POSTRmagazine

Free

Counter-Culture Chronicle

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In honour of Timmy V.G. and H.S.T

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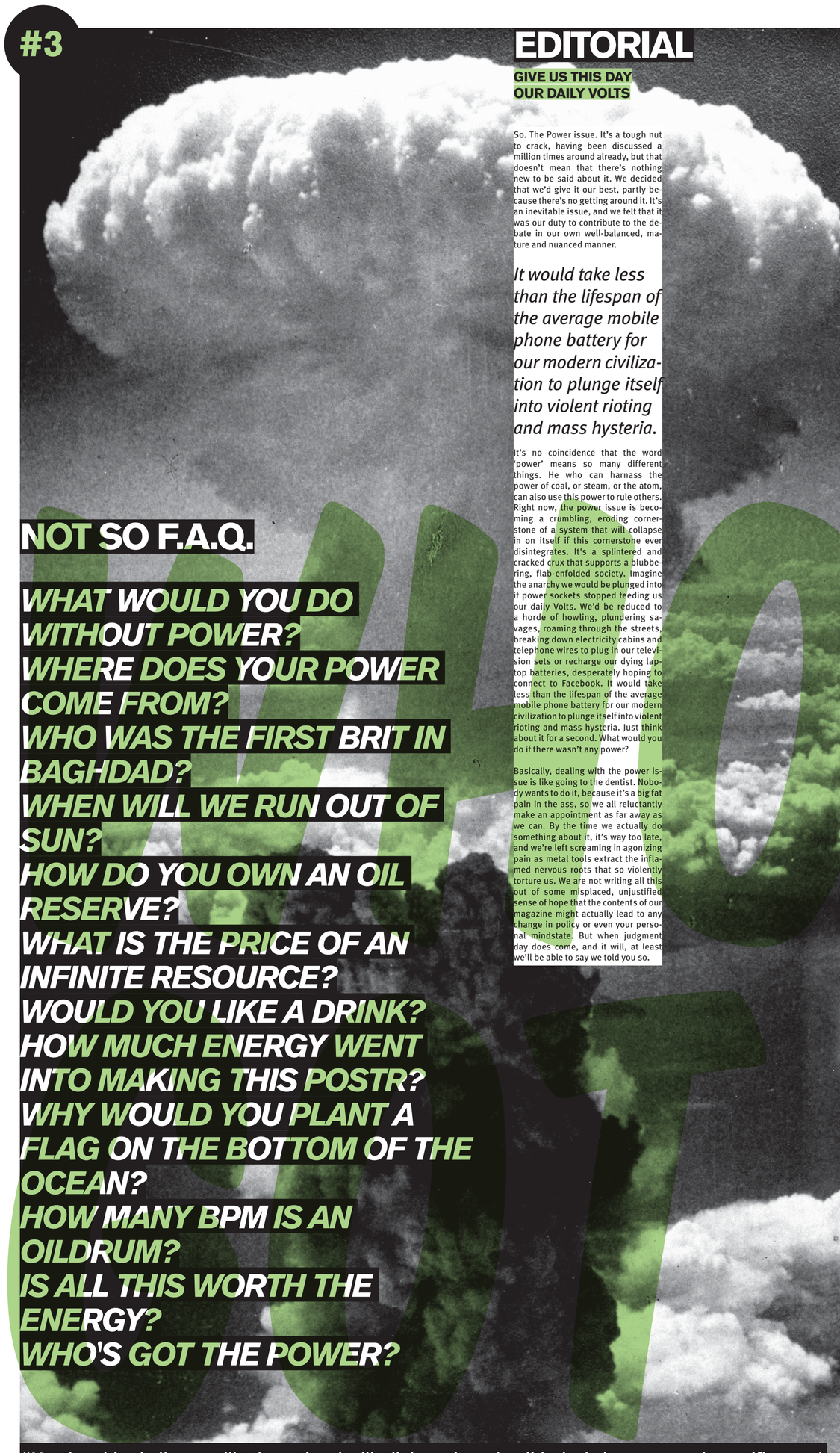


NOT SO F.A.Q.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO WITHOUT POWER?
WHERE DOES YOUR POWER COME FROM?
WHO WAS THE FIRST BRIT IN BAGHDAD?
WHEN WILL WE RUN OUT OF SUN?
HOW DO YOU OWN AN OIL RESERVE?
WHAT IS THE PRICE OF AN INFINITE RESOURCE?
WOULD YOU LIKE A DRINK?
HOW MUCH ENERGY WENT INTO MAKING THIS POSTR?
WHY WOULD YOU PLANT A FLAG ON THE BOTTOM OF THE OCEAN?
HOW MANY BPM IS AN OILDRUM?
IS ALL THIS WORTH THE ENERGY?
WHO'S GOT THE POWER?

