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50 Years Since Earth Day 1: Reflections on the Catastrophe That Is Capitalism-Imperialism

by Raymond Lotta, April 27, 2020 | revcom.us

This article addresses critical aspects of the climate emergency and broader environmental crisis. These are reflections on how the system of capitalism-imperialism is the underlying cause of this crisis—and why this system is the fundamental obstacle to humanity consciously confronting and collectively acting on the environmental emergency, with the urgency and on the scale required.

I. Indicators of Accelerating Crisis, Devastation, and Great Power Criminality

***2019 was the second hottest year on record. Since the 1960s, each decade has been warmer than the previous decade, by significant amounts.** By 2016, when the Paris Agreement on Climate Change was signed by more than 190 countries pledging to curb greenhouse-gas emissions, the planet had already passed a precipitous threshold of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere: 400 parts per million.

NOTE: Half of all global carbon emissions since the industrial revolution (dating to 1751) were produced between 1988 and 2014—that is, *since* climate scientist James Hansen presented his seminal findings on global warming, and *since* the convening of UN summits on climate change. And in the almost four years since the signing of the Paris Agreement, not **one major carbon-emitter is close to meeting stated goals.** Meanwhile, the country responsible for the greatest amount of cumulative carbon dioxide emissions in the atmosphere—the United States—is headed by a fascist regime that denies the reality of global warming altogether, while ramping up fossil-fuel production.

In the following section, I draw from Bill McKibben's article "A Very Hot Year"¹ and step back to show how the underlying dynamics of capitalism are expressed.

***McKibben observes that the models used by scientists 20 and 30 years ago to predict warming have proven to be remarkably accurate—some 1 degree Celsius, as averaged across the globe, so far. BUT the impact/effect/severity of global warming was far underestimated.** The planet has notably suffered the loss of *more than half of sea ice in the Arctic*, and the *onset of the collapse of coral reefs*. McKibben cites a November 2019 European study identifying nine major tipping points focused on Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets, the boreal forests and permafrost of the north, and Amazon rainforests and corals of the tropical latitudes. The conclusion is that the risk of “abrupt and irreversible changes” was much higher than projected by the earlier research.

NOTE: No emergency alarm has gone off, no radical rethinking, no bold action at the highest levels of governance.

***The U.S. is the world’s biggest oil and natural gas producer (for the record, the “climate-conscious” Obama administration presided over the largest increase in oil production in U.S. history and under Obama the U.S. became the largest natural gas producer in the world). The U.S. is also expected to produce 80 percent of the new supply of oil and gas over the next five years.**

NOTE: This projection cited by McKibben predates the COVID-19 pandemic and the sharp contraction of the world economy. But, tellingly, in the early stages of the pandemic, Russia and Saudi Arabia were dueling it out in a price war to secure and expand global oil market shares. How? By pumping more oil, which then threatened the global market position of the U.S. fossil-fuel industry. The Trump/Pence regime moved to bolster U.S. oil prices. But as the pandemic worsened and oil consumption fell sharply, oil prices crashed.

***To meet the Paris Climate Summit goal of limiting temperature increases to 1.5 degrees Celsius, the world would have to cut emissions by 7.6 percent annually for the next decade.** That would require an enormous slashing of fossil-fuel consumption. As McKibben observes, **no individual country (and certainly not the global economy as a whole) has reduced carbon emissions at that rate in a single year.**

NOTE: The reality is that an effective and coordinated commitment to

sustain such a level of carbon reduction, *continuously over an entire decade*, collides with the short-term horizons of capital and the profitable fossil-fuel foundations of the world-imperialist economy... and smacks up against the boundaries of private/national-state decision-making in a world of competing capitals and national-imperialist states. Again, think about it: no major signatory to the Paris climate agreement is on track to meeting its goals. We live in a world in which non-renewables, including oil, coal, and natural gas, provide 80 percent of global energy.

II. A Contradiction Built into the Competitive-Private Relations of Capitalism as It Has Historically Evolved: Reliance on and Expansion of Fossil Fuels... The Barriers to and Limitations of Green Technology in the Framework of This System

In his March 12, 2020 article, McKibben cites *Financial Times* calculations that **in order to meet the 1.5 degree Celsius Paris target**, and this is far from what is needed, **the fossil-fuel industry would have to leave 84 percent of its reserves in the ground, effectively writing off their value.** (Reserves refers to the estimated amount of crude oil controlled by private and state companies that can be brought to the surface under current technical and price conditions.)

Let's examine why keeping 84 percent of fossil-fuel reserves in the ground is such an imponderable in the framework of capitalism-imperialism.

*The oil/natural gas energy companies/investors draw on finance to make huge fixed capital outlays (technical equipment, infrastructure, etc.): in order to explore for and develop their oil reserves... and ultimately to extract oil and natural gas at a profitable margin. There are “sunk investment costs” in these reserves. This refers to the social knowledge (engineering, etc.) that is privately deployed; seismic and oil-field development technology that is applied, transport infrastructure put in place—costs that cannot be recovered if the firm making those investments leaves the industry. At the end of the day, these investments are weapons in the capitalist battle for markets, expansion, and survival.

*There is this particularity in the oil and natural gas extraction sector: *it*

takes years for individual fossil-fuel projects to become profitable... years for massive capital-intensive investment to be recouped by private owners.

That can only happen through continuous cycles of production. If those circuits of production-realization-new production do not continue—recoupment plus profit will not materialize. There is compulsion facing these individual units of capital to “make good” on these investments, which means developing and drilling oil from these reserves, producing and producing more—with all the adverse consequences for the well-being of the planet.

This capitalist calculus of profit-making and return on investment works against, effectively nullifies, a rational recommendation by climate scientists, and a most “sensible” demand by many climate activists: to “keep the oil in the ground.”

