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David Orten

Ecofascism: What is It?

A Left Biocentric Analysis

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Natural world who are prepared to use violence and intimidation,
and other fascist tactics, against their opponents.

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supporters have used this term in a basically unfounded manner to attack deep ecology and the ecological movement, and it also looked at what can be called ecofascist attacks against the environmental movement. So we can say that the term “ecofascism” can be used:

- Illegitimately. This is the use of the term which has been advanced by some social ecologists who have tried to link those who defend the Natural world, particularly deep ecology supporters, with traditional fascist political movements – especially the Nazis. The “contribution” of these particular social ecologists has been to thoroughly confuse what ecofascist really means and to slander the new thinking of deep ecology. This seems to have been done from the viewpoint of trying to discredit what some social ecologists apparently see as an ideological ‘rival’ within the environmental and green movements. This social ecology sectarianism has resulted in ecofascism becoming an attack term against those environmentalists who are out in the trenches being attacked by real ecofascists! I have also defended the late Rudolf Bahro against the charge of being an ecofascist or Nazi sympathizer.
- Legitimately, to describe “Wise Use” type activities, that is, against those who want to exploit Nature until the end, solely for human/corporate purposes, and who will do whatever is seen as necessary, including using violence and intimidation against environmentalists and their supporters, to carry on. We should not be phased by “Wise Use” supporters calling their ecodefender opponents ecoterrorists, or saying that they themselves are “the true environmentalists.” This is merely a diversion. Also I have raised in this bulletin for discussion, what seem to me to be some real contradictions within the deep ecology camp itself around the ecofascism issue, e.g. intrusive research.

Hopefully this article will also enable deep ecology supporters to be less defensive about the terms ecofascist or ecofascism. These terms, if rescued from social ecology-inspired obfuscation, do have analytical validity. They can be used against those destroyers of the

Introduction

This bulletin is an examination of the term and concept of “ecofascism.” It is a strange term/concept to really have any conceptual validity. While there have been in the past forms of government which were widely considered to be fascist – Hitler’s Germany, Mussolini’s Italy and Franco’s Spain, or Pinochet’s Chile, there has never yet been a country that has had an “eco-fascist” government or, to my knowledge, a political organization which has declared itself publicly as organized on an ecofascist basis.

Fascism comes in many forms. Contemporary fascist-type movements (often an alliance of conservative and fascist forces), like the National Front (France), the Republicans (Germany), the Freedom Movement (Austria), the Flemish Block (Belgium), etc., may have ecological concerns, but these are not at the center of the various philosophies and are but one of a number of issues used to mobilize support – for example crime-fighting, globalization and economic competition, alleged loss of cultural identity because of large scale immigration, etc. For any organization which seeks some kind of popular support, even a fascist organization, it would be hard to ignore the environment. But these would be considered “shallow” not defining or “deep” concerns for deep ecology supporters. None of these or similar organizations call themselves ecofascists. (One time German Green Party member, ecologist Herbert Gruhl, who went on to form other political organizations, and to write the popular 1975 book **A Planet Is Plundered: The Balance of Terror of Our Politics**, did develop what seems to be an intermeshing of ecological and fascist ideas.) While for fascists, the term “fascist” will have positive connotations (of course not for the rest of us), “ecofascist” as used around the environmental and green movements, has no recognizable past or present political embodiment, and has only negative connotations. So the use of the term “ecofascism” in Canada or the United States is meant to convey an insult!

Many supporters of the deep ecology movement have been uncomfortable and on the defensive concerning the question of ecofascism, because of criticism levelled against them, such as for example from some supporters of social ecology, who present themselves as more

knowledgeable on social matters. (The term “social ecology” implies this.) This bulletin is meant to change this situation. I will try to show why I have arrived at the conclusion, after investigation, that “ecofascism” has come to be used mainly as an attack term, with social ecology roots, against the deep ecology movement and its supporters plus, more generally, the environmental movement. Thus, “ecofascist” and “ecofascism”, are used not to enlighten but to smear.

