise" is the expertise

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of a wolf in a flock of sheep. There is a clear case of conflict of interest between what these boards should do and what they actually do, as a result of having the representatives of the polluters sit on them. They have become a cover for the polluters. They divert the concern over pollution to dead-end corners and endless "studies" and "discussions."

We have examples of what happens to people who take their "civic responsibilities" seriously. In New York, Mr. John Burns was an Assistant District Attorney. In 1970 he went after General Motors for polluting the Hudson River. He was doing a very good job. Because he was doing a good job he was summarily fired by the U.S. Attorney General.

Because of public pressure recently the Atomic Energy Commission financed a study, by a top-ranking group of atomic scientists, of the effects of radiation that comes from nonmilitary use of atomic and nuclear energy. After a serious study, they reported that the dangers from radiation are now 20 times as great as was the official judgment accepted by the people in the government and by the Atomic Energy Commission itself. The report was buried. The group was dissolved. Eleven of the 12 scientists were quietly fired. The study was discontinued.

The tentacles of the pollution empire are endless. Mr. Gerald Thomas, the president of New Mexico State University recently set guidelines and the priorities for the state's environmental laws. He said the language should make clear that the environmental laws insure and maintain the "profit motive and the free enterprise system in the state."

Edmund O'Brien, Jr., California's State Attorney General, tried to get experts on oil pollution from the universities. After repeated rebuffs, he said: "The university experts all seem to be working on grants from the oil industry." To which a professor

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of oil engineering publicly retorted that he cannot testify “because my work depends on good relations with the oil industry. My interest is serving the petroleum industry.” The oil corporations’ priorities are the professor’s priorities. Needless to say, the professor knew that the oil industry was not interested in the truth, in the welfare of the people or in a clean environment.





## VI. IRRESPONSIBILITY OF GOVERNMENT

Criminal conspiracy and destruction of the environment are not limited to corporations. They extend to the very top governmental bodies. The crime on the governmental level is covered up by demagogic speeches about ecology and calling for "earth days." The Nixon-Agnew gang was the first to use the ecology demagoguery on a wide scale. It thought it could make meaningless speeches about clean air and clean water, and involve youth in a meaningless movement. But the strategy backfired. Youth quickly discovered collecting discarded cans and bottles, while not without merit, was not tackling the problem at its source. There is an important lesson to be learned here: the mass can move very quickly from revulsion at the effect to condemnation of the cause. We are witnessing the same educational process that took place in the peace movement.

Nor is the President skillful in his demagoguery. This year, 1971, Nixon addressed a meeting of the top industrial polluters. He assured them that they are not going to be the "scapegoats" of the ecology movement. He repeated his basic approach—

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that industry does not have to prove that its products are harmful or a danger to life before it starts production and sales. This policy means, go ahead—produce and put the products on the market. If it kills enough people directly, then we will take it off the market. Under these circumstances, the people are the guinea pigs.

Earlier Nixon made a big point about ecology in his State of the Union address. But, as usual, when the Nixon Administration introduced the bills that would become law, seven key words were inserted at every point into every law dealing with the environment. This was done at the insistence of the Administration spokesman. The seven words are “*taking into account the practicability of compliance.*” These words pulled the rug from under all anti-pollution government bodies. They also pulled the rug from under the power of the courts to deal with environmental pollution. This clause makes Nixon’s anti-pollution bills a farce. It is the loophole through which even the biggest polluters can crawl. This is Nixon’s good deed to big business, which on February 10, 1971, complained that anti-pollution boards were setting air and water standards “which are unachievable with present available technology” and “at economically tolerable costs.”<sup>9</sup> In plain, simple words, the corporations said they are not going to do anything to safeguard the environment if it affects their drive for maximum profits.

This government concept of profits above all else is exposed in case after case. Recently Agriculture Department officials conceded that the department did not test for residues in poultry of two drugs considered possibly related to cancer. Officials of the Food and Drug Administration confirmed that,

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<sup>9</sup> *New York Times*, February 11, 1971.

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although the limit for meat and fish content of nitrate is 200 parts per million, it permitted nitrate up to 260 parts per million before seizing products as harmful.

A cancer specialist told the same subcommittee that the nitrate limit should be no more than 20 parts per million because the chemical—curing and coloring agent—may combine in the stomach with amino acids and cause cancer. The FDA claimed the allegation was unproven.