This profit-making calculus, and it flows from the expand-or-die compulsion of capital, is also part of the reason that the idea and prediction bought into by many progressive people—that once the price of clean-renewable technology came down, we’d surely be on a different (a positive) trajectory—has proven to be utterly untrue.

***A salient observation on green energy by David Wallace-Wells in his 2019 book, *The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming* (a recommended read):**

“[T]he much-heralded green-energy ‘revolution’ ... has not even bent the curve of carbon emissions downward. We are, in other words, billions of dollars and thousands of dramatic breakthroughs later, precisely where we started when hippies were affixing solar panels to their geodesic domes. That is because the market has not responded to these developments by seamlessly retiring dirty energy sources and replacing them with clean ones. *It has responded by simply adding the new capacity to the same system.* Over the last 25 years, the cost per unit of renewable energy has fallen so far that you can hardly measure the price today, using the same scales (since just 2009, for instance, solar energy costs have fallen more than 80 percent). *Over the same 25 years the proportion of global energy use derived from renewables has not grown an inch. Solar isn’t eating away at fossil-fuel use, in other words, even slowly; it’s just buttressing it.* To the market this is growth;

to human civilization, it is almost suicide.” (Emphasis added, p. 178)

***There is what is called “path-dependency”:** So much capital is tied up in fossil fuel, as fossil fuels have been cheap and widely available; and as fossil-fuel-based production has been foundational to the *profitable functioning* of the global capitalist-imperialist system, including its global supply chains with their “dirty” (fossil-fuel-based) infrastructure. Moving outside the energy industry, the auto industry continues to manufacture vehicles with gasoline-fueled, internal combustion engines—with research expenditure and infrastructure established for gasoline-fueled transport and machines. This “path” of fossil-fuel-based production is self-reinforcing, and has been further reinforced with the massive expansion of hydraulic fracking of petroleum and natural gas (and this sector’s huge fixed capital outlays). What is being described is a major barrier to “unlocking” fossil-fuel energy systems.

***The problem of green energy in the framework of capitalism-imperialism**

Renewable energy, like wind and solar power, has been scaled up commercially. But these renewables answer to the goal of generating profit and are also objects of market share competition. So you have the situation in which both the Obama and Trump administrations imposed tariffs (a tax) on Chinese-manufactured solar panels. And in the current pandemic-slowdown of the world economy, firms in the solar and wind industries are scrambling to survive and competing for bank and government-backed loans.

Green energy/technology as it has developed is stamped by the structure and workings of the system. The current manufacture of solar panels involves the mining and fusing of quartz and coal, and depends on global supply chains with significant inputs of fossil fuel. The batteries powering GM and Tesla electric vehicles would not function without cobalt that is mined under horrific conditions of super-exploitation, including child labor, in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Europe is establishing wind farms in North Africa, in what amounts to a kind of “green-energy colonialism.” Solar panels help power the prison and torture camp at the U.S. naval base at Guantánamo in Cuba. All of which is to say that harnessing a less fossil-fuel-based infrastructure to the existing imperialist

economy of the U.S., with its unsustainable levels of consumption and its plunder of the planet, is NOT a good thing for humanity and for the earth.

***A brief aside on innovation and “risk taking.”** The ideologues of capitalism hail its “risk-taking” qualities: “savvy entrepreneurs” who take “bold gambles” and “venture capitalists” who go where others dare not go. But the one “risk” that is not taken, that will never be taken... is that which does not follow the logic of profit and empire, the very logic that is destroying the planet.

***Oil is a *strategic commodity*.** Oil is bigger than ExxonMobil, bigger than the money-slinging, right-wing oil-political donor and operative Charles Koch, and bigger than the major banks that have frenetically financed fossil-fuel’s wave of capital expansion of the past decade. *Oil is a strategic commodity.* Control over oil supplies and oil markets brings with it leverage over the world economy. Oil is central to the military and war-making capabilities of U.S. imperialism. It is a strategic weapon of rivalry and intimidation. For example, the U.S. imperialists, beginning with the Obama administration, stepped up oil and natural gas production to increase maneuvering room against imperialist Russia, and to intimidate countries like Iran and Venezuela—that depend on oil sales as their economic lifelines—into submission.

For all of the reasons gone into—the profitability of oil-based production, the fixed capital tied up in it and “path dependency,” the role of oil as a strategic commodity—along with other factors, capitalist markets and the capitalist state have NOT effected a rapid shift to “green technology.”

BUT ON THE BASIS OF MAKING A REVOLUTION THAT OVERTHROWS THIS SYSTEM... that establishes a new socialist state power and economy no longer based on private ownership and exploitation—and that puts an end to the American empire, with its network of sweatshops and military bases—***we will be able to decisively move away from fossil fuels.*** We can do that as a critical part (emphasizing that this is still only a part) of a radical, all-around reorganization of society and restructuring of the economy toward socialist sustainability.

A genuine socialist economy would allocate and re-allocate resources on a *societal* level. It would have the capacity to redirect and subsidize

investment and effect *dis*-investment—and to consciously *regulate* growth. It can do that because the framework of public-state ownership enables you to *socialize and centralize the surplus of society* and to consciously steer and coordinate economic development through comprehensive, integrated planning, guided by the three goals/criteria set forth in the *Constitution for the New Socialist Republic in North America* authored by Bob Avakian and the associated *Some Key Principles of Socialist Sustainable Development*.

III. “Public Goods” in a Private Capitalist World

Humanity is part of nature. We evolved with and are dependent on the physical environment and its interaction with other living things. Well-functioning ecosystems provide us with oxygen, food and fuel, materials essential to survival and well-being, protection from storms, disease, and solar radiation, regulation of water and climate. Not to mention aesthetic wonder and inspiration for art.

