

COPENHAGEN, APRIL 12, 2049

April 12, 2049. It was a nice, cool Spring morning, temperature did not rise above 42 C in the shadow. Grandmother Sarah, aged 71, went to a walk on the sea-shore with her grand-son Stefan, aged 10. They engaged a very lively conversation.

Stefan: Grandmother, is it true what father told me this morning, that under the sea in front of us lies a whole city which was once called Copenhagen?

Sarah: Yes, dear Stefan. It was a great, beautiful, charming town, full of palaces, churches, towers, theatres, universities. We used to live there, with our friends and family, before the Catastrophe.

Stefan: What happened?

Sarah: Did you not learn about it in school? The greenhouse gases resulting from the fossil energies — coal, oil — produced a rise in temperature, and the billions of tons of ice from the North Pole and Greenland melt. It started slowly, but some years ago it became a sudden process, enormous blocs of ice slipped into the sea, and the Ocean's level rose by several meters.

Stefan: I see ... Did it happen only here, in Denmark?

Sarah: Oh no, my child. It happened all around the world. Many other wonderful towns, like Venice, Amsterdam, London, New York, Rio de Janeiro, Dacca, Hong-Kong are now under the sea....

Stefan: Will I never see Copenhagen, and these other beautiful cities?

Sarah: I'm afraid not, Stefan. Some climatologists say that in a few thousand years, when the climate will change again, the sea may retrocede, revealing the ruins of those splendid towns. But we won't be there to see.

Stefan: But grandmother, did nobody foresee the Catastrophe?

Sarah: Many people did! Some scientists, like James Hansen, the climatologist of the NASA, pretty accurately predicted, 40 years ago, what would happen, if we would continue with "business as usual." Other scientists also predicted what has happened in Southern Europe: instead of the green lands of South Italy, France and Spain, we have now the so-called Southern European Sahara Desert.

Stefan: Tell me grandmother, was the Catastrophe inevitable?

Sarah: Not really, sonny. Some decades ago it was still possible to avert it, if radical changes had been done.

Stefan: Why didn't the governments of those years take some initiative?

Sarah: Most of them served the interests of the ruling classes, which refused to consider any change that threatened their economic system — the capitalist market economy — their privileges and their way of life. They were a sort of "fossil oligarchy" which clung obstinately to oil and coal, and considered any proposal of quickly replacing them by renewable alternatives (such as solar energy), as "unrealistic", or a threat to the "competitiveness" of their enterprises. The same applies to the car industry, to the transport of commodities by trucks, etc.

Stefan: How could they be so blind?

Sarah: Look, in 2009, while there still existed the town of Copenhagen, the rulers of the world met here for a World Conference on Climate Change. They made beautiful speeches, but did not come to any significant conclusions on what to do the next few years; some rich industrial countries announced that they would reduce by half their emissions of green-house gases ... by 2050. And they found nothing better, meanwhile, than to establish a “Emissions rights trading system,” where big polluters bought the right to continue polluting.

Stefan: And nobody protested?

Sarah: Of course there was protest! Masses of angry people came from all of Europe, and also from far away countries, to Copenhagen, to voice their protest, and call for immediate and radical measures, such as a reduction of emissions by 40% till 2020 (we should have asked for 80%!). Among the people supporting these measures, there were some — I was one of them! – who called themselves *ecosocialists*.

Stefan: What did you propose?

Sarah: We argued that a radical social change is needed, taking the means of production from the hands of the capitalist oligarchy to give them to the people; we called for a new mode of civilisation, a new pattern of production – using solar energy – and of consumption, suppressing advertisement and the useless junk it promoted. Instead of unlimited “growth”, based on unlimited profit and accumulation of capital, we proposed the democratic planning of production, according to the real social needs, and the protection of the environment.

Stefan: That seems reasonable to me! But what was the response of the authorities?

Sarah: Well, we and all the young protesters were received with police clubs and tear gas.

Stefan: Did you get hit, grandmother?

Sarah: Oh yes! I was hit by a cop with a rubber truncheon, and my left ear was almost cut. Look, I still have a mark here, under my hair...

This document was prepared, thanks to H.G.Wells' time machine, by the Ecosocialist International Network, www.ecosocialistnetwork.org. The draft was written by Michael Löwy, with the help of Klaus Engert, Danièle Follet, Joel Kovel, Joaquin Nieto and Ariel Salleh.