"Meeting this challenge will take national will, diplomatic and political wisdom, economic sacrifice, and, of course, military capability. We must call on the best that is in us to preserve the security of this crucial region. Let our position be absolutely clear: An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force."

Former US President Jimmy Carter elaborates upon his geopolitical policy that would become known as the Carter Doctrine. It was incorporated by Ronald Reagan, George Bush Senior & Junior, leading up to two Gulf Wars, that have been tearing the Middle East to bloody shreds for almost two decades. Carter was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2002.

EDITORIAL

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY VOLTS

So. The Power issue. It's a tough nut to crack, having been discussed a million times around already, but that doesn't mean that there's nothing new to be said about it. We decided that we'd give it our best, partly because there's no getting around it. It's an inevitable issue, and we felt that it was our duty to contribute to the debate in our own well-balanced, mature and nuanced manner.

It would take less than the lifespan of the average mobile phone battery for our modern civilization to plunge itself into violent rioting and mass hysteria.

It's no coincidence that the word 'power' means so many different things. He who can harnass the power of coal, or steam, or the atom, can also use this power to rule others. Right now, the power issue is becoming a crumbling, eroding cornerstone of a system that will collapse in on itself if this cornerstone ever disintegrates. It's a splintered and cracked crux that supports a blubbering, flab-enfolded society. Imagine the anarchy we would be plunged into if power sockets stopped feeding us our daily Volts. We'd be reduced to a horde of howling, plundering savages, roaming through the streets, breaking down electricity cabins and telephone wires to plug in our television sets or recharge our dying laptop batteries, desperately hoping to connect to Facebook. It would take less than the lifespan of the average mobile phone battery for our modern civilization to plunge itself into violent rioting and mass hysteria. Just think about it for a second. What would you do if there wasn't any power?

Basically, dealing with the power issue is like going to the dentist. Nobody wants to do it, because it's a big fat pain in the ass, so we all reluctantly make an appointment as far away as we can. By the time we actually do something about it, it's way too late, and we're left screaming in agonizing pain as metal tools extract the inflamed nervous roots that so violently torture us. We are not writing all this out of some misplaced, unjustified sense of hope that the contents of our magazine might actually lead to any change in policy or even your personal mindstate. But when judgment day does come, and it will, at least we'll be able to say we told you so.

UNTIL THE LAST DROP HAS BEEN DRILLED

OR: HOW TO PULL THE PLUG ON A PARADIGM

DONT BELIEVE THE HYPE

Times are a-changing, just like they always are. Over the course of the past decades, the energy issue has evolved into a cancerous demon that throbs at the heart of almost every global conflict. Apart from its political implications, it has become the most direct threat to our planet and correspondigly, our survival as a species. Now in order to resolve any problem, it's imperative that you understand its nature and direct causes before you attempt to work out a solution, right? So then, what is the problem with our power? Well, the main problem is not that we're running out of power, we're running out of air to pollute and lakes to dump toxic waste in. So whoever thought that we were about the pump out the last drop of petrol and use it to drive a Hummer into the world economy, you've got another thing coming. There's enough oil to go around for quite a while. At least if we keep development out of developing countries the way we're doing right now.

The big question is not 'will there be enough energy to power the planet?' but 'will there be enough planet to power?'. Taking in consideration the fact that several major cities are already being partially powered by photovoltaic plants (solar power), we are inclined to think it can't be that hard to make the switch to this so-called green energy, at least on a technological level. The brains are there, the only thing needed now is a big budget. Which means you need to talk to the people who have the kind of money that can replace an existing global infrastructure and render it obsolete by providing a new infrastructure that produces an even bigger amount of energy without all the pollution. And that's where the real problem is.

We don't want to spend the money to do it, and we certainly don't want to lose any potential profits while doing it. That's just the way of the world and how we live in it. The first and last thing we think of is profit. In the course of 60 years of unchecked capitalism (in the past half century, it hasn't exactly been hip to be a communist, at least not in professional circles), profit has become the primary motivation behind any form of business, a budgettary ground rule that has grown into the central crux of our economic progression. This right here is the main idea that has propelled the West to the top of the global foodchain. It is fundamental to our way of living. So when we're saying that we need to make the switch to renewable energy, we implicitly mean that we need to make money while doing it. There's no need to say it, because it's such a natural thing to do.

