

Retrieving the Thread

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It may be useful to quickly review the course of this exchange. My initial (invited) comment on Maria Mies's Mumbai interview with Joel Kovel focused essentially on the mutual dependence of local and global struggles. As I then noted, I share Mies's basic aspirations—insofar as they entail opposition to patriarchy and recognition of the value of localism—but I am disturbed by (1) her lack of concern for differences in the initial mindsets of various popular constituencies, (2) her apparent belief, as expressed in that interview, that social transformation can be brought about purely by local struggles, and (3) her view that socialism is inherently defined by the negative traits of its first-epoch manifestations.

Mies unfortunately misinterpreted my remark about the differences in people's energy-related starting points as an assertion on my part that people differ in their basic needs (rather than in their socially determined *perceptions* of what they need). My whole subsequent discussion of a transitional strategy—in which I tried to suggest the compatibility of radical ecological goals with considerate and equitable policy responses to the energy dilemmas posed by specific populations—was thus simply ignored. My reference to Marx's critique of capitalist technology was likewise overlooked, partly on the pretext that for people in struggle, theory is an archaism and/or a luxury.

A similar posture is adopted by Nicholas Faraclas in his response to my above effort at clarification. His emphasis on the abuse and plunder of Third World communities and of women in particular—and on the bitter struggles they have had to wage in response—is misdirected, because I never disputed these points. My reference to Mies's "swipes at socialism" focused above all on her charge that socialism is inherently committed to accumulation. This is not so. Accumulation is an option which socialist regimes may or may not pursue, depending on the circumstances (which encompass not just immediate opportunities or threats but also structural constraints—in either direction—on policymakers). What "accumulation" drive can explain the Cuban government's vast program of medical solidarity?

In my above article, I note and document five very specific ways in which Mies and Claudia von Werlhof misrepresent Marxism, socialism, and the working class. Faraclas categorically ignores these observations and then simply repeats the caricatures that they refute. His remarks disregard the complex history of socialist struggles, in which the approach he labels as the dominant one has been repeatedly contested from within the movement, to increasing effect.

Faraclas appears to believe that in order to be faithful to the goals of feminism and localism, one must show Marxism and socialism to be intrinsically tarnished. Everything for him is *either/or*, why not *both/and*? The current popular struggles in Venezuela and Bolivia, for example, are taking place *both* at the level of state power *and* at the level of grassroots organizing. The two levels of struggle can and must be mutually reinforcing. Faraclas, in his *a priori* exclusion of such a scenario, relies on bare assertion, grounded in stereotypes drawn in a highly prejudicial way from the tapestry of conflict.

Perhaps others can draw us back to addressing the practical questions with which this discussion began.