*The economic models and pricing system of capitalism cannot capture the true measure of these elements of nature. They systematically “*undervalue*” nature because, historically, these benefits of ecosystems are provided “free” as “public goods”—and have been systematically *overexploited* as imperialism relentlessly and massively commodifies more and more of nature. Export-production in poor countries rich with natural resources is based on the exploitation/processing of “public goods,” such as mangrove forests turned into commercial shrimp farms. But export prices do not factor in “environmental costs”: their short- and long-term impacts locally and globally. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that rich countries *disproportionately* use what are called “environmental sinks”—like the atmosphere and tropical rainforests—to absorb their high levels of carbon emissions.

In short, profit-maximizing capital has massive negative effects “external” to its private boundaries of ownership, operations, costs, and earnings. These are *unpaid environmental externalities*.

IV. The Rich/Poor Country Divide and Climate Change

*The U.S. and Western Europe have been directly responsible for 52 percent of all carbon dioxide emissions since the Industrial Revolution. The U.S.

alone has accounted for 25 percent and is, in the words of climate scientist James Hansen, “by far, more responsible than any other nation” for global warming. The poorest half of the world’s population—3.5 billion people—is responsible for just 10 percent of cumulative carbon emissions.²

***By 2050 global warming might create as many as 1 billion climate refugees**, most from the poor nations of the world—according to projections from the UN International Organization for Migration.

*In the years 1961-2000, countries in the low, middle, and high income groups were responsible for 13%, 45%, and 42% of greenhouse-gas emissions, respectively. The resulting “climate damages” were estimated to be distributed 29%, 45%, and 25%, respectively.³

***During the past 50 years, some 69 percent of deaths from extreme weather-related events—such as droughts, wildfires, floods, landslides, heat waves, and large storms—have taken place in poorer countries.** Since 2000, this death rate in poor countries has been *seven times higher than in wealthier countries*.⁴

*And one little known but significant contributor to this situation is that major U.S. transnational corporations like Walmart, GM, and Apple *outsource pollution* to China, Bangladesh, countries in Central America, and elsewhere. **America’s total carbon emissions worldwide are actually 14 percent higher than the domestic numbers reveal, when you factor in the greenhouse gases emitted by the manufacture of cars, clothing, and other products overseas but that are consumed in the U.S.**⁵

*A 2019 study by Stanford University scientists estimates that the **gap between the economic output of the world’s richest and poorest countries is 25 percent larger today than it would have been without global warming**; and from 1961 to 2010, global warming decreased the wealth per person in the world’s poorest countries by 17-30 percent.⁶

*In the world today, nearly 70 million refugees have been forced from their homes: **23 million of them, about a third of the total, and almost all from Third World countries, were displaced by extreme weather events** that are becoming more common and destructive because of global warming. The number of Central American migrants forced to flee their countries,

due in significant part to climate change, increased five-fold between 2010 and 2015. These were unusually dry years, leaving many without enough food.⁷

V. Imperialist Global Trade, Agro-Industry, and the Destruction of Species

In May 2019, the UN Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services issued a preliminary report. Its crucial finding was that **one million species face extinction in the next few decades unless action is taken to reduce the intensity of drivers of biodiversity loss**. The report identifies five factors driving extinction and biodiversity loss: changes in land and sea use; unsustainable overuse; climate change; pollution; and invasion by non-native species. And what are some of the key drivers of these drivers? This is summarized in the revcom.us article “Capitalism-Imperialism Is Strangling Life on the Planet.”⁸

***Global trade.** The UN report points out that global trade has increased ten-fold in the last 50 years. This is a product of *profit-driven imperialist globalization* and the forging of a globally integrated, cheap-labor manufacturing/sweatshop economy and the extraction of raw materials. Goods produced in the oppressed countries of the global south are transported worldwide in huge container ships consuming massive amounts of fuel oil that contributes to pollution and global warming. These supply chain/transport systems require increased infrastructure, such as roads and pipelines, which split up ecosystems (having effects like impeding the ability of animals to travel with changes in seasons). Global trade also increases the spread of *invasive species* (not native to a region). These invasive species have increased by 70 percent since 1980 alone, disrupting and often causing great damage to ecosystems. One invasive pathogen spread in part by global trade is responsible for the extinction of at least 200 species of frogs around the world.

***Commercial-driven destruction of wetlands** that often support high concentrations of animals. Many such wetlands have been drained to make room for industrial farming that utilizes toxic fertilizers and pesticides that poison land and water. Wetlands have been compromised by reckless residential and urban-industrial development that produces pollution and carbon dioxide accelerating climate change.

***Fossil-fuel-driven climate change.** The report emphasizes that climate change is “increasingly exacerbating the impact of other drivers...that many species are unable to cope locally with the rapid pace of climate change, either through evolutionary or behavioral processes, and that their survival will also depend on the extent to which they are capable of dispersing, of following the appropriate climatic conditions and preserving their capacity for evolution.”

VI. A planet interconnected and integrated by capitalist-imperialist globalization is a planet of intensifying and accelerating eco-catastrophe... a planet on fire.

*Why? Because capitalism-imperialism, in its ruthless and anarchic pursuit of profit and competitive advantage, not only has ravaged the environment but *is driven* to continue to do so, releasing more and more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere in the ceaseless drive of competing blocs of capital for profit and more profit. This is a system in which fossil fuels are “cost effective.”

*And global warming is having cascading feedback effects: climate-driven crop failures and water shortages; diseases and plagues compounded by global warming—mosquitoes that can migrate to expanding tropical regions; mutating viruses; rising sea levels that endanger densely packed swaths of humanity in coastal cities; unbreathable air; acidification and warming of oceans that depletes fisheries and contributes to more frequent and intense weather events and disasters; the potential loss of one million species; climate refugees and resource-scarcity conflicts.