Deep ecology has as a major and important focus the insight that the ecological crisis demands a basic change of values, the shift from human-centered anthropocentrism to ecocentrism and respect for the natural world. But critics from within the deep ecology movement (see for example the 1985 publication by the late Australian deep ecologist Richard Sylvan, *A Critique of Deep Ecology* and his subsequent writings like the 1994 book *The Greening of Ethics*, and the work by myself in various Green Web publications concerned with helping to outline the left biocentric theoretical tendency and the inherent radicalism within deep ecology), have pointed out that to create a mass movement informed by deep ecology, there must be an alternative cultural, social, and economic vision to that of industrial capitalist society, and a political theory for the mobilization of human society and to show the way forward. These are urgent and exciting tasks facing the deep ecology movement, and extend beyond what is often the focus for promoting change as mainly occurring through individual consciousness raising, important as this is, the concern of much mainstream deep ecology.

The purpose of this essay is to try and enlighten; to examine how the ecofascist term/ concept has been used, and whether “ecofascism” has any conceptual validity within the radical environmental movement. I will argue that to be valid, this term has to be put in very specific contexts — such as anti-Nature activities as carried out by the “Wise Use” movement, logging and the killing of seals, and possibly in what may be called “intrusive research” into wildlife populations by restoration ecologists. Deep ecology supporters also need to be on guard against negative political tendencies, such as ecofascism, within this world view.

I will also argue that the social ecology-derived use of “ecofascist” against deep ecology should be criticized and discarded as sectarian,

important contribution and lesson from the animal rights or animal liberation movement. Animal welfare, as well as the concern with species or populations and the preservation of habitat, must be part of any acceptable restoration ecology.

C. Inducing Fear

Perhaps another example of ecofascist behaviour which could occur within our own ranks might be carrying out activities which could deliberately kill or injure people in the name of some environmental or animal rights/animal liberation cause. This seems to rest on using “fear” to destabilize. Many activists of course know that the state security forces also have successfully used such tactics to try and discredit the radical animal rights and radical environmental movements.

More important philosophically perhaps, such activities may rest on the deeper view that in the chain of life, the human species does not have a privileged status above other species, and must be held accountable for anti-life behaviours. In other words, why should violence be acceptable towards nonhuman species, and non-violence apply only to humans? We also know that any state, whatever its ideological basis, claims a monopoly on the use of violence against its citizens and will use all its institutions to defend this. Yet the term “terrorist” is only applied against opponents of the prevailing system. Also, many activists have experienced “terror” from the economic growth and high consumption defenders. However, the political reality is that the charge of “ecoterrorist”, often used as a blanket condemnation against radical environmentalists and animal rights activists, seems to be fed by such behaviour of attempting to induce fear.

Conclusion

This bulletin has shown that the concept of “ecofascism” can be used in different ways. It has looked at how some social ecology

In a sense wildlife becomes “domesticated” by some conservation biologists, so that it can be numbered, counted, tagged, and manipulated. This does not appear, so far, to have been challenged from a deep ecology perspective. Conservation biology, like any other profession, if looked at sociologically, has its own taken-for-granted world view justifying its existence. The world view seems to be, not that “Nature knows best,” but that “Nature needs the interventions of conservation biologists to rectify various ecological problems.”

The intrusive research practices engaged in by some conservation biologists and traditional “fish and game” biologists, seem to be remarkably similar. They both use computer-type and other technologies, such as radio-collars, implanted computer chips, banding, etc. The main defense of intrusive research seems to be two-fold:

- the first is that habitat is crucial for wild animals (no disagreement here), and that radio-collaring and the use of other tracking and computerized devices have been helpful in establishing the ranges of the wild animals being studied. (But there are other non intrusive methods, although more labour and knowledge intensive, for the range tracking of wildlife.)
- the second justification, the one that I feel has some ecofascist echos, is that “the larger good” requires such research and any negatives to the “researched” animals have to be accepted from this perspective. (This larger good is defined variously as the goals of the Wildlands Project; the health of the wildlife populations being studied; the well being of the ecosphere; or work towards implementing the goals of the Deep Ecology Platform.) One thinks here of the fascist goals of “the nation” or “the fatherland” as justification to sacrifice the individual human or groups of humans considered expendable. For me, the defense of intrusive research on nonhuman life forms and their expendability, in the name of a human-decided larger good, although couched in ecological language, is the ultimate anthropocentrism and could legitimately be called an example of ecofascism.

