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Ecological Manifesto for a Different Europe

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The ideological spectres of the last few centuries still haunt Europe. Worse, these economaniac spectres have become a reality and living reality has become a spectre.

If we look at what has been achieved and what is to be expected if we continue along the present road, we see that our society has not become the safe, healthy and peaceful community we once expected. On the contrary, it is losing meaning, quality and satisfaction. In important aspects the achievements of progress turn out to be as destructive as its failures.

More and more citizens of Europe share a conviction that the present road will lead deeper into unemployment and inflation, energy dilemmas, the exhaustion of depletable resources of the environment, the spread of radioactivity and genetic deterioration, the disappearance of free space, quiet and serenity, the extinction of plants and animal life, a global arms race and a fierce conflict between North and South. All these symptoms are signals of a crisis of civilization.

The widespread belief that these evils are accidental and can be made to disappear through the application of more science and technology or through more legal integration is an illusion, as is the belief in the feasibility and desirability of further economic growth and increased industrial production. After 200 years of industrial expansion, modern society has come to the crossroads. Continuing along the old path would push spiritual erosion beyond hope and lead to unprecedented global destruction.

This, however, is not an unavoidable fate. Change is possible, but only if the reality of this crisis of civilization is finally acknowledged by large segments of decision makers active in the political and economic fields. Eventually this will mean new politicians and new entrepreneurs who are well integrated into the grass-roots. An essential condition for both is that people should have increased consciousness and self-confidence.

These are the priorities of change as we see them:

1) Overcoming Technocracy

At the basis of all different crisis phenomena there is an attitude of expansion, domination and exploitation. It has set man against man, man against nature, the State against the individual, employer against employee. It has separated people from their roots, their relatives and their fellow-citizens. It has led to materialism, centralization of power, bureaucracy and gigantism. All this is stimulated by the industrial approach, which has infiltrated media and government policies. It prevails even in the functioning of political parties.

The common denominator of all this is: **Technocracy**, i. e. the submission of Man and of the whole Life System to the exigencies of the organizational and technical instruments of society which have become a system in itself, independent from human needs. It is domination usurped by the servants.

The technocratic expansionist system, both in its Eastern and its Western variants, is suffocating. Its crises stem from the very nature of the system and cannot be overcome by the same forces as those which generated it. Centralized power and institutionalized interests effectively block social, spiritual and political innovation to such an extent that politicians are becoming, in varying degrees, allies of technocracy rather than representatives of the people. The controlling forces of the Industrial Growth Society act as a filter which accepts only politicians of this type.

More and more people of all ages, backgrounds and educational levels are seeking ways and means to change this situation and their own lives. They already number many millions in Europe, but are confronted with the faceless complex of technocratic power, which tries to paralyse their initiatives, hope and faith. They are beginning, however, to join forces across the borders of nation states, classes and group interests. A new spirit is emerging.

2) Community of Communities

Democracy means that it is the people which holds political power. Centralized power is its negation. Unless absolutely essential, power should not be delegated to anonymous government agencies or other centralizing organizations, but should remain within social and economic communities of human proportions. The dominational structures of our states have shown themselves to be unfit for real integration: witness the stalemate European situation compared with the high popular hopes of unification of twenty years ago. The United Europe - and each of its member countries - must become a community of organic communities which on all levels and fields of human activity will have to replace the established power hierarchies. Reliance on the might of the Big Powers will have to be replaced by self-confidence, especially since even the superpowers have turned out to be superpowers only in destructiveness.

Nation states are patently incapable of solving many basic problems, at either global or local level. We should therefore aim at the federation of autonomous regions, each self-organized in a participatory and anticipatory democracy.

3) Participatory and Anticipatory Democracy

Complex structures necessitate participation. If we do not wish to have a uniform monocultural society or an a-cultural society in uniform, we need full participation. This means emancipation - emancipation not only in terms of rights but also in terms of responsibility. It means redefining politics by creating alternatives (or at least supplements) to the present party system in order to avoid the dilemma presented by the choice between immobility and totalitarianism. Free creative associations of active non-conformists should be encouraged, not repressed. People must be shown that they can influence things themselves and in their lifetime, that the future can be actively anticipated. An anticipatory democracy involves citizens already in the preparation stage of programmes and policies, not only in project decision or project implementation stages. Today they are not even involved in these.

Self-reliant local communities are the logical answer to the violence of centralized power. Protection against environmental disintegration, concentrational megatechnologies, alienating urbanization and superhighways can only be effective if decision-making, for issues beyond interpersonal affairs, is placed in the hands of federated local communities of people who want to express their own needs and themselves determine their particular way of life in peace. This means that citizens should have a right to and full anticipatory access to pertinent information. It requires social innovation to enable individuals and groups to control technology instead of becoming irresponsible parts of the technocratic machine.