Other governmental departments follow Nixon's lead. The federal government has placed every possible obstacle to the manufacture of electric automobiles. The excuse has been that present-day batteries have to be recharged too often. In contradiction, there is no obstacle to operating electric municipal buses whose batteries can be recharged at the end of a route. But they are not available for cars because automobile manufacturers and oil producers are against the idea. As always, the obstacle is private profit.

Mary P. Nichols wrote in the *Village Voice*:

“For those who believe the conspiracy theory of history, Detroit has reached into the federal government to slow down electric car development. At Senate hearings last year, on bills introduced by Senators Edmund Muskie and Warren Magnuson authorizing between \$3.6 and \$5 million in federal money toward development of the electric car, representatives of the new Department of Transportation, the Health, Education and Welfare Department, and the Department of Commerce were in opposition.

“The testimony of J. Herbert Hollomon, acting Undersecretary of Commerce, sets the tone: ‘The automobile contributes directly or indirectly to a substantial portion of our Gross National Product. It is a significant item in our trade relations with the rest of the free world. It involves a large segment of the work force and is a major factor in the

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production of some of our largest industries. . . .' In assessing any action to be taken, Hollomon warned, 'we must fully perceive these relations and be aware of the social and economic impact of proposed solutions.' "

The government and the monopoly corporations have become ever more entwined in carrying out these designs of capitalism. They cannot be separated from the policies of aggression in Vietnam. They cannot be separated from the policies of exploitation, of racism, of high taxes, prices, rents. They have the same basic class interests. Through struggle the government can be forced to make concessions. Through struggle the corporations can be made to make concessions. But as is the case with wages or victories against racism—so it is in the struggle for a clean environment.

The anti-pollution offensive has not gotten off the ground yet. Congress passed a bill appropriating six million dollars to investigate—not pollution, but whether the concept in any way is hurting big business.

In their efforts to win workers to their position, employers are using the workers' fear of losing their jobs. They say that if the pressure continues they will have to close down plants. This is the same propaganda they have used against trade unions and against paying local taxes.

Cleaning and safeguarding the environment will create more jobs. Workers will be needed to manufacture the new equipment. Workers will be needed to run the equipment. Researchers and specialists will find employment in this new field.

The solution to problems brought on by new technology is not going back to the "good old days." Such ideas only create illusions and apathy because they are myths.

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The task is to update human society so it measures up to the new level of technology. Going back to the “good old days” is a form of “cop out.”



## VII. A NEW PROBLEM

What we are facing in the environment crisis is not just another problem, but a qualitatively different one. The basic solutions are not to be found in old concepts, or even stopgap measures, as important as they are. New problems require a radically new approach.

Throughout history, science and technology have broken through old social and political frameworks. The then existing social systems became roadblocks to further progress. The present breakthrough in science and technology has created a more formidable obstacle than a roadblock. It has brought with it the serious danger of wiping out all forms of life on this planet.

It is possible to postpone the problem of dealing with a roadblock. It is not possible to postpone indefinitely dealing with a problem that challenges the very existence of life.

The challenge of the crisis is not an abstraction. It is not nature that is poisoning the atmosphere. It is not individual man as such who is polluting the atmosphere. The pollution comes from scientific, concrete processes of human activity. The immediate crisis can be met only by placing a ban or a control on these processes. The total cost of cleaning the environment must come from corporate profits.

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To move on remedial action, however, opens a key question for consideration. How can human society continue to use the benefits of the technological breakthrough while placing a permanent and a continuous control over the negative features resulting from these processes? Economic and social processes in a human society have definite structural forms. In the United States we are dealing with the crisis of the environment as it is related to the system and structure of capitalism.

Therefore, the most fundamental question facing the people of the United States is whether controls can be placed on the negative effects of the technological revolution while permitting capitalism to continue as an economic and social structure.

There is no question about the need for an organized movement to force even stopgap measures against the pollution of the environment. Mass actions can influence the action of governmental bodies. The exposes of Ralph Nader and his task force are an example of the possibilities open in this area. Their proposals can cut down on some forms of the pollution. They can even postpone the disaster. But Nader and his associates limit themselves to first aid and are not physicians.

In a fundamental sense, the question remains: Can human society avoid an environmental point of no return while life and production remain organized along capitalist lines?