***Global interconnection without global cooperation.** To quote again from *The Uninhabitable Earth*: “If you had to invent a threat grand enough, and global enough, to plausibly conjure into being a system of true international cooperation, climate change would be it—the threat everywhere, and overwhelming, and total.” (This was before COVID-19, but *this* is the world we are living in!) And what we see is the utter opposite of “true international cooperation.” This inability to coordinate and cooperate is a function of capitalism-imperialism, of globalized capital anchored to national markets and safeguarded by national-imperialist states, a world system divided into oppressor and oppressed countries, and rent by antagonistic class and social division. A system in which private ownership

and appropriation are in conflict with socialized and interconnected global production.

***It doesn't have to be this way.** Only a revolution to overthrow this system and establish a new socialist state power and economy, to create a socialist society as a transition to global communism—a revolution guided by the *new communism* developed by Bob Avakian—gives humanity any real chance to save the planet. Only by making this revolution can we fit ourselves to be caretakers of the planet for current and future generations, and create a true world community of humanity.

1. New York Review of Books, March 12, 2020.
2. James Hansen, *Climate Change in a Nutshell: The Gathering Storm*, 18 December 2018, p. 15; “World’s richest 10% produce half of carbon emissions while poorest 3.5 billion account for just a tenth,” Oxfam, December 2, 2015.
3. Data from U.T. Srinivasan, et al., “The debt of nations and the distribution of ecological impacts from human activities,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of the Sciences of the United States*, February 5, 2008.
4. “Time to redress the globally unjust cost of climate change,” International Institute for Environment and Development, September 2019.
5. Brad Plumer, “You’ve Heard of Outsourced Jobs, but Outsourced Pollution? It’s Real, and Tough to Tally Up,” *New York Times*, September 4, 2018.
6. “Global warming has increased global economic inequality,” Noah S. Diffenbaugh and Marshall Burke, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States*, May 14, 2019.
7. The climate crisis, migration, and refugees, Brookings Institution, July 25, 2019; Groundswell: Preparing for Internal Climate Migration, World Bank, August 2018; “Central American Farmers Head to the U.S., Fleeing Climate Change,” *New York Times*, April 13, 2019; “Climate Change Threatens the World’s Food Supply, United Nations Warns,” *New York Times*, August 8, 2019.
8. “Capitalism-imperialism is Strangling Life on the Planet,” revcom.us, May 13, 2019.

// This system and those who rule over it are not capable of carrying out economic development to meet the needs of the people now, while balancing that with the needs of future generations and requirements of safeguarding the environment. They care nothing for the rich diversity of the earth and its species, for the treasures this contains, except when and where they can turn this into profit for themselves....These people are not fit to be the caretakers of the earth. //

Bob Avakian, *BAsics* 1:29

5 Reasons “The Green New Deal” Is Misleading, Dangerous and Part of the Problem— Delusion and Deception in Service of American Empire

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Editors’ Introduction: In early February, Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez introduced a congressional resolution titled “Recognizing the duty of the Federal government to create a Green New Deal.” The stated goal of the Green New Deal is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (it also contains calls for curbing economic inequality and racial injustice). This resolution is non-binding, which means that even if Congress passes it, nothing in the proposal would become law. But it has become a rallying cry for sections of the environmental movement and for many progressive-minded people. The following analysis demonstrates that the Green New Deal is not a solution to the problem of climate change but is part of the problem.

The planet is warming at an alarming rate, with horrific consequences for humanity and putting ecosystems and species in peril. International summits, agreements, and commitments from Kyoto to Paris have done little to nothing.

The most important fact is this: The problem of global warming cannot be resolved within the confines of this global capitalist-imperialist system.¹

There are only two choices: *let the planet hurtle uncontrollably towards environmental disaster, and let other horrors continue and intensify such as wars of aggression and the oppression of Black and Brown people, of women, and of immigrants; OR we make a revolution, an actual revolution to overthrow this system of capitalism-imperialism.*

Along comes the Green New Deal. Does it offer a *more practical and immediate* way to solve this crisis? No! It leaves in place the system

of capitalism-imperialism, the very cause of global warming, with its production for profit, its oil/energy corporations, and the U.S. military machine. It operates on the basis of a fundamental and dangerous fallacy—that the current U.S. economy and standard of living simply needs to be weaned on to sustainable energy—when in fact *a radical rupture is required in how what is today the United States interacts with the rest of the world and with the natural world.*

This is not possible without an ACTUAL revolution, without dismantling and defeating the oppressive forces of the old order, and replacing it with a radically different system and society that are in line with the interests of humanity. But before we get to that, let's actually examine the Green New Deal itself.

THE GREEN NEW DEAL—PART OF THE PROBLEM, HARMFUL AND MISLEADING

1. The Green New Deal Takes as a Given and Reinforces Imperialist Privilege

The Green New Deal sets out to “meet 100% of the power demand in the United States through clean, renewable, and zero-emission energy sources... building or upgrading to energy-efficient, distributed, and ‘smart’ power grids and working to ensure affordable access to electricity.”²

Read those words again: “meet 100% of the power demand in the United States...” In other words, the Green New Deal takes America’s current level of production and consumption *as a given*. It takes the enormous disparities in energy consumption between the U.S. and most of the world *as a given*. It takes *as a given (without admitting)* that the standard of living of the richest economy in the world rests on the exploitation of hundreds of millions across the planet... and the plunder of the resources of the planet.