4) Energy for the People

The engine of technocracy runs on an increasing energy throughput. The basic energy question does not so much concern resources and capital as whether the supply of more and more energy has led and will lead to a happier and more viable society. There is much evidence to suggest that this is not the case. The technocratic outlook for the future shows an ever closer web linking centralized (predominantly nuclear) energy systems with military power and police control. "Managing" the crises of this system is becoming a goal in itself: above all it justifies structures of domination in societies which are theoretically democratic. The great loser is the average citizen, who pays with his autonomy and freedom of self-fulfilment, who is pushed into escapist or even extremist postures as a reaction to non-participation and anxiety. More energy conversion will inevitably lead not only to more environmental destruction, but to more social, political and military crises also. A radical change is needed, replacing technocratic by ecological structures and goals, which would stop the energy race, help to meet real needs and bring democracy a decisive step nearer to realization.

5) Meaningful Work for All

The motor of a sane society is meaningful work for people, from childhood onwards. The individual should be confronted directly and completely by material and social challenges, not just by a meaningless fraction of them. In present societies and in particular in the commercial economy, good human relations and harmony between people and the rest of nature are being increasingly destroyed and replaced by exploitative unilateral and narrow-minded relations. Decisions on whether and how to work, what to produce and how much income is provided, are for the overwhelming majority of individuals taken far away from them. People find themselves controlled by anonymous forces, be it as workers, as consumers or as inhabitants of environmentally affected areas. But there are no constraints other than those generated by the expansionist and exploitative system itself which could legitimize this hierarchy of alienation. In a healthy society work opportunities, resources and income are distributed according to social and ecological usefulness, not according to power and blackmailing potential.

If meaningful work is lacking, then people are also uncreative in their leisure time. This increases consumption dependency as well as causing waste of environmental and human resources.

Meaningful work cannot be artificially created but depends on demand. Most employment openings proposed by the dominating elites are fictitious, parasitic or downright destructive: cases in point are throwaway goods, pollution/antipollution combinations and armaments. The right to work remains a demagogic slogan if it does not mean the right to engage in a meaningful activity according to one's talents and inclinations. This, however, means that work and the fulfilment of basic material need should not remain as strongly linked as they are today. The satisfaction of basic material needs should become decommercialized. It could be taken over by a public service duty at local level. Meaningful employment in general requires highly decentralized structures of production and decision-making. No central state agency, no centralized, large corporation or large hierarchically organized labour union can achieve this objective.

6) A Deprofessionalized Society

Under the spell of specialization pushed to the extreme by technocracy, society has become excessively professionalized if not downright expertocratic. People's ability to think and decide for themselves, to create, to organize their own lives, to plan their homes, to care for their children and their aged, to cure their diseases, has largely disappeared. Such functions have been more or less forcefully delegated to experts. This has led to a society of disabled beings, dependent on professionals who themselves depend on the technocratic machine.

The deprofessionalizing of our society can, however, only occur if experts acquire general knowledge and, even more important, if they re-integrate the grass-roots and learn to communicate on the human scale again. This process has silently begun all over the world, but at the same time state technocracy and industrialism are becoming worse and more powerful. It should become a matter of public policy to dismantle institutional castles.

7) Education for a Communitarian Society

To demand that education be improved is a futile objective as long as the educators and their political masters are themselves not appropriately educated. It takes training to think along ecological lines, to work in institutions of appropriate scale and to foster community self-reliance. Present educational systems seem to be hypnotized by the religion, or rather the superstition, of technological progress. Even though some change is visible, it is constantly menaced by the old forces. Contraction of the mind to narrow specialization on the one hand and to mass consumption on the other is still the rule. Instead, education for cooperation, self-determination and a creative mind should become a recognized societal goal. In other words: education not as adaptation to exploitative interests and as an adjustment to the expected development of technology, but for the evolution of the spirit and the unfolding of talent in a cooperative culture. This new permanent education would also provide the flexibility in knowledge and skill necessary for adapting to the fast-changing demands of society and individuals themselves. The guaranteed satisfaction of basic material needs would greatly facilitate a self-adjusting, unbureaucratic training system. *)

*) See last paragraph of Point 5)

8) A Society which can Afford Health

Our life expectancy is decreasing, not only in the sense of our trust in the future, but in the brutal statistical sense also. Since the infant mortality rate has been brought under control, male mortality has ceased to fall and is even increasing again; female mortality tends to follow the same pattern, now that birth and abortion risks are no longer diminishing. The causes of poorer health have a common denominator in the disturbance of the ecological balance, as evidenced by pollution of the air, water and food, the excessive use of drugs, the weakening of self-healing forces by symptom treatment, unnatural life and working conditions, mental stress, alienation from meaningful relationships, drug addiction and socialization neuroses.