I have to come to see that, as well as working for conservation, it is necessary to work for the individual welfare of animals. This is an

human-centered, self-serving dogmatism, and moreover, even from an anarchist perspective, totally in opposition to the open-minded spirit say of anarchist Emma Goldman. (See her autobiography **Living My Life** and in it, the account of the magazine she founded, **Mother Earth**.)

Fascism Defined

“Fascism” as a political term, without the “eco” prefix, carries some or all of the following connotations for me. I am using Nazi Germany as the model or ideal type:

- Overriding belief in “the Nation” or “the Fatherland or Motherland” and populist propaganda at all levels of the society, glorifying individual self-sacrifice for this nationalist ideal, which is embodied in “the Leader”.
- Capitalist economic organization and ownership, and a growth economy, but with heavy state/political involvement and guidance. A social security network for those defined as citizens.
- A narrow and exclusive de facto definition of the “citizen” of the fascist state. This might exclude for example, “others” such as gypsies, jews, foreigners, etc. according to fascist criteria. Physical attacks are often made against those defined as “others”.
- No independent political or pluralistic political process; and no independent trade union movement, press or judiciary.
- Extreme violence towards dissenters, virulent anti-communism (communists are always seen as the arch enemy of fascism), and hostility towards those defined as on the “left”.
- Outward territorial expansionism towards other countries.
- Overwhelming dominance of the military and the state security apparatus.

What seems to have happened with “ecofascism”, is that a term whose origins and use reflect a particular form of **human** social, political and economic organization, now, with a prefix “eco”, becomes used against environmentalists who generally are sympathetic to a

particular non-human centered and Nature-based radical environmental philosophy — deep ecology. Yet supporters of deep ecology, if they think about the concept of ecofascism, see the ongoing violent onslaught against Nature and its non-human life forms (plant life, insects, birds, mammals, etc.) plus indigenous cultures, which is justified as economic “progress”, as ecofascist destruction!

Perhaps many deeper environmentalists could foresee a day in the not too distant future when, unless peoples organize themselves to counter this, countries like the United States and its high consumptive lifestyle allies like Canada and other over‘developed’ countries, would try to impose a fascist world dictatorship in the name of “protecting their environment” — and fossil fuel-based lifestyles. (The Gulf War for oil and the World Trade Organization indicate these hegemonic tendencies.) Such governments could perhaps then be considered ecofascist.

Social Ecology and Ecofascism

Since the mid 80’s, some writers linked with the human-centered theory of social ecology, for example Murray Bookchin, have attempted to associate deep ecology with “ecofascism” and Hitler’s “national socialist” movement. See his 1987 essay “*Social Ecology Versus ‘Deep Ecology’*” based on his divisive, anti-communist and sectarian speech to the National Gathering of the US Greens in Amherst Massachusetts (e.g. the folk singer Woody Guthrie was dismissed by Bookchin as “a Communist Party centralist”). There are several references by Bookchin in this essay, promoting the association of deep ecology with Hitler and ecofascism. More generally for Bookchin in this article, deep ecology is “an ideological toxic dump.”

Bookchin’s essay presented the view that deep ecology is a reactionary movement. With its bitter and self-serving tone, it helped to poison needed intellectual exchanges between deep ecology and social ecology supporters. This essay also outlined, in fundamental opposition to deep ecology, that in Bookchin’s social ecology there is a special role for humans. Human thought is “nature rendered self-

work to remove seals from the marine eco-system because “there are far too many of them.”. (It seems that for such people there are never too many humans or fishers.)

