

# U.N. climate summit in Berlin is an eco-spectacle with a dubious goal

by Helmut Böttiger

*The author writes on environmental affairs and other cultural issues for the German weekly Neue Solidarität.*

The agenda at the treaty conference for the Climate Convention in Berlin set for March 28-April 7, the first United Nations conference in Germany, is no longer about whether a climate catastrophe generally is threatening, or whether it is unleashed by man, who is allegedly producing excessive carbon dioxide and causing "global warming." This matter was supposed to be settled via the Draft Convention on Climate at the 1992 Rio de Janeiro summit, which was signed by 166 nations and has been in effect since March 21, 1994. Still to be discussed are the measures required to reduce the man-made carbon dioxide production to 80% of the 1990 amount, and how to distribute the costs. In the words of the German government, which is responsible for the content and organization of the preparation and execution of the official proceedings, the issue is the "central switchyard for the follow-up action to the Draft Convention on Climate."

The following questions are being discussed:

- 1) Are the treaty obligations of the individual nations sufficient to achieve the goal of the Convention?
- 2) How do the signator states want to translate the goals into corresponding measures for action, and reciprocally support one another in doing so?
- 3) What actions have individual states already undertaken in the realm of climate protection policy, and what are the results?
- 4) How should the costs be financed, and who should assume the financial burdens (for example, those of the developing nations)?
- 5) Which institutions and/or sanctions must be set up or imposed, in order to enforce the measures?

The deliberations in Berlin will be conducted by high-level ministry officials, and resolutions will then be passed by the ministers.

Within the framework of the summit, a massive propaganda spectacle will be simultaneously staged, for which the German government will spare no expense. The planned "unpopular measures" will be somewhat sweetened in this way. The city of Berlin is responsible for putting on the

official summit spectacle. The open performance, "Of the People," will be organized by the U.N. non-governmental organizations (NGOs)—these are tightly centralized, globally active interest groups like the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), etc.—which furnish the media with neatly packaged propaganda. At both levels, the same effect is intended. On the one side, the raving grows ever wilder and more bizarre, with the intention of causing the other side to appear more normal and moderate.

For the public, during the summit, there will be a "First International Climate Protection Expo." Exhibitors will be not only environmental-technical firms with their gear, but also communities, citizens' initiatives, and federations that have something to say regarding their local problems. Other, more far-reaching themes, such as the resolution of the North-South conflict, eastern Europe, the population explosion, urban ecology, etc. will come under discussion.

Alongside the summit, a municipal climate protection conference will meet, the "World Mayors' Summit," at which the "Successes of Urban Climate Protection Policy" will be presented. This will involve, among other things, "alliances" and partnerships between European cities and "indigenous peoples." Here, for example, the radical squatters movement in Berlin-Kreuzberg could apply for a partnership with the Zapatista terrorists in Mexico.

## Consciousness-raising 'happenings'

Culturally, the city has organized for progressives an "Arts and Sciences Happening" with music and "Textual Contributions from Climate Scientists," a multi-media program. For the common folk, there is a "Climate Balancing-Act" comprised of high-wire acts, a "Climate-Mile," ice pyramids, "Nights of Climate," and a "Global Change" exhibition.

On top of all this, there are sessions on such themes as "Solar and Climatically Correct Construction," "Steps toward an Ecological Climate, Energy and Labor Market Policy," "Possibilities and Means toward the Conversion of Industrial Society," and pushing the reduction of carbon dioxide in transportation and similar areas.

More revealing are the planned spectacles of the NGOs.

Environmental youth organizations are preparing “environmentally revolutionary” activities as part of an international youth conference (“The Climate is Right for Change”), including a planned “Climate Action Day” to help one to overcome one’s inhibition threshold and prepare to put these tactics into practice back home.