The insistent drive for maximum private profits by the corporate interests has been and is ever more sharply at loggerheads with the overall general self-interests of society. This is an inherent characteristic of capitalism. It is this that sets into motion the processes that create classes and the class contradictions. The endless drive for profits has been the cause



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throughout recorded history for the destruction of more human lives, by wars, industrial accidents, through hunger, racism and exploitation, than all of the other causes of death combined.

It is this same drive for profits that is now in irreconcilable contradiction with the ability of human society to continue to survive on this planet. As the drive for private profit has destroyed human life through various forms, it has launched a new killer environmental disaster. The human race faces the challenge: Will it be capitalism or survival?

This contradiction is rooted in the intrinsic characteristics of capitalism. The big corporations have taken over the benefits of the technological breakthrough because they are profitable. There are no profits in the control of the negative features resulting from these new technological processes. Capitalism has never been concerned with human problems, including human life. Why should anyone think capitalism is going to change now? One can judge a social system by its history.

Corporations producing tranquilizers were fully aware of the mutilating effects of thalidomide. But these respectable church-going, flag-waving pillars of society kept right on manufacturing and advertising these drugs, for only one reason—because it was profitable for them. They got richer by promoting a drug whereby children were condemned to be born without hands or feet. They stopped producing thalidomide only when confronted with a chorus of outrage.

In the capitalist sector of the world some 80,000 human beings die prematurely because of malnutrition every day of the year. These deaths occur not because the human race cannot raise or produce enough, but because capitalism is geared to making private profits for the few! The 80,000 are victims of capitalism—of the imperialist corporate thieves. Is it not an

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illusion to expect such a system to be concerned about the profitless control of the environment?

Capitalists, particularly of the Wall Street variety, frequently attempt to cover up the human devastation caused by their system by concealing their deeds with pious pronouncements. Such was the scheme in Vietnam where genocide was carried out while Washington attempted, unsuccessfully, to persuade the American public that it had the lofty aim of "self-determination." Now the Pentagon Papers confirm that merciless war was to be waged against the entire population while the public was to be told that the pure-hearted generals were motivated by altruism.

Fascism is inherent in capitalism. Fascism is a brutal enforcer in a capitalist private profit system. When people threaten the ability of monopoly corporations to continue making their profits the system of capitalism moves to suppress such movements. Fascism in Germany, in Italy, were structures to advance the ability of the big monopolies to make maximum profits. In that drive they murdered tens of millions of people, among them six million Jews. A system responsible for such crimes will not be concerned with the pollution of the environment.

Racism is the basis for a special system of oppression and exploitation. In the United States the basis for the special exploitation of Black Americans, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans and Indian Americans is racism. Racism is an instrument of corporate profits. Individual rich Americans are richer because Black Americans are forced to work for lower wages. They are richer because white workers who are influenced by racism keep the working class split and therefore are forced to work for less wages than would be the case if the working class was united. In human terms, racism is a brutal killer. It is genocide.

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In slum neighborhoods 111.1 babies of every 1,000 live births die at birth. This is five times greater than the national average in the United States. It is 15 times greater than such deaths in affluent areas in our country. This is racism in human terms. The incidence of tuberculosis in the slums of Boston is six and one half times the rate that it is in the city as a whole. This is racism. In some slum areas the death rate is larger than the birth rate. In spite of the struggles and partial victories this basic system of racist genocide continues. In 1950 the "non-white" infant mortality rate was 62 percent greater than among white Americans. Now, 20 years later, it is nearly 90 percent greater.

It has been stated that the poor get poorer and sicker and the sick get sicker and poorer.

Some doctors studying the effects of hunger on children of migrant workers concluded: "The children we saw have no future in our society. Malnutrition since birth has already impaired them physically, mentally and emotionally." The doctors did not make the connection but later in a report to Congress they did describe the cause. They said it was "the deliberate, cruelly contrived and highly effective system which has been devised to extract the maximum work and productivity for the cheapest possible price."<sup>10</sup>

The doctors were describing the system of capitalism. The method is exploitation. The aim is private profits. The result is starving children who "have no future in our society." An important federal government study of hunger has been officially scuttled because it found too many hungry people. The question is obvious. Why should anyone expect this system and the government that represents it to be seriously concerned about the environment?

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<sup>10</sup> *New York Times*, July 21, 1970.