If anything is going to be the death of all of us, it's going to be greed.

WHO'S DOING THE MATH HERE?

Now anyone can see that making a buck and saving the environment don't mix. But the yacht-owning apex of society is still trying to haul in as much cash as possible while saving the planet. And the rest of society accepts it. Now you can call that phenomenon a lot of things. You can take that mentality and call it an exisiting social paradigm that is about to shift, or you can call it cognitive incongruency between the facts of reality and acquired knowledge, or you can label it socio-environmental inertia. We also came up with a name for it, and it's the shortest one in the list. Greed. It's greed that is keeping us from making the switch. There's just too much money to be made and thus also lost. If anything is going to be the death of all of us, it's going to be greed.

Greed is the sort of thing that gives birth to concepts like emission rights. If you don't know what emission rights are, they're basically the right to pollute. Picture it like this: every country is allowed a certain amount of greenhouse gases and such to produce in the course of a year. The amounts are based on the types of emissions, size of the country and other things of this nature. Basically, you define the total amount of crap that can be exhausted into our atmosphere and be 'disposed of' in waste processing facilities. You set a limit. Now, if one country spews out more deadly venom than it's allowed to, it's allowed to buy the right to emit that surplus from another country that has emissions to spare. Because you know, we aren't up to the red yet, get it? So now countries like Russia and Canada have crazy mad emission rights to sell to the highest bidder, whoever that may be. Again, we're not trying to be overly critical of policy makers, but to us that sounds a lot like a really stupid idea. It's a short-term strategy that allows a couple of people to keep on making money and make some new money while they're at it. Of course, if you let an economist tell you the story, it'll sound a lot different but that's only because they consider survival a matter of numbers. Ironically, in the end they might be more right than we are, but that's only because they're the ones calling the shots. Besides, numbers will prove anything if you arrange them right.

We're going to need a whole new third world to dump our waste in and buy our emission rights from.

How does this translate to current affairs and the near future? Well, one possible projection predicts that the big power cartels will try to maximize their profit margins by keeping the price of oil right up there with other luxury products like gold and cocaine, while they work out a new system that will probably and totally coincidentally be operational by the time all those newly found oil fields are depleted. When that finally happens, the new infrastructure will be nicely set up and ready to go, and somebody somewhere will pull a switch and that'll be it. You probably won't even have to unplug your washing machine. Of course, this scenario only plays out if we haven't had a global meltdown by then, and there is no guarantee that that will or will not happen. There's a sensitive balance to these sorts of things, and if enough developing countries reach the same degree of 'civilization' that we enjoy, we're going to need a whole new third world to dump our waste in and buy our emission rights from.

THE GREAT HOPE IN THE SKY

Now it's obvious that those in power aren't going to stop being greedy. It's what made them what they are, and only an idiot would give up on a business tactic that has yielded mountains of gold for the past centuries. So, either they have to be convinced that the green market can earn them just as much (or more) money fast, or somebody else has to become greedy enough to challenge the existing bodies of power and claim the title of saviour of the world, and the spoils that come with it. Unless someone comes by and plays by another set of rules then the ones calling the shots right now. Someone whose main motivation is not profit, but progress on a larger scale than a personal bank account. A few names come to mind, like the one of Prince Hasan Bin Talal of Jordan, with his plan to turn the Mediterranean and the Northern Sahara into the world's power socket. His 'Desertec' project might become an everlasting battery that can provide a partial answer to power demands in North Africa, the Middle East and Europe.

Desertec would consist of a network of renewable energy plants spread across the Mediterranean countries, the Northern Sahara and the Middle East. Concentrating Solar Plants would make up the main portion of the network, along with other renewable energy installations like biomass and wind energy plants. The main issue is of course money: Desertec's pricetag is around € 400 billion, which is a completely reasonable pricetag for a project that's going to run a course of construction for at least 30 years. The only problem is in getting someone to cough up that kind of money, although 400 billion really isn't that much if you have an entire continent to find it in. However, Desertec's future seems pretty unclouded considering the fact that several major power companies are actually teaming up with financial insitutions and experienced engineering firms. It could really happen.

So yes, there is a ray of light peaking over the rim of our exhaust-smoke-clogged horizon. Not only on the far edge of the world (which to most people is anything beyond city limits), but closer to home as well. In Germany, SPD-parlementarian Hermann Scheer succeeded in getting a majority vote for his 100,000-roof program, the first mass implementation program involving solar panels. A plan that was so ambitious, it was deemed 'unrealistic' by Greenpeace, who proposed a 50,000-roof program instead. Scheer gained social and political support for his cause by not only focussing on the enviromental angle of the problem: he pointed out the economic possibilities that would come with a project of this scale. And almost singlehandedly created a groundwork for a revolution that has mainly been national so far, but which might spread around Europe and the rest of the world.

