

STEFAN ENGEL · MONIKA GÄRTNER-ENGEL · GABI FECHTNER

THE GLOBAL
**ENVIRONMENTAL
CATASTROPHE**
HAS BEGUN!

SUPPLEMENTARY VOLUME

A dramatic illustration of a globe engulfed in flames and fire, with skeletal remains floating in the air above it, set against a green background.

The Global Environmental Catastrophe Has Begun!

Supplement to the book

Catastrophe Alert!

What Is to Be Done Against the Willful Destruction
of the Unity of Humanity and Nature?

November 2023

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*What Is to Be Done Against the Willful Destruction
of the Unity of Humanity and Nature?*

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Introduction

Since the 1980s our editors' collective has been analyzing the ongoing process of the undermining of the unity of humanity and nature in capitalism. In 2014 we published the book, *Catastrophe Alert! What Is to Be Done Against the Willful Destruction of the Unity of Humanity and Nature?*, in which we proved that the global *environmental crisis* that emerged in the 1970s had become an *inherent law* of the economy of imperialism. The decisive condition for this was the reorganization of international capitalist production since the 1990s. Since that time the mode of production has been oriented exclusively to maximum profit and world market domination. Under the dictatorship of the international supermonopolies this mode of production is bound, under penalty of ruin, to the increasing destructive exploitation of the natural environment.

During the last few years this law-governed development has assumed the quality of a *global environmental catastrophe*. In the book, *The Crisis of Bourgeois Natural Science*, in February 2023 we determined that this has ushered in an *advancing process of the destruction and self-destruction of the biosphere*. *Humanity* finds itself in a *latent existential crisis* because of this development, which is exacerbated by the acute danger of world war that emerged in 2022 with the Ukraine war. It involves the danger of a nuclear exchange that would destroy humans and nature.

Catastrophe Alert! already drew far-reaching conclusions from this development: the fight to protect the natural environment must become a component part of the worldwide class

struggle of the working class to overcome the imperialist world system, and the environmental struggle of the broad masses must take on a society-changing character.

The *qualitative leap to the global environmental catastrophe*, which we have feared since the 1980s, has set in earlier than anticipated. This makes the conclusions all the more urgent.

Bourgeois environmental research and bourgeois politicians have gotten into an open crisis because of this development. Owing to their bourgeois class interests, they cannot grasp, or do not want to grasp, what in the meantime has become a dramatic fact. Perhaps some of them are merely victims of their own whitewashing and manipulation of reality, considering that the positivist and pragmatic way of thinking and working predominate in their politics and natural science. But it is more likely that they know more about the actual developments than they admit. Whether they want to acknowledge it or not, they willfully expose humanity to catastrophe so long as *solely ruling international finance capital, as main cause, remains in power*.

Despite the heightened environmental consciousness, the influences of bourgeois ideology and the petty-bourgeois mode of thinking cause the masses to still underestimate the extent of the development.

It is absolutely necessary to fully comprehend the new situation in order to draw the necessary conclusions for the international class struggle and the rescue of humanity. The broad mass of the world's population does not want to perish in capitalist barbarism. We are firmly convinced that hundreds of millions will rise up against the imperialist world system and fight for a socialist society under the guideline of the unity of humanity and nature.

We are publishing our analyses on the emergence of the global environmental catastrophe in the form of this *supple-*

mentary volume to the book, *Catastrophe Alert! What Is to Be Done Against the Willful Destruction of the Unity of Humanity and Nature?* The basic statements made in that book are still valid and form the initial synthesis for this book. The resultant new, complete volume in the *Revolutionärer Weg* series is again the result of a collective dialectical-materialist advance in research and knowledge. It strengthens the *well-founded revolutionary optimism* that, and how, the full maturing of the global environmental catastrophe that has begun can be prevented.

Stefan Engel, October 2023

V. The Ambivalent Character of the UN Climate Reports 2021–2023

Since its foundation, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)¹ has warned of accelerated sea-level rise, changes in ocean currents, retreat of ice masses and permafrost regions, and severe storms.

Its sixth assessment report was published between August 2021 and March 2023 in three parts plus a synthesis report. The 2022 report already spoke of

substantial damages, and increasingly irreversible losses, in terrestrial, freshwater and coastal and open ocean marine ecosystems.²

The 2023 Synthesis Report even noted the failure of the arbitrarily agreed target of the 2015 Paris Climate Conference to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial times.³

At the same time, however, the reports' explanations and conclusions trivialize the alarming results and even partly justify them. In particular, the "Summary for Policymakers" reveals the interest-driven haggling over every formulation

¹ The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was founded in 1988 as a suborganization of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

² Hans-Otto Pörtner et al. (eds.), *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*, p. 9

³ IPCC, Synthesis Report, main statements from the Summary for Policymakers, July 2023