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The federal government spends more money on instruments of death than the total sum that is spent by the federal, state, county and city governments on health, hospitals, education, old age and retirement, public assistance, unemployment and social security, housing, agriculture and community development projects all put together. Is it not an illusion to expect such a system to spend money and be concerned about improvement of the environment?

Under pressure, the corporations will maneuver. They will retreat, but they will only seek for new ways to hide the pollution of the environment from the public. This is not because of the evil in man, but rather it is because of the inherent nature of capitalism as an economic and social system.

It is difficult to enforce even good anti-pollution laws with corporations which have a "people-be-damned" attitude. Under pressure they retreat to the "cosmetic" approach. They mix steam with the heavy pollutants belching out of the smokestacks so that in appearance they seem harmless. Many have added night shifts to carry on the polluting while the people sleep. Now some have come up with more sophisticated ways to fool the public. They have installed alter-burners and other devices that reduce the size of the pollutants or vaporize them. Thus a new factory chimney or a "clear" jet engine or an "improved" automobile exhaust pipe are not assurance that the death-dealing pollutants have been removed. The truth is that powderized pollutants can be conveyed quicker afield by the winds.

Another example of the cosmetic cover-up is in the field of transportation.

Bus companies have been under pressure because of the clouds of smoke, the putrid smell and the poisons coming from the tailpipes of buses. These are odors of death. Under public

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pressure, some, as in Yonkers, N.Y., are now putting perfume into the gas tanks. So, the deadly fumes now have the fragrance of lilacs.

Nature has its mechanism for preserving and containing the balances in the biosphere. If some species consumes or destroys more than is provided by nature the penalty is a reduction of the species. Thus, a balance is recreated.

Humans are different. Their intelligence can, in a sense, reprogram nature's balance mechanism. They can reprogram it—resulting in a continuous higher level of well-being for all, or they can reprogram it to create profits for a few and a disaster for the species.

The reprogramming can result from planless anarchy, or it can result from a thought-out, overall plan of direction by a society that is guided by the courageous, intelligent will of the human race.

The crisis of the environment forces millions to compare the basic sense of values that motivates the two social systems—capitalism and socialism. They are forced to give serious consideration to the structure of the two systems. And socialism is no longer a dream. It is here on this earth. It can be examined.

Capitalist production is planless. It is anarchy. Each corporation is motivated only by how it can squeeze out the maximum profits. General Motors is a \$25-billion private empire. It accepts no social responsibilities—human or environmental. Science, production and technology have now reached a level where such problems as the environment cannot be left to the mercy of individual corporations who have no social consciousness.

In the final sense, the present level of human activity produces problems that can be resolved only by a social

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structure that can plan and guide the activity so that benefits go to all the people.



## VIII. SOCIALISM AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Socialism corrects the basic flaw of capitalism. It sets human society on a new path. The means of production, factories, mines and mills become the property of the people. They operate and produce *only* to fulfill human needs. They are not motivated by private profits. This is the foundation for a new set of priorities—for new values. This then is the framework in which all questions are determined. If a process does not serve the common good, it does not take place. A clean environment is for the common good. It is therefore pursued.

Under capitalism there is a contradiction between the drive for profits and cleaning the environment. Under socialism this contradiction is eliminated. Saving the environment becomes a social necessity. Under capitalism, the main pressure on the production processes is maximum private profit. Capitalism cannot function any other way. The environment is a casualty of these pressures. Under socialism this pressure is totally eliminated. It is replaced by a pressure to do only that which is in the best interests of all in society. This pressure guarantees

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that no process will take place that endangers a continuation of life on this planet.

What is involved is “a conflict of values.” The values of capitalism are geared to supporting a system of exploitation and private profit for the few already rich. They are values that justify exploitation, oppression, racism, and imperialist wars of aggression. It is these values that are the obstacles in the struggle for a livable environment.

The present level of productive processes places the problem: Can civilization continue to move ahead in a society where the main questions are: Is it profitable? How much does it cost? It seems rather obvious that civilization has reached the plateau where these questions must be replaced by: Is it in the interest of the people, of society? Will it move humankind a step higher on the ladder of progress? It is this that must mold values and set priorities.

The capitalist values and policies result in hunger, misery, death and the destruction of the environment. The values of socialism support a system based on the elimination of exploitation, private profits, racism and wars of aggression. They are values that arise from the concept of doing only that which is the best for all. The choice is obvious. Human society cannot basically stop the destruction of the environment under capitalism. Socialism is the only structure that makes it possible. It is not possible or necessary to speak of socialism in the abstract. One third of the world is building socialist societies. They are building societies based on these new values. They have removed the basic flaw that is in capitalism.