With industrial capitalist societies having permanent growth economies, increasing populations, increasing consumerism as an intrinsic part of the economy, non-sustainable ecological footprints etc., and no willingness to change any of this, the struggle over what little wild Nature remains and whether it is going to be left alone or put to “use”, is becoming increasingly brutalized. Those who refuse to rise above suicidal short term interest, whether workers or capitalists, see themselves as having a stake in the continuation of industrial capitalism and are prepared to fiercely defend this at the expense of the ecology. Yet despite this “on the ground” reality which many environmental activists are facing, there seems to be an ongoing attempt to link the deep ecology movement and its supporters with ecofascism — that is, to malign some of the very people who are experiencing ecofascist attacks!

B. Intrusive Research

Another example of where the term “ecofascist” can be applied, will be much more controversial within the deep ecology movement, since it is directed at some in our own ranks — that is, some of those who work in the field of conservation biology! The ecofascist activity here is directed at wildlife, not humans. But I have come to believe it to be true, and that it is necessary to speak out about it. It concerns in a general way, Point 4 of the Deep Ecology Platform (by Arne Næss and George Sessions), “*Present human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening.*” Specifically it concerns activities carried out by conservation biologists which can be called “intrusive research” into wildlife populations. This is generally done in the name of restoration ecology. (Of course, industrialized society and its supporters inflict far worse intrusive horrors, for example, on domestic animals destined for the food machine.)

January 2000 issue of the **Earth First! Journal**. These were ecofascist activities directed at environmentalists.

Another “Wise Use” ecofascist-type activity concerns the killing of seals, particularly on the east coast of Canada. There seems to be a hatred directed towards seals (and those who defend them), which extends from sealers and most fishers, to the corporate components of the fishing industry and the federal and provincial governments, particularly the Newfoundland and Labrador government (see for example, the extremely rabid “I hate seals” talk of provincial fisheries minister John Efford). The seals become scapegoats for the collapse of the ground fishery, especially cod. A vicious government-subsidized warfare, using all the resources of the state, becomes waged on seals. The largest annual wildlife slaughter in the world today concerns the ice seals (harp and hooded seals), which come every winter to the east coast of Canada to have their young and to mate. Quotas of 275,000 harps and 10,000 hoods, are allocated. Every honest knowledgeable person is aware that these quotas, given suitable ice killing conditions, are vastly exceeded. There is also a “hunt” with bounties, directed at grey seals, which live permanently in the Atlantic marine region.

In addition to the above, there are additional seal execution plans in the works. The so-called Fisheries Resource Conservation Council, in its April 1999 Report to the federal minister of fisheries giving as justification the protection of spawning and juvenile cod, seeks to:

- reduce seal herds by up to 50 percent of their current population levels;
- establish an experimental seal harvest for grey seals of up to 20,000 grey seals on Sable Island; and
- define a limited number of so-called “seal exclusion” zones where all seals would be killed. These zones seem to include the Northumberland Strait, the marine waters off New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island and other areas.

I regard the pronouncements of the Fisheries Resource Conservation Council on seals as ecofascist mystification: “*We need to kill seals for conservation*”. I also regard as ecofascists those who actively

conscious.” The necessary human purpose is to consciously change nature and, arrogantly, “to consciously increase biotic diversity.” According to Bookchin, social arrangements are crucial in whether or not the human purpose (as seen by social ecology) can be carried out. These social arrangements include a non-hierarchical society, mutual aid, local autonomy, communalism, etc. — all seen as part of the anarchist tradition. For social ecology, there do not seem to be natural laws to which humans and their civilizations must conform or perish. The basic social ecology perspective is human interventionist. Nature can be moulded to human interests.