Our present society cannot afford to be healthy. Firstly, the escalation in the cost of medical treatment and insurance schemes is becoming intolerable. It cannot be stopped as long as public health deteriorates, individual responsibility is discouraged and the economic potential of physical and psychic misery is as recklessly exploited as any natural resource. Secondly, the forces which destroy health and a healthy environment are the same which propagate the industrialist system and cannot therefore be separated. Thirdly, the citizens of a healthy and sane society could not be so easily manipulated and blackmailed into patterns of behaviour which reinforce their own political and economic dependency.

Health, therefore, is a highly political issue. Self-reliance within the context of autonomous federated communities, the deccommercialization of the satisfaction of basic needs and citizens' anticipative participation in public decision-making mark, as in the case of employment, energy and education, the way towards the necessary change. Only an ecological society can afford to be healthy, and only a sane society will quite naturally behave in an ecologically appropriate manner.

9) In dubio pro vita: a Legal System Enhancing Life

The condition of a society is reflected in its legal system. In the course of their submission to the dictate of power and monetary profit, of productivist success rather than human goals, the occidental societies have decisively changed the character of their legal system:

- in having been reduced to an organization tool of the power structure, the legal system has ceased to be the practical translation into general norms of values consciously accepted by society as a whole;
- in having become an institutionalization of the power establishment, it has ceased to be a system of relationship between groups and individuals which provide compensation in favour of the weakest;
- in having become a means of political control by the State, it has ceased to be a permanently renewed creation fed by the activities and customs of the grass-roots.

Consequences of this mutation have been: abusive property laws and an increasing avalanche of legal and administrative texts, accompanied by an even greater avalanche of crime, general irresponsibility and perversion of the very sense of justice.

Thus, the "in dubio pro reo" principle of Roman law was once adopted to protect individuals against the abuse of power by abstract state justice: today it is often used to deny the protection of the helpless against the powerful structures which promote mega-technological violence in the form of nuclear or chemical industrial complexes or unsafe pharmaceutical products. When the benefit of the doubt favours the development of deadly menaces and when the accused organizations control most holders of formal expertise, illegal counter-action appears legitimate. This misdevelopment, which leads to societal chaos, must stop.

The legal system has to acknowledge as overruling principle the benefit of the doubt in favour of Life. "In dubio pro vita" must predominate over "in dubio pro reo". Order irrespective of ecological laws and laws irrespective of the order necessary for a viable system are counterproductive caricatures of law and order. No rational legal approach can be based on the hope that everything will turn out for the best, rather its very *raison d'être* is to prepare for the worst. Law must face reality.

10) New Life to the Political Landscape

Political parties still base their existence upon polarizations of nineteenth century talents: of the exploited against the exploiter or of the established order against upcoming competitors for power. Exploitation is still omnipresent, admittedly, but there are new poor in our countries: the victims of pollution, noise and the loneliness of urban deserts, those who suffer from meaningless jobs, from the manufacture of what are ultimately useless products and from the performance of nonsensical paperwork, those who see the web of their social relations destroyed by the violence of gigantism and commercialism, the victims of diseases which are part of the price of industrial expansion, such as cancer, the rate of which has increased tenfold in one century. But political parties do not recognize them. The political scene of Europe is therefore like a frozen lake, where the winds of change do not cause any waves. Political parties have largely become rigid hierarchical systems that function for their own sake, monopolizing the political scene in resistance to the spirit of democratic constitutions and the dynamics of a highly diversified culture.

A rigid political system is no method of overcoming creatively our crisis of civilisation; it cannot even guarantee the survival of its people and of the basis of all: living nature. We need politicians who are capable of breaking the ice, who listen to the winds of change and who understand that viable politics now and in the coming age cannot be based on socialist or liberalist or conservative ideologies, but only on ecological principles.

11) Solidarity of Europe and the Third World

Even the contention that there is a fundamental conflict of interest between the industrialized countries and the Third World appears quite different in the light of ecological insight. There are, no doubt, great threats to world peace; catastrophies of hunger and desperate moves are inevitable if industrial expansionism persists in the North and if this irresponsible development model continues to be imitated by the South. After having suffered

the trauma of colonialist exploitation and now under the spell of neo-colonialist strategies, the Third World and in particular the majority of its elite are at present firmly engaged in a murderous ratrace which nobody can win. One way to end this fixation would be for Europe to embrace the idea of non-dominational, symbiotic partnership between people as well as between mankind and nature. A change in attitude and goal-setting in the Third World would thus be decisively enhanced.

In the struggle for dignity, self-reliance and civil rights and in the struggle for the co-evolution of all forms of life on our planet there can only be allies among those who have understood the new face of reality, in East and West, North and South.