We may now ask: How are socialist societies doing on problems of pollution? Is the environment better? Is it being polluted?



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In a basic sense the answer is yes—they are doing much better, but with some weaknesses. Most important—the laws, the approach, the sense of values, the priorities given to saving the environment are on a high level in all of the socialist states. A violation of environmental laws is treated as a serious crime. There may be some weaknesses in research. They will have to increase research in the areas of the detection of pollutants, their effects and the means of prevention.

But under socialism, the means are present through which society can resolve the problem of the environment before it reaches the point of no return. The socialist states are resolving the problem successfully. The reversal of the dead-end processes of pollution requires overall planning that is possible only under socialism.

Socialism, motivated by doing only that which serves society as a whole, has values and priorities that make the preservation of the environment a part of the overall human activity.

The socialist sense of values is expressed in environmental laws that are strictly enforced. It is expressed in statements of leading scientists and government leaders.

A leading Soviet academician, Igor Petryonov, said: "The swift growth of production and the development of cities give rise to the sharp need of completely rethinking our attitude to the problem of protection of nature and its resources."

"When it comes to preservation of the biosphere, we are firmly convinced that the path of natural evolution is unacceptable because at each fork in the road one path leads to the death of the species. That might be the price we should have to pay for making a mistake in our choice. The only possible and reasonable way out for an intelligent being is the technological path, whose indispensable features are a clear

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awareness of the goal and actions aimed at reaching it by the most certain path. That means creating industry of a new type, the construction of composite enterprises without chimneys or industrial wastes, at which all or almost all the raw materials that go into the technological process are ultimately converted into products useful to man by processes that will not harm living nature. The sooner such industry is created throughout the world, the more hope will there be for a good life for our grandchildren."<sup>11</sup>

The USSR has a strict Nature Conservation Law, watched over by sanitary inspectors. These inspectors have the right to suspend operations if they consider them damaging to the environment. The approach is expressed in the following statement by a Soviet factory engineer:

"The greatest prospects are provided by those based on progressive technological processes, for instance, the employment of closed electric furnaces for smelting ferroalloys not only will make it possible to avoid polluting the atmosphere with carbon monoxide, but also to utilize this gas as fuel or raw material for the synthesis of methyl alcohol. The method of the gasification of mazut under pressure makes it possible to avoid during combustion the emission of sulfur dioxide and at the same time to obtain a commodity product of which there is a shortage— pure sulfur."

The values are stated in the ecology laws of the socialist countries. Poland's 1949 Law on the Conservation of Nature, the German Democratic Republic's 1954 Law on the Conservation and Safeguarding of Nature, Czechoslovakia's 1956 Law on the State Conservation of Nature, Bulgaria's 1967 Law on the Conservation of Nature, and similar legislative acts adopted by other socialist states testify to the attention being

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<sup>11</sup> *Soviet Life*, November 1970.

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given in the socialist countries to protection of the environment. There are no Nixon-like escape clauses in these laws.

Moscow is one of the largest industrial cities in the world. Not so many years ago the air around it was one of the dirtiest in the world. World pollution specialists agree that Moscow is now the cleanest big industrial city in the world. Since 1948 the air is 83 percent cleaner. There are no smoking apartment house chimneys. There is no heating either by oil or coal. Moscow has a city-wide heating system. The system burns only gas.

Some 300 polluting factories have been moved out of Moscow. All factory and housing projects are planned with an eye to established protective health zones and to meteorological conditions. All government bodies have strict environmental codes.

What is happening in Moscow is happening in every city in all of the countries of socialism. This is possible because the environment is not left to the mercy of private corporations. In a planned socialist country, there is no price tag on doing that which is a social need.

Achievement in this area is not confined to such cities as Moscow. It spreads over the entire Soviet countryside and undoubtedly the most dramatic story is that of Lake Baikal. What happened there at the earth's most ancient and deepest lake was told, not by a Soviet publication, but by Farley Mowat in the *Boston Globe*.

The lake, Mowat wrote, contains almost a fifth of all the free fresh water in the world. Its depth is more than a mile, the waters "fantastically clean," and Baikal has more than a thousand species of plants and animals that are found nowhere else.