Younger children are also targeted by various campaigns and “happenings,” including: “We’re Making Climate the Issue,” “Solar School,” “Children’s Action for Protection of the Climate,” or “Young Artists’ Climate Summit.” Then there is “Performance: The Forest,” where participants are to allow themselves to become sensitive to the “Feelings of the Forest.” In plain language, this bafflegab translates into modernist, chaotic mystery plays for the neo-pagan United Nations world-cult, in which artists operate as a combination of priests and shamans. Several German federal ministers are providing subsidies for all this.

The Protestant Church in Germany is joining the party with its own Climate Worship Service, and a roundtable discussion on “Climate Protection as an Ecumenical Task.” The Evangelical Academy is contributing to a meeting on “How Do We Bring the Climate Summit Down to the Level of Everyday Life.”

With its own film festival, the summit is supposed to awaken feelings of self-pity or utopian daydreams, for example with the series, “Energy Culture: A Glance at Everyday Life in the 20th Century.”

Women, of course, are treated as if they were “entirely different” from the human race, and therefore offered something all their own: Thus the “Women for Peace and Ecology” have organized actions, called “CliMagic,” cultural events for “Mother Earth,” or on the so-called “Legacy of the Indians.” In a Climate Tribunal, they will sit in judgment over the male perpetrators. Everything serves as a setting for its corresponding “art.” Naturally, neither an “International Women’s Forum” nor an event like “Weathercocks and Weather-Witches—Climate Protection from the Feminist Point of View” could be lacking under these circumstances.

The preparations and then the theatrical performance of the summit itself will be reported by the Berlin City Council in the monthly magazine *Klima 95*, founded last September, which the federal government funds. The magazine differs neither in form nor in content from propaganda that comes from Greenpeace or other such entities. In it one reads such well-known “truths” as: “Every day 100 animal and plant species become extinct, 55,000 hectares of tropical forest are annihilated, the deserts expand another 20,000 hectares.”

As for the future, into which the U.N. wants to lead us with such initiatives, the circumstances of the summit presage nothing good. Illusions of any kind are, in any event, inadvisable. Citizens who do not wish to befriend this new “fascism with an ecological face,” and do not share the associated pseudo-religious image of man and nature, will see themselves quickly pushed aside as Politically Incorrect “dinosaurs.”

# The Kobe earthquake and the lessons for urban infrastructure

by Rogelio A. Maduro

On Jan. 17, the cities of Kobe and Osaka, Japan were hit by one of the most destructive earthquakes of this century. More than 107,000 buildings, houses, and factories were destroyed, and over 5,350 people were killed. Although the earthquake registered 6.9 on the Richter scale—not a huge earthquake according to most records—the Kobe earthquake hit the highest level in the Japanese scale that measures ground shaking. In other words, the seismic waves caused by the earthquake caused the most intense kind of ground tremors that can be measured.

Part of the reason for the intensity of the tremors is that Kobe lay directly in the path of the earthquake fault and that most of Kobe is located on loose soils, mostly landfills. Intense ground shaking liquefies loose soils. Also, loose soils, found in much of the Los Angeles area in California, amplify seismic waves.

This intense ground shaking is the first of several unexpected developments. It is now very important to draw the lessons of the Kobe earthquake to prepare for future earthquakes. This article is an introduction to the subject, the first in a series of articles analyzing the engineering and scientific issues.

## Predictions for Los Angeles

In January, three separate scientific studies were released warning that the Los Angeles area faces a very high probability that it will be hit by a major earthquake in the next 30 years. One of the reports, released by the Southern California Earthquake Center, a coalition of academic and government scientists, warned that Southern California faces an 86% chance of suffering an earthquake of magnitude 7 or larger by the year 2024.

The probability of an earthquake has been increased due to the discovery of a large number of thrust faults in the area (similar to the kind of fault that caused the Northridge earthquake near Los Angeles a year ago). In addition, historical earthquake data in California indicate that Southern California should expect six magnitude-7 earthquakes every century. So far this century, Southern California has suffered only one such quake. Thus, scientists believe that either