Walmart and most other major U.S. corporations *outsource production (and pollution!)* to China, Bangladesh, countries in Central America, and elsewhere. America’s total carbon pollution worldwide is actually 14 percent higher than the domestic numbers reveal... when you factor in the

greenhouse gases emitted in the manufacture of cars, clothing, and other products overseas but consumed in the U.S.³

Can you solve the problem of global warming while keeping all these supply chains, with their sweatshops, pollution-intensive industrial agriculture, and shipping, intact? No you cannot.

Can you avert the collapse of ecosystems and get to zero-carbon emissions without making profound and, yes, wrenching changes in how we live, in what is produced and how, in what and how much we consume, in transport, in our values? You cannot.

But the Green New Deal spins the toxic fable that in the imperialist enclaves we can have it all: high growth, imperialist prosperity, and sustainability based on government-supported green technology fixes. *This is not a solution but a reinforcement of the system that causes global warming.*

2. The Green New Deal Does Not Keep the Fossil Fuel in the Ground

There is no mandate in the Green New Deal to keep fossil fuel in the ground. Instead, the Green New Deal proposes “to achieve *net-zero* greenhouse gas emissions.” This means that companies can pollute the atmosphere with carbon but “zero out” those emissions by, let’s say, creating carbon-absorbing tree plantations in the Third World. This “net-zero” escape clause also opens the prospects for questionable technology to capture and store carbon. The major oil companies are salivating over these technology investments because that enables them to keep pumping oil while appearing to be “going green.”

The Green New Deal *places no limits on the activities of energy corporations or the banks that finance fossil-fuels.* And let’s not dance around reality. To truly reverse climate change, the oil industry would have to be put out of business.

3. The Green New Deal Gives the U.S. Military a Pass

The genocidal U.S. military machine—with its tanks, naval ships, warplanes that rain death and destruction, and its 800 military bases that girdle the globe—relies on fossil fuel. In fact, *the U.S. military is the single largest*

*institutional consumer of oil in the world.*⁴ Can you solve the problem of global warming while keeping that military machine in place? The Green New Deal doesn't say a word!

But it *does* declare, echoing Pentagon-think, that “climate change constitutes a direct threat to the national security of the United States.”⁵ That is code for the criminal enforcement of the interests of the U.S. Empire. In fact, Ocasio-Cortez in a recent video evoked the U.S. military during World War 2 as part of the glorious past of this country, when in fact this was a ruthless imperialist war culminating in nuclear holocaust committed by the U.S. against Japan.

The Green New Deal takes the New Deal of the 1930s and war mobilization of the 1940s as its model—and people need to wake up to how FDR's New Deal served the American empire.

4. The Green New Deal Aims to Secure U.S. Dominance Under the Cloak of Green Energy

The Green New Deal draft document says that “adopting [its] goals would make ‘green’ technology, industry, expertise, products, and services a major U.S. export. As a result, America could become an international leader in helping other countries transition to completely carbon-neutral economies.” To some, this may sound positive and encouraging: America “will take the lead” in new, clean technologies and “help other countries.” But don't get played: this is a green-chauvinist version of “Make America Great Again”... and it's **dangerous**.

U.S. imperialism has historically used technological advantage to out-compete dependent countries and to penetrate and dominate them. The so-called “green revolution”⁶ involving hybrid seeds, pesticides, and infrastructure investment was packaged to raise agricultural productivity in order to “help” poor countries. But these and other “cutting-edge” technologies serve profit. Imperialism exports and deploys them in ways that *create and increase dependency on imperialism*—whether as loans to be paid back, parts replacement, intellectual property rights, and so on. For example, the global seed market is increasingly monopolized by major U.S. agro-business leading to harmful effects on biodiversity and financial dependency and ruin on the farmers who harness crops off them.

As for “climate-friendly” technologies, like solar and wind, the imperial mission set out in the Green New Deal to “help other countries” is a recipe for a kind of “climate colonialism.” Western Europe is aiming to meet its renewable energy targets in part by investing heavily in solar and wind generation in North Africa—that is, by grabbing land and renewable resources.⁷ Energy-guzzling California is importing wind power from Mexico. The Green New Deal incentivizes this to a whole new level. Something else: some of the raw materials required in the manufacture of this green-energy technology will be extracted from the Third World—by plundering land and super-exploiting workers.

5. A Sustainable Economy Without Comprehensive and Integrated Planning Is a Delusion

To truly confront and act on the environmental emergency, we need a whole different kind of economy—a genuinely socialist economy in which the means of production become the common property of society through public-state ownership, an economy in which *resources are allocated according to a conscious plan to meet social need and protect and repair the environment.*

The Green New Deal is the opposite of this. It relies on the imperialist market, on tax breaks and government incentives for the large corporations to invest in green technology, and making green profitable—all within and reinforcing the very system of capitalism-imperialism. Capitalism-imperialism is driven by competition to relentlessly expand production for profit and more profit, a system in which the major imperialist powers contend for control of regions, markets, and vital resources of the planet, and in which the natural world is treated as just so many “free” inputs to be seized and poured into production for profit.

The Green New Deal is not about the radical transformation of a profit-based capitalist economy. It’s not about shattering a global network of exploitation. It’s not about consciously regulating growth for the betterment of world humanity. The Green New Deal is an *agenda to harness a less fossil-fuel based infrastructure to the existing imperialist economy—and to keep the U.S. at the top of the imperialist world system.*

The Green New Deal is one part bullshit fantasy (an easy transition to

sustainability) and one part a better business plan for a green American empire.