Mowat continues:

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“In 1962, the economic planners in Moscow decided to build five gigantic cellulose and wood-chemical plants on Lake Baikal. In 1964 work on the first two began.

“At this juncture something truly remarkable occurred. *Pravda* and *Izvestia*, having proudly announced the birth of the gigantic new production complex at Baikal, were inundated by letters of outrage. As the two plants neared completion the intensity of the storm strengthened.

“An elderly, much respected Moscow writer described what followed:

“‘The word Baikal became a rallying cry even to people who knew very little about it except its name. They were acute enough to see that finally the high priests of progress through production had to be brought to their senses. . . .

“‘For a while the authorities who had designed the cellulose combine tried to drown out the protest .... There were some threats . . . . The plants were completed and began operations .... Within three months there were reports of fish dying in Baikal and even of people getting sick from eating fish caught in the Angara. The fight of the people to save the lake became more furious and then, quite suddenly the authorities gave in. The plants were closed.’

“To the Western mind the scope of the victory seemed staggering. In 1967 the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR voted to make the entire Baikal region—the lake and thousands of square miles of surrounding territory—into a national park.

“Extensive reclamation projects are underway to restore tributary streams and riverbeds. New fish hatcheries are being built. All wildlife ranging from wolves to wild flowers are now under complete protection. By 1970 the seal population had increased to 45,000 and even the very rare Barguzin sable was staging a remarkable comeback.”

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The struggle to end the pollution around Lake Baikal is an example of both the difficulties and the seriousness with which a socialist government approaches this problem. The Soviet government issued its basic directives for cleaning the lake in 1969. Evidently the directives were not carried out fast enough. On September 24, 1971 both the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the Soviet Government issued directives demanding speedier action and full compliance. The new directives called for "speed in drafting and implementing the organization of the protected zone." The protected zone includes the drainage basin, in which are situated the mining and timber lands in the Lake Baikal region. The old pulp mills were given until 1972 to establish full pollution controls. The new pulp mills were instructed not to start operations until "appropriate treatment facilities were ready."

The directives set 1973 as the year by which the cities along the rivers that flow into Lake Baikal were to have full waste-treatment devices. Electric power stations are prohibited from raising the water temperature in the rivers on which they operate by no more than seven degrees Fahrenheit.

Compare this to the futile efforts to save dying Lake Erie. Lake Erie is now listed as dead. It is not being cleaned up. If all of the pollution was stopped today it would take 50 years to give it new life. It took 50 years to kill it. In 1920 the commercial catch from Lake Erie was 33 million pounds of white fish, blue pike, and lake trout. By 1960 commercial fishing had to close shop. You swim in Lake Erie at your own great risk.

These are stories of two social systems and two lakes. One decaying and dying, the other flourishing and confidently looking to the future.

When the very first piece of evidence of the negative effects of DDT appeared, its production and use was totally banned in

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the socialist countries. In socialism there are no private corporations which, because of profits, would lobby against the ban.

The workers in our steel towns will understand the significance of the fact that 95 percent of all furnace dust from open hearth furnaces is captured by special filters in socialist countries.

The basic difference between the two systems is that in the socialist countries the battle for a livable environment is being won; the tide has been turned.

## IX. TOWARD A SOLUTION

As of now in the leading capitalist countries— the United States, West Germany, England, Japan, and France—the battle is being lost. There are some victories here and there, but the basic processes leading to an environmental crisis continue to escalate.

While the ultimate solution to the grave problem of pollution and destruction of our environment can come only with the replacement of the capitalist system by a socialist society, the masses of the American people cannot put aside action until that stage in the development of our country arrives. The monopolies are continuing to commit their crimes against our environment, despite the massive protests of the American people. And the federal government is determined to help the corporations commit these crimes while claiming it is opposed to this plunder.

This was made clear in President Nixon's message accompanying the report of the Council on Environmental Quality, which was issued in August 1971. Decrying this, the *New York Times* declared editorially:

“President Nixon's message accompanying the report seems by contrast to be a pulling-back, a softening of his

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commitment, apparently in response to growing pressure within and without the Administration to cool the prevailing sentiment for environmental reform."<sup>12</sup>

The *Times* adds: "But now that dollar signs are appearing all over the program, the President speaks of 'realist' talks of maintaining 'a healthy economy while we seek a healthy environment,' and warns against demanding 'ecological perfection at the cost of bankrupting' the very sources of funds for improvement."