This does not mean that everybody must wait until the others become reasonable. Of course, if economic expansion and exploitation of nature remain the main societal goals, no country or region can pursue its proper course: worldwide interdependence is bound to increase further, the propagation of instabilities within the international politico-economic system to become faster. This results from a willfully close coupling of local and regional economic systems. A Europe directing itself resolutely towards an ecological democracy would, on the contrary, become less and less dependent from the rest of the world, less influenced but with more beneficial influence. Hardware exchange would decrease to the benefit of software exchange, the transfer of information and knowledge being liberated from narrow economic power interests. A Europe with an ecological orientation can dare to be a forerunner towards a new international order. It even has the moral obligation to do so.

12) Security and Peace

Security is the number one preoccupation of our society. It has three aspects: individual security, social security and security against aggression from the outside. The instrumental, symptom-oriented approach so typical of the North has not only proven unable to solve these societal problems (or any other) but has actually amplified them.

Thus, individual security is jeopardized by the disintegration of family and group coherence, by generalized opportunism and by the erosion of ethical principles - in other words by the effects of an economaniac society. Secondly, social security is sought through anonymous, bureaucratic institutions. This erodes the sense of responsibility and the community spirit. It thus increases dependency as well as the public burden and enhances threat to the viability of the system as a whole. A one-side "generation contract", however, between the irresponsibles of the present and the future slaves of the past is not feasible. But if the breakdown of social security institutions is not intercepted by the rise of new, stable ecological structures, social chaos may ensue.

Thirdly, it is absurd to search for security against aggression from the outside through instruments of mass destruction, that is of terror and revenge, rather than through the spirited purposefulness of real communities to defend their integrity. In the international menace system of the nuclear age, security is not produceable with military means at all. The military and armament complexes of our time share the destiny of all institutions which issue from aiming at absolute security (apart from the fact that also lust for profit and power are involved). They eventually produce the contrary of what they pretend to look for. Their product are in fact insecurity, constraints and the bondage of human learnability to a vicious circle. In the best case this leads to the disintegration of the institutions themselves, based on wrong ends and means; in the worst case it causes the annihilation of man and nature.

No balance of terror can be trusted in the long run. Fear engenders fear and may at any time trigger off an irrational attack in rational disguise. The arms development has led humanity to a point at which it must, for the sake of sheer survival, detach political action from all violent principles.

The European Community, by historical accident constituted as a civilian formation, signifies in this situation a unique chance: to lead its population beyond nation-state narrow-mindedness and beyond thinking in the bondage of institutionalized violence, in that it demonstrates the possibilities to resolve inner and outer conflicts without violence.

The societal consequences of armament are as devastating as the environmental destruction caused by its industry. An ecological Europe would therefore dismantle its armament potential. A Civilian Power Europe based on regional, federated communities will have to make credible the means of self-maintenance developed by modern peace research, and realize them in response to the deep-lying anxiety of defencelessness of those citizens who are still conditioned to nation-state concepts. Civilian Defence starts from the premise that all domination over people can only be exerted to the extent in which the people is ready to collaborate with those who want to gain or maintain domination. In a base-democratic and economically decentralized society, the occupation of its territory by alien or alienated forces does not automatically lead to submission. Preconditions for the faculty of a society for civilian defence are firstly the citizens' identification with the community they live in, and secondly, the previous practice of non-military forms of combat. The experience gained at present in the resistance to mega-technological aggression can be as instructive here as the historical examples of the workers' movement, of military putschs warded off by general strikes, of civilian defence during World War Two, of

Ghandi's liberation movement, of the resistance of Czechoslovakia in 1968 in spite of no international solidarity and no democratic structures to begin with.

If meaning is to be restored to the terms "peace" and "defence" at all, this can only be done by an ecological society. The determined and well organized self-maintenance of transnationally federated communities against any aggressor, be he intranational or extranational, military or commercial, lies at the core of the answer. But change should go even further. The aims and means of societal liberation, of personal development and of the defence of freedom have to be of the same nature: a respect for Life.

If we want life instead of death, if we want living reality instead of spectres, it is not enough for us to throw off our more evident outer chains. We have to lose also our conditioned inner bondage, which includes our unecological arrogance towards "the rest of the world". The pseudo-alternatives of the dominating elites, be they officially in power or in phony opposition, must no longer hypnotize us with their disintegrating, fragmented flat universe. Reality is a multi-dimensional unity of meaningful patterns of interrelation. In our present condition these patterns convey the message of sickness. but they turn out to be patterns of stupendous potential once the inner and outer chains are shaken off. The necessary alternative beyond revolution and reformism can then be created by the people itself. The ecological movement shows that this is more than a hope. Real change is proved be possible. More: its time has come.

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The ideas and principles laid down in the ECOLOGICAL MANIFESTO are the result of discussions between concerned citizens of 11 European countries. The Manifesto is intended to be a framework of reference for the members and friends of the European network of ecological action. At the same time it is the basis of a DECLARATION FOR A DIFFERENT EUROPE

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