The Green New Deal is not a “something is better than nothing” proposition. Why is it harmful? It aims to mobilize resources and know-how to **secure U.S. imperial hegemony with a green face**. It *corrals and channels people’s outrage and concern, initiatives and energy, back into reinforcing the system that is the cause of the problem in the first place*—an ACTUAL obstacle to what IS needed, which is to break out of the confines and framework of this system as part of getting rid of it. The Green New Deal does NOT get us or move us from “here” (the environmental emergency) to “there” (an economy and society that interact with nature in a sustainable way). **It is a deceptive and harmful dead end.**

THE ONE REAL SOLUTION

We return to the two choices: *let the planet hurtle uncontrollably towards environmental disaster; or make an ACTUAL revolution to overthrow this system and transform the entire economic, social, and political framework of society, to bring about a genuine socialist society.*

The *Constitution for the New Socialist Republic in North America*, authored by Bob Avakian, sets forth how a genuine socialist society would be constituted and function; how it would be meeting the basic needs of people in a way that *did not plunder either the nations of the Third World or the environment*; its role in the world process of getting to a world free of exploitation, oppression, and antagonistic social divides; and how such a society would be able to address and tackle the environmental crisis.

On the basis of OVERTHROWING the old order and establishing a new revolutionary state power, it becomes possible to put an end to private production for profit, to socialize the means of production, and create a planned socialist economy that can allocate resources and consciously regulate economic growth for the betterment of world humanity and protection of the planet. One of the first acts of the new socialist state would be to totally dismantle the global network of U.S. military bases.

On this foundation, it becomes possible to decisively restructure the economy away from fossil fuels, to reconfigure the entire economy, and create a new kind of sustainable economy and society. And, most importantly, it becomes possible to unleash the creativity and determination of people—from basic people to the scientists whose findings about climate change go nowhere under this system—to tackle the environmental emergency.

The new socialist society would share knowledge and expertise and promote unprecedented international cooperation to save the planet. It would put an end to America's global, cheap labor/pollution-intensive supply chains of exploitation. This would not be the same "consumer society" with its outsized and unsustainable global ecological footprint—and it would imbue people with the understanding, ethos, and morality that we must think and act as caretakers of the planet, and proceed from the fundamental interests of all seven billion of humanity.

We challenge the many, many people who DO see the gravity of the situation to grapple with the only framework through which humanity can forge a viable answer to the existential crisis, and on a truly emancipatory basis. There is no guarantee that we will succeed in reversing the environmental damage done and its continuing effects—but this is our *only shot* to deal with the environmental emergency on the scale and with the urgency needed.

Bringing this society into being will take an actual revolution. Starting with this Constitution for a radically different society, we have great strengths that include the science, the leadership and strategy for an actual revolution, with the basis for organizing thousands into the movement for revolution right now (go here for Bob Avakian's speech *Why We Need An Actual Revolution And How We Can Really Make Revolution*). While this is critical, this movement does not yet have the people who are needed to make this a reality. We are setting out to radically change this (go here to learn about the National Revolution Tour). What is needed is you!

1. Bob Avakian makes the case for this in this excerpt from Part I of *Why We Need an Actual Revolution And How We Can Really Make Revolution*, where he states “*the very nature of the capitalist-imperialist system dictates* that competing capitalists, controlling billions of dollars of investments, and the governments of the major world powers in particular, are compelled to contend with each other for markets, cheap labor, and raw materials, including fossil fuels, and for control of strategic parts of the world.” [emphases ours]
2. See “What’s actually in the ‘Green New Deal’ from Democrats?” *Washington Post*, February 11, 2019.
3. Brad Plumer, “You’ve Heard of Outsourced Jobs, but Outsourced Pollution? It’s Real, and Tough to Tally Up,” *New York Times*, September 4, 2018.
4. The U.S. Military and Oil, Union of Concerned Scientists, 2012.
5. H.Res.109 - Recognizing the duty of the Federal Government to create a Green New Deal.
6. The “green revolution” was initiated by the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations in the United States and promoted by U.S. aid agencies and the World Bank from 1950 until the late 1960s. It involved research and transfer of technology to raise agricultural productivity in rice and other grains in Mexico, India, the Philippines, and other Third World countries. It was aimed at increasing food production as part of a larger strategy of deepening U.S. imperialist economic penetration of these countries and preventing peasant revolution. It was highly carbon-intensive; it led to widening inequality in the countryside; and resulted in greater dependency on the West.
7. See, “Another Case of Energy Colonialism,” *Opendemocracy.net*, September 9, 2017.

How Would a Revolutionary Socialist Society Address the Environmental Emergency?

Excerpts from the *Constitution for the New Socialist Republic in North America*

December 3, 2018 | revcom.us

The Constitution for the New Socialist Republic in North America is a visionary and concrete application of the new synthesis of communism, written by the architect of that new communism, Bob Avakian. It is a «blueprint» for the day after a revolution has established a socialist state. While the following excerpts speak to crucial aspects of the new socialist government's approach to the environment—from the economy and international relations, to art and culture, science and education, and more—the orientation of being «caretakers of the Earth» runs through the whole thing.

These are not the planks and promises of some bourgeois party platform. To do any of this would require an actual revolution. As the “Introductory Explanation on the Nature, Purpose and Role of This Constitution” explains:

In order to bring this new socialist state into being, it would be necessary to thoroughly defeat, dismantle and abolish the capitalist-imperialist state of the USA; and this in turn would only become possible with the development of a profound and acute crisis in society and the emergence of a revolutionary people, in the millions and millions, who have the leadership of a revolutionary communist vanguard and are conscious of the need for revolutionary change and determined to fight for it. To work for this objective—to hasten while awaiting the emergence of these necessary conditions, with the goal of revolution and ultimately communism clearly in mind—is the strategic orientation of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA. And, as one important part of giving life to and carrying out

CONSTITUTION

For The

New

Socialist

Republic In

North America

(Draft Proposal)

From the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA

this strategic orientation, we are publishing this “Constitution for the New Socialist Republic in North America (Draft Proposal)”: as a contribution to a process in which growing numbers of people are seriously considering and grappling with whether, how, and in what form there could be a real alternative to the present capitalist-imperialist system and the unspeakable suffering and depredations it imposes on the great majority of people in the world, on humanity as a whole, as well as on the environment and the webs of interconnected species which inhabit this earth; to provide a more concrete sense of the basic nature, structure and functioning of the socialist society, and its government, envisioned here, and the principles and objectives underlying and guiding this; and to enable people to see, sharply outlined, what is in reality the radical difference between the society and government envisioned here and the capitalist-imperialist system which currently rules in this country and exercises domination over the world as a whole, with such terrible consequences.