It is obvious from this that the American people cannot depend on Washington to do the job, that the immediate struggle against pollution must be accelerated. Although the ultimate solution cannot be achieved at once, partial victories can be won against the rapacity of the monopolies.

But such victories will require the united effort of the masses of Americans. The key factor will be leadership of the struggle by the organized working class, the most powerful single element for progress in our society.

Masses who after all are the power of any revolution do not, as a rule, set their directions through academic studies. They reach conclusions through experiences, through the medium of struggle. The struggles are for reforming the old system. They are not convinced that the old system is beyond repair. This is true in the struggle to save the environment. What is new, however, is that the knowledge of the point of no return gives this struggle an unusual urgency.

Masses are not going to wait and see if it works. Those of us who know that capitalism cannot basically be reformed, must work with and for people who have not yet come to that conclusion. We must be the organizers, the leaders of these

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<sup>12</sup> *New York Times*, August 11, 1971



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movements. We must give these struggles the benefit of our deeper understanding.

The immediate goals of the struggle must be a demand for federal laws—without the Nixon clauses that make them meaningless.

The demand must be for laws with provisions through which the people, workers, the people in the ghettos, trade unionists, can be the enforcers.

The demand must be for the nationalization of industry that violate anti-pollution laws.

The demand must be for laws that guarantee that the cost of all anti-pollution measures comes from corporate profits.

The power of environmental control must be with the people.

Some say: "But the capitalist class breathes the same polluted air. They are in the same boat." This is true. But the obstacle is not in individuals. It is in the system of things. The executives of Bethlehem Steel do not think in terms of spending money on cleaning the environment. Their sense of values does not include concern for human beings, either now, or whether they will exist in the future.

When we deal with the problems rooted in capitalism we are not dealing with the evil intent of individuals. We are dealing with the evils of a social and economic system. All social and economic systems are propelled by inner laws. Because of the cause and effect factors of these laws it is possible to foresee the general direction of development. It is these inner laws of development that mold the structure of society. They dictate the order of priority and the values. The capitalist class is both the product and the perpetuator of the system that rests on these laws. They will continue as long as capitalism continues. Based on our understanding of these inner laws of

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capitalist development, as well as our study of past experiences we are forced to conclude that capitalism as a social and economic system will be increasingly in sharper contradiction with the needs of society as they are measured by the explosive potential that is present in the new level of science and technology. The struggle to save the environment cannot be separated from this overall challenge that a decaying, outdated system presents to the human race.

One hundred years ago there was much talk about how to solve the question of housing.

Technically it was a “solvable” question. For capitalism it was not a question that needed solution. When others were producing abstract blueprints of how to solve the housing problem under capitalism, Engels, the revolutionary coworker of Karl Marx, who had a basic understanding of the workings of capitalism, wrote in 1872:

“This is a striking example of how the bourgeoisie settles the housing question in practice. The breeding places of disease, the infamous holes and cellars in which the capitalist mode of production confines our workers night after night, are not abolished; they are merely *shifted elsewhere!* The same economic necessity which produced them in the first place produces them in the next place also. As long as the capitalist mode of production continues to exist it is folly to hope for an isolated settlement of the housing question or of any other social question affecting the lot of the workers. The solution lies in the abolition of the capitalist mode of production and the appropriation of all the means of subsistence and instruments of labour by the working class itself.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Engels, Frederick, *The Housing Question*; Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1970, p. 71.

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The slums of 1971 in New York, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, in the South, in San Antonio, the indescribable slums in San Juan, in London, Madrid, Paris, Tokyo, all stand as evidence of Engels' scientific insight of a hundred years ago. The disappearance of the slums in the socialist countries is also testimony of the correctness of Engels' solution. "The solution lies in the abolition of the capitalist mode of production." The Soviet Union is the first industrial country that has now solved the crisis of housing.

If the question of housing in a basic sense has been unsolvable under capitalism, the crisis of the environment is a thousand times more so. Like in housing, mass militant struggle can result in victories to safeguard the environment, but basically it will be resolved only in socialism.