Another ‘argument’ is to refer to some extreme or reactionary statement by somebody of prominence who supports deep ecology. For example, Bookchin calls Dave Foreman an “ecobrutalist”, and uses this to smear by association all deep ecology supporters — and to further negate the worth of the particular individual, denying the validity of their overall life’s work. Foreman was one of the key figures in founding **Earth First!** He went on to do and promote crucial restoration ecology work in the magazine **Wild Earth**, which he helped found, and on the Wildlands Project. Overall he has, and continues to make, a substantial contribution. He has never made any secret of his right-of-center original political views and often showered these rightist views in uninformed comments in print, on what he saw as “leftists” in the movement. The environmental movement recruits from across class, although there is a class component to environmental struggles.

Bookchin’s comments about Foreman (of course social ecology is without blemish and has no need for self criticism!), are equivalent to picking up some backward and reactionary action or statement of someone like Gandhi, and using this to dismiss his enormous contribution and moral authority. Gandhi for example recruited Indians for the British side in the Zulu rebellion and the Boer War in South Africa; and in the Second World War in 1940, Gandhi wrote an astonishing appeal “*To every Briton*” counselling them to give up and accept whatever fate Hitler had for them, but not to give up their souls or their minds! But Gandhi’s influence remains substantial within the deep ecology movement, and particularly for someone like

Arne Næss, the original and a continuing philosophical inspiration. Næss is dismissed by Bookchin as “grand Pontiff” in his essay.

Other spokespersons for social ecology, like Janet Biehl and Peter Staudenmaier, have later carried on this peculiar work. (See the 1995 published essays: *“Ecofascism: Lessons from the German Experience”* by Staudenmaier and Biehl; *“Fascist Ecology: The ‘Green Wing’ of the Nazi Party and its Historical Antecedents”* by Staudenmaier; and *“‘Ecology’ and the Modernization of Fascism in the German Ultra-right”* by Biehl.) For Staudenmaier and Biehl, in their joint essay: *“Reactionary and outright fascist ecologists emphasize the supremacy of the ‘Earth’ over people.”* Most deep ecology supporters would not have any problem identifying with what is condemned here. But this of course is the point for these authors.

Staudenmaier’s essay is quite thoughtful and revealing about some ecological trends in the rise of national socialism, but its ultimate purpose is to discredit deep ecology, the love of Nature and really the ecological movement, so it is ruined by its Bookchin-inspired agenda. For Staudenmaier, *“From its very beginnings, then, ecology was bound up in an intensely reactionary political framework.”* Basically this essay is written from outside the ecological movement. Its purpose is to discredit and assert the superiority of social ecology and humanism.

At its crudest, it is argued by such writers that, because **some** supporters of German fascism, liked being in the outdoors and extolled nature and the “Land” through songs, poetry, literature and philosophy and the Nazi movement drew from this, or because some prominent Nazis like Hitler and Himmler were allegedly “strict vegetarians and animal lovers”, or supported organic farming, this “proves” something about the direction deep ecology supporters are heading in. Strangely, the similar type argument is not made that because “socialist” is part of “national socialist”, this means all socialists have some inclination towards fascism! The writers by this argument also negate that the main focus of fascism and the Nazis was the industrial/military juggernaut, for which all in the society were mobilized.

Some ideas associated with deep ecology like the love of Nature; the concern with a needed spiritual transformation dedicated to the sharing of identities with other people, animals, and Nature as a

Dave Dietz and Maurice Tugwell. The message was *“It takes a movement to fight a movement.”* In other words, neither industry nor government according to Arnold, can successfully challenge a broadly based environmental movement. Hence the necessity for a “Wise Use” movement to do this work.

The fascist components of the “Wise Use” movement are:

- some popular misguided support of working people who depend on logging, mining, fishing, and related exploitive industries who see their consumptive lifestyles threatened;
- backing by industrial capitalist economic interests linked to the same industries, who provide money and political/media influence;
- the willingness to be influenced by hate propaganda, to demonize/scapegoat, and to use violence and intimidation against environmentalists and their supporters;
- the tacit support of law enforcement agencies to “Wise Use” activities; and
- an unwillingness to publicly debate in a non coercive atmosphere the deeper environmental criticism of the industrial paradigm, where old growth forests, oceans and marine life, and Nature generally, only exist for industrial and human consumption.