We publish these excerpts at a time when the capitalist-imperialist plunder of the planet and the destruction of the webs of life themselves are actually accelerating. These pose the only real way out of this. But these are part of a larger vision and blueprint embodied in the Constitution, which we urge our readers to deeply engage.

This Constitution (Draft Proposal) is written with the future in mind. It is intended to set forth a basic model, and fundamental principles and guidelines, for the nature and functioning of a vastly different society and government than now exists: the New Socialist Republic in North America, a socialist state which would embody, institutionalize and promote radically different relations and values among people; a socialist state whose final and fundamental aim would be to achieve, together with the revolutionary struggle throughout the world, the emancipation of humanity as a whole and the opening of a whole new epoch in human history—communism—with the final abolition of all exploitative and oppressive relations among human beings and the destructive antagonistic conflicts to which these relations give rise.

From the Introductory Explanation (p. i)

A. The Economy.

1. The basic character and objectives with regard to the economy and its development are set forth in Article IV. Here it is important to underline that the development of the economy, along socialist lines, is the foundation for carrying out the functions of government and affairs of state in the interests of the broad masses of people, within the New Socialist Republic in North America and in the world as a whole. The fundamental objective is to carry out the development of the economy and the transformation of economic relations, and relations in society and the world overall, in such a way as to eliminate and uproot all aspects of exploitation and oppression and so that finally the means of production (as distinguished from items of personal use and consumption) become the common property and resource of the whole of society, and ultimately all of humanity, in accordance with the fact that these means of production, and the wealth that is produced in general, are fundamentally the result of the labor, both intellectual and physical, of people throughout the world. With the achievement of communism, throughout the world, ownership of the means of production by the whole people will take place directly, that is, without the need for or the mediation of a state (although, once again, there will still be a need for, and a role of, government, in regard to the economy as well as other aspects of society, as discussed in the Preamble of this Constitution). Within a particular socialist country, before the goal of communism has been achieved on a world level—and this is particularly so with regard to the early stages of the socialist transition to communism, to which the New Socialist Republic in North America, and the Constitution embodying the principles of this Republic, now correspond—the ownership by society of the means of production will be expressed primarily and most essentially through the medium of the socialist state, and its increasingly predominant role in the ownership of means of production and the overall socialist economy, even as the state itself is being continually transformed in line with and in the direction of the achievement of communism.

From Article I, Section 2 (pp. 18-19)

B. The Environment.

1. In the development of the socialist economy, and in the overall functioning of the government, within the New Socialist Republic in North America and in its international relations, not only must the fundamental orientation and principles of proletarian internationalism be consistently adhered to and applied, but this has special and urgent relevance with regard to the environment. In addition to—and in a dimension far beyond—damage that had been done to the environment in previous periods of history, the fundamental dynamics and the overall operation of the capitalist-imperialist system in this era—not least the wars and other massive destruction this system repeatedly gives rise to and continually causes—have created an environmental crisis constituting a genuine and increasingly severe emergency, and this is being and will be continually heightened and exacerbated, for so long as the system of capitalism-imperialism continues to dominate, or to exert significant influence and force in, the world.

The establishment of the New Socialist Republic in North America, through the defeat of the imperialist state of the USA, while it could not have occurred without the unleashing of further violent and destructive acts on the part of that outmoded imperialist state, nevertheless represents a truly gigantic stride toward the emancipation of humanity and with regard to the ability to more frontally and comprehensively confront and address the critical environmental emergency threatening humanity and the other species and ecosystems (the complex webs of interacting and interrelating life) on this earth. In full recognition of this, the New Socialist Republic in North America, in its development of a socialist economy, in all spheres of government and social activity, and in its international relations, will apply itself—and the initiative, knowledge, energy and creativity of the masses of people who make up and are the backbone of this Republic—to addressing this environmental emergency, in its various dimensions, and will seek out the ways to do so through increasing cooperation and common endeavor with scientists, and people from all walks of life, in every part of the world, struggling and joining with others in struggle to overcome barriers that are placed in the way of such efforts by the operation of the capitalist-

imperialist system and the functioning of imperialist and other reactionary states.

2. Already, in the period before the revolution that led to the establishment of the New Socialist Republic in North America, the Revolutionary Communist Party (in what was then the imperialist United States of America) published a special issue of its newspaper, *Revolution* (issue #199, April 6, 2010) which analyzed the extent, depth and urgency of the environmental crisis at that time and the fundamental elements and principles of a program for addressing this crisis. One of the distinguishing features of the New Socialist Republic in North America is its determination to apply the principles set forth at that time by the Revolutionary Communist Party—and what has been learned since, with further developments with regard to the environmental crisis and in the world more generally—in order to contribute all it can to solving this environmental crisis and, to the greatest degree possible, reversing its terrible and manifold effects, and to ushering in a new era in which human beings and their society can truly be fit caretakers of the earth.

From Article 1, Section 2 (pp. 21-22)

Article IV. The Economy and Economic Development in the New Socialist Republic in North America.

Section 1.