The human race moves up the ladder of progress by finding solutions to problems and contradictions that appear on its path. As problems to which solutions have not been found pile up, the climb slows down and even comes to a halt. The inability to find a basic solution to problems arising from the destruction of the environment is now being added to the growing list of problems to which there is no basic solution as long as capitalism is the social and economic system. This list includes chronic unemployment, hunger for hundreds of millions, wars of aggression, imperialist colonial oppression, racism, the housing crisis, health care. There is no basic solution because the cause of these problems is the capitalist system itself.

Capitalism is in its very essence a system through which a small minority class exploits the majority to further enrich itself from the profits that come from exploitation.

The basic solution is to put an end to a system that perpetuates exploitation for private profits. The basic solution

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is to destroy capitalism and build in its place a system that does not permit exploitation for private profit—socialism.

If you are convinced of the need for mass action, for struggle—to cut back, to hold back, and to do away with a social system that breathes and lives on the destruction of its environment, including the human race—join in removing it from the scene. Join in replacing it with a social structure that exists only to serve all humankind—socialism.

The social forces that carry out a revolutionary transition never arrive on the scene from the blue. They are never hatched in some isolated hot house. They mature, they become conscious of their historic mission and their collective power, in the struggles around the immediate grievance they face in their daily lives. The tens of millions who are in the struggle against pollution are not yet ready to save the environment by fighting for socialism. This they will learn through the experiences of struggle against specific acts of pollution. But even this does not take place spontaneously. Experiences of struggle open up the mind to ideas, to concepts. Marxism-Leninism is a social science. It is the science of the revolutionary transition. It embodies the basic essence, the wisdom, the might that comes from all of human revolutionary experience.

Marxism-Leninism is the theory of the historic transition.

The experience that comes from the struggle around the daily needs and grievances, combined with a study of the nature of the social and economic system, and its class forces, transforms the fighters for reforms into fighters for the revolutionary transition to socialism. Thus, the forces of transition are hatched and matured in the struggles for immediate needs. With the help of a science, Marxism-Leninism, the processes can be greatly speeded up.

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It is hoped that this booklet will be a factor in helping the millions who are getting the experiences of struggle in the movements against pollution to become a new force in the transition from capitalism to socialism.



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## THE PARTY OF COMMUNISTS USA

The Party of Communists USA (PCUSA) traces its roots to the dropped clubs from the revisionist Communist Party USA (CPUSA). The PCUSA is the political party of the working class and is dedicated to the interests of all working and oppressed peoples. Its aim is a socialist society, on the road to building communism.

The PCUSA is dedicated to upholding of Marxism-Leninism, scientific socialism, proletarian internationalism, and socialism-communism. Our focus is on class struggle, workers' rights, and creating the conditions for a socialist revolution. The PCUSA follows the model created by Comrade Lenin of the *Party of a New Type*, adhering to the principles of Democratic Centralism.





**LEAGUE OF YOUNG COMMUNISTS USA**

## LEAGUE OF YOUNG COMMUNISTS USA

The League of Young Communists USA (LYCUSA) is the communist youth organization of the PCUSA. The League is politically united with the PCUSA, and yet is organizationally autonomous with our own constitution, membership, and publications. We call for a stronger, more active, and more united youth and student movement.

The purpose of our communist youth organization is to prepare young cadre to become full members of the PCUSA. The LYCUSA's main task is to give our members the most learning and experience possible. However, the LYCUSA is specifically tasked with creating a generation of Marxist-Leninists, dedicated to internationalism, scientific socialism, and the class struggle to build socialism into communism.





## PEOPLE'S SCHOOL FOR MARXIST-LENINIST STUDIES

*Tuesdays & Thursdays | 8:00 – 9:40 PM EST*

The sole goal of the People's School for Marxist-Leninist Studies (PSMLS) is to educate the working class to prepare to build socialism in the United States.

The PSMLS is the current manifestation in the long line of Party-sponsored schools in the US. Today, the People's School continues the task of ideologically educating workers, including those who are unemployed, oppressed peoples, women, and youth in the science of Marxism-Leninism and its application in various struggles.





## US FRIENDS OF THE SOVIET PEOPLE

US Friends of the Soviet People is dedicated to supporting struggles to restore socialism in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. USFSP is the US affiliate of the International Council for Friendship and Solidarity with the Soviet People.

USFSP acts as a unifying force to help consolidate and coordinate the anti-imperialist forces of the world with the ongoing movement to restore the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe as socialist states. The people of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe themselves will choose their paths toward socialism.