In Canada, I see mainly two kinds of “Wise Use” activities. One concerns the actions of logging industry workers against environmentalists, for example in British Columbia, often concerning blocked access to logging old growth forests. Whereas the other ecofascist “Wise Use” activity is directed against seals mainly, and only secondarily against those who come forward to defend seals. So one “Wise Use” example is human-focussed and one is wildlife-focused. For a recent example of what could be called ecofascist activity, see the accounts of the physical attacks in September of 1999, by International Forest Products workers and others in the Elaho Valley in British Columbia, against environmentalists blockading a logging road, as reported in the Winter 1999 issue of the **British Columbia Environmental Report** and more fully in the December-

him yet an advocate of deep ecology. But he does know Bahro's work and the German context. Sarkar left the Green Party one year after Bahro. Sarkar, and his German wife Maria Mies, do not consider Bahro an ecofascist, although they both distanced themselves from Bahro's later work. Sarkar has written extensively on the German Greens. (See the two-volume **Green-Alternative Politics in West Germany**, published by the United Nations University Press, and his most recent book **Eco-socialism or eco-capitalism? A critical analysis of humanity's fundamental choices**, by Zed Books.)

Bahro was a supporter and, through his ideas, important contributor to the left biocentric theoretical tendency within the deep ecology movement. (See my "*Tribute*" to Bahro on his death, published in **Canadian Dimension**, March-April 1998, Vol. 32, No. 2 and elsewhere.) In a December 1995 letter, Bahro had declared that he was in agreement "with the essential points" of the philosophy of left biocentrism.

Legitimate Use of Ecofascism?

A. "Wise Use"

I mainly associate the term "ecofascism" in my own mind, with the so-called "Wise Use" movement in North America. (The goal is "use", "wise" is a PR cover.) Essentially, "Wise Use" in this context means that all of Nature is available for **human** use. Nature should not be "locked up" in parks or wildlife reserves, and human access to "resources" always must have priority. One has in such "Wise Use" situations, what might be considered "traditional" fascist-type activities, used against those who are defending the ecology or against the animals themselves. This, in my understanding, makes for a legitimate use of the term ecofascist, notwithstanding what I have written above.

At a meeting in Nova Scotia in 1984 (an alleged Education Seminar organized by the Atlantic Vegetation Management Association), three ideologues of the "Wise Use" movement spoke — Ron Arnold,

whole; and with non-coercive population reduction (seen as necessary not only for the sake of humans but, more importantly, so other species can remain on the Earth and flourish with sufficient habitats), seem to be anathema to social ecology and are supposed to incline deep ecology supporters towards ecofascism in some way. Deep ecology supporters, contrary to some social ecology slanders, see population reduction, or perhaps controls on immigration, from a maintenance of biodiversity perspective, and this has nothing to do with fascists who seek controls on immigration or want to deport "foreigners" in the name of maintaining some so-called ethnic/cultural or racial purity or national identity.

A view is presented that only **social** ecology can overcome the dangers these social ecology writers describe. Yet even this is wrong, although one can and should learn from this, I believe, important theoretical tendency. Deep ecology has the potential for a **new** economic, social, and political vision based on an ecocentric world view. Whereas all these particular social ecologists seem to be offering as the way forward, is a human-centered and non-ecological, anarchist social theory, pulled together from the past. Yet the basic social ecology premise is flawed, that human-to-human relations within society determine society's relationship to the natural world. This does not necessarily follow. Left biocentrism for example, argues that an egalitarian, non-sexist, non-discriminating society, while a highly desirable goal, can still be exploitive towards the Earth. This is why for deep ecology supporters, the slogan "Earth first" is necessary and not reactionary. Left biocentric deep ecology supporters believe that we must be concerned with social justice and class issues and the redistribution of wealth, nationally and internationally for the human species, but within a context of ecology. (See point 4 of the *Left Biocentrism Primer*.)