The economy of the New Socialist Republic in North America is a planned socialist economy, under the direction of the state and led by the Revolutionary Communist Party, in accordance with the principles and provisions set forth in Article I, Section 2 and elsewhere in this Constitution. Social production and economic development are guided and evaluated according to three overarching criteria:

1. Advancing the world revolution to uproot all exploitation and oppression and to emancipate all of humanity;
2. Meeting social need, creating a common material wealth that contributes

to the all-around development of society and the individuals who make it up, and overcoming oppressive divisions between mental and manual labor, town and country, different regions and nationalities, and men and women;

3. Protecting, preserving, and enhancing the ecosystems and biodiversity of the planet for current and future generations.

Section 2.

Socialist production is based on and promotes relations and values of people working cooperatively for the common good and for the interests of world humanity. Socialist relations of production must enable the masses of people to gain increasing collective mastery over economic processes. In line with this orientation and these objectives, the exploitation of human labor, and the sale and purchase of labor power, is forbidden, except as this may be allowed and provided for, for a limited time on a transitional basis, and on a small scale, within the overall framework of socialist economic development and in accordance with socialist planning to effect such development.

Section 3.

In order to develop the economy along socialist lines it is necessary to put revolutionary politics in command of economic matters. To meet goals and solve problems of production, the state must mobilize the conscious activism of people in accordance with the principles and objectives set forth here and elsewhere in this Constitution. It must encourage initiative and creativity to advance the public interest.

Section 4.

1. A socialist economy operates according to principles of “socialist sustainable development.” It takes the “long view” of what is needed to benefit humanity and the planet. It organizes and regulates production and growth on the basis of awareness of natural limits and the interconnected web of ecosystems. It emphasizes safe and renewable sources of energy.

2. The state in the New Socialist Republic in North America recognizes special internationalist responsibilities to share knowledge and technology,

to allocate resources, and to promote initiatives to protect the global environment—and to assist the people in other parts of the world, especially in the Third World, to cope with the damage caused by imperialist environmental despoliation and plunder.

pp. 78-79

Section 5. The System of Public-State Ownership is the

Foundation of the New Socialist Economy.

1. This form of ownership concentrates the highest interests of the proletariat and masses of people and the revolution which embodies those interests. It enables society to consciously and collectively utilize and develop social productive forces in order to transform society and the world and to enable humanity to truly become caretakers of the planet...

3. Land, waters, forests, minerals, and other natural resources are protected and managed as “public goods.” They fall within the scope of public-state ownership. Socialist-state ownership recognizes its responsibility to preserve the “commons”—the atmosphere, oceans, wildlife, and so forth—for all of humanity and for the future.

pp. 80-81

In contrast to the way in which the capitalist-imperialist state serves and enforces the interests of a small ruling group of exploiters, the New Socialist Republic in North America, with the continuing leadership of the Revolutionary Communist Party, bases itself on, and proceeds from, the fundamental interests of those most bitterly exploited and oppressed under the old system, and the masses of people broadly, and provides the means for them to play an increasingly widening role in the exercise of political power and the functioning of society in accordance with those interests—in order to carry forward the struggle to transform society, with the goal of uprooting and finally eliminating all oppressive and exploitative relations

among human beings and the destructive antagonistic conflicts to which these relations give rise.

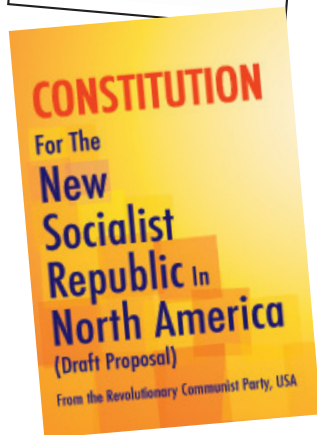
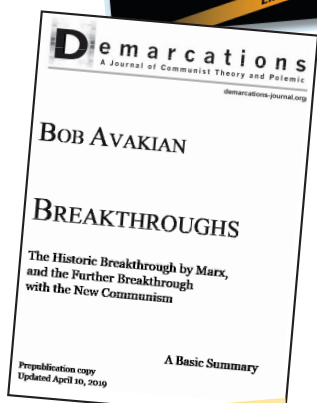
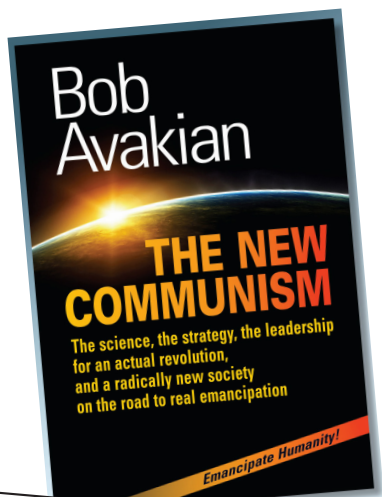
This is a process and goal which, fundamentally and in the final analysis, can only be achieved on a global scale, with the advance to communism throughout the world. The orientation and principles of this state, as embodied in this Constitution, are internationalist: While giving due emphasis to meeting the material, intellectual and cultural needs of the people within this state, on a continually expanding basis, and to promoting the further transformation of this society to continue uprooting social inequalities and remaining aspects of exploitation and oppression, the socialist state must give fundamental priority to the advance of the revolutionary struggle, and the final goal of communism, throughout the world, and must adopt and carry out policies and actions which are in accordance with and give concrete effect to this internationalist orientation.

From the Preamble, p. 2

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“ This system and those who rule over it are not capable of carrying out economic development to meet the needs of the people now, while balancing that with the needs of future generations and requirements of safeguarding the environment. They care nothing for the rich diversity of the earth and its species, for the treasures this contains, except when and where they can turn this into profit for themselves....These people are not fit to be the caretakers of the earth. ”

Bob Avakian, *Basics* 1:29

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