Deep ecology and social ecology are totally different philosophies of life whose fundamental premises clash! As John Livingston, the Canadian ecophilosopher put it, in his 1994 book **Rogue Primate: An exploration of human domestication**:

"It has become popular among adherents to 'social ecology' (a term meaningless in itself, but apparently a brand of anarchism)

to label those who would dare to weigh the interests of Nature in the context of human populations as ‘ecofascists.’”

Rudolf Bahro

The late deep-green German ecophilosopher and activist Rudolf Bahro (1935–1997) has been accused by some social ecology supporters — for example Janet Biehl, Peter Staudenmaier and others, without real foundation, of being an ecofascist and Nazi sympathizer and a contributor to “spiritual fascism”. Yet Bahro was a daring original thinker, who came into conflict with all orthodoxies in thought — particularly left and green orthodoxies. The language he used and metaphors as shown in his writings, display his considerable knowledge of European culture. But one would have to say that he took poetic license with his imagery — for example, the call for a “Green Adolf”. He saw this as perhaps necessary, to display the complexity of his ideas and to shake mass society from its slumbers! But this helped to fuel attacks on him. Bahro was interested in concretely building a mass social movement and, politically incorrect as it may be, sought to see if there was anything to learn from the rise of Nazism: *“How a millenary movement can be led, or can lead itself, and with what organs: that is the question.”* (Bahro, *Avoiding Social & Ecological Disaster*, p.278)

This concern does not make him a fascist, particularly when one considers overall what he did with his life, his demonstrated deep sentiment for the Earth, and his various theoretical contributions. Bahro was also open-minded enough to invite Murray Bookchin and others with diverse views (for example the eco-feminist Maria Mies), to speak in his class at Humboldt University in East Berlin!

The social ecologist Janet Biehl, in her paper *“‘Ecology’ and the Modernization of Fascism in the German Ultra-right”*, has a four-page discussion on Rudolf Bahro. I come to the opposite conclusions about Bahro than she does. I see someone very daring, who raised spiritually-based questions on how to get out of the ecological crisis in a German context. Bahro was not a constipated leftist frozen in his thinking. Bahro saw that the left rejects spiritual insights.

Biehl comes to the conclusion that Bahro, with his willingness to re-examine the national socialist movement, was giving “people permission to envision themselves as Nazis.”

Bahro, himself a person from the left, came to understand the role of left opportunists in undermining and diluting any deeper ecological understanding in Green organizations, in the name of paying excessive attention to social issues. They often called themselves “eco-socialists”, but never understood the defining role of ecology and what this means for a new radical politics. For many leftists, ecology was just an “add-on”, so there was no transformation of world view and consciousness was not changed. This is what happened in the German Green Party and Bahro combatted it. It therefore becomes important for those who see themselves as defending this left opportunism, to try to undermine Rudolf Bahro, the most fundamental philosopher of the fundamentalists. By 1985 Bahro had resigned from the Green Party saying that the members did not want out of the industrial system. Whatever Bahro’s later wayward path, the ecofascist charge needs to be placed in such a context.

Bahro did become muddled and esoteric in his thinking after 1984–5. This is shown, for example, by the esoteric/Christian passages to be found in Bahro’s last book published in English, *Avoiding Social & Ecological Disaster: The Politics of World Transformation*, and also by his involvement with the bankrupt Indian Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. Yet Bahro saw the necessity for a spiritual and ecopsychological transformation within society, something which social ecology does not support, to avoid social and ecological disaster. Bahro, like Gandhi, believed it necessary to look inward, to find the spiritual strength to break with industrial society. This needed path is not invalidated by spiritual excess or losing one’s way on the path.

As additional support for opposing the slander that Bahro was an ecofascist, I would advance the viewpoint of Saral Sarkar. He was born in India, but has lived in Germany since 1982. Sarkar was a radical political associate of Bahro (they were both considered “fundamentalists” within the German Greens) and fought alongside of him for the same causes. (Saral is also a friend who visited me in November/December of 1999 in Nova Scotia, Canada.) Although Sarkar writes with a subdued biocentric perspective, I would not consider