In the meanwhile, renewable power is starting to appeal to even the military. Along with private developers Clark Enterprises and the Spanish Acciona, the US army has started construction on what will be one of the largest solar plants on the planet. In the Mojave Dester, at Fort Irwin, California, a 500 megawatt solar plant is set to provide power to the adjacent military base and most likely the rest of the state with netpower by 2022. Not so strange when you think about it, because after all, the few oil pipelines that power the base today are a much easier target for potential attacks than 50,000 solar panels. In Iraq, the US military is also making use of trash-to-power tactical biomass refineries, big green hulking machines that convert unfiltered garbage into power by creating low-grade propane or methane.

After all, there are still countries where people don't have the luxury of being worried about the environment.

LEAD NOT FOLLOW

So what does that all mean? Well, it means that a change will come, the question that remains is whether or not this change will come before it's too late. Pessimists will say that we are all doomed and need to build an ark now in order to ensure a prolonged existence as a species. Being who we are, we do not share their rabid fatalism and believe that only some of us are doomed. This is an important nuance: the ones doomed are those people who live in countries where they have other stuff to worry about than producing renewable energy and reducing CO2 exhausts. After all, there are still countries where people don't have the luxury of being worried about the environment, mainly because they have to worry about themselves not freezing to death or getting shot as a direct cause of a power conflict. Those who won't be doomed will be enjoying their hybrid cars and exhaust filters, while still being able to bitch about environmental taxes and ever-rising oil prices. The unlucky ones are the same ones who have been on the shitty end of the deal ever since we started colonizing the planet. Countries without a democratic access to health care, or developing countries where cities are exponentially growing, along with energy needs and cases of cancer.

So what is the issue with our power? If we look at the means that are at our disposal, we can safely say that the issue we're facing is not in the least technologal, it is social. It's political, and above all, it's economical. If we want to solve the energy issue, we (and by we, we mean all those people who actually have a tangible say in the matter, not we as in the people) will need to stop seeing energy as something we can trade for the highest possible amount of money. Energy needs to be up there right along with things like medication, and political asylum, and air to breathe. It's time for someone to lead instead of just talking about what should or could be done. We (that means you, governments and power companies and oil cartels alike) have to stop fighting over fossil fuels and invest into a new infrastructure that can provide the entire world with the power it needs to function and grow. Survival is just a matter of signing the right expenses bill. It's a matter of priorities. You've got the money and don't you dare deny it. We can go on all day naming alternative technologies for you to invest in. You know the people aren't going to revolt for at least the next decades. No Senate building in the West is going to burn for years to come. But that doesn't mean that you can wait it out. At least not if you meant any of that stuff you told us during election time.

The Kuwaiti oil fires were a result of the scorched earth policy of Iraqi military forces retreating from Kuwait in 1991 after conquering the country but being driven out by Coalition military forces. The byproducts of the petroleum burn caused pollution to the soil and air, and the oil fires have been linked in the popular imagination with what was later called Gulf War Syndrome. Whether this syndrome has been caused by the oil fires, by chemical attack, or other causes has not been determined, and the longterm environmental effects of the fires have yet to be fully understood.

THERE'S BLOOD IN THE PIPELINES

In nature, the fight for power is generally a matter of who has the biggest fangs or claws. In the human world, the fight for power follows a similar pattern, albeit slightly less straightforward. Humans settle fights not with a simple pair of fangs, but with highly advanced guns and missiles, and by signing treaties and embargo's, and planting flags at the bottom of the Arctic Ocean at 4km beneath sea level. Such is the cruel beauty of our complex nature. The fight for power has been going on since the raw potential of fossil fuels became fully known to man. The weapon of choice when it comes to power is geopolitics.

Geopolitics is one word that means a whole lot of things. The term was coined around a century ago in 1897, and its features were further popularized in 1904 with the publication of the Heartland Theory, written by Sir Halford Mackinder. The theory was initially a reaction against the dominant concept of a sea-based empire that relied on naval fleets and transoceanic transports. Instead, it proposed the idea of a land-based dominion: control over strategic pieces of land would make a better defense against potential attackers and provide easier access to allies. This explains why French and English troops were already fighting Turkish soldiers around the Suez Canal in 1915. After that, the entire Middle East region would only become an increasingly hotter boiling pot of economic and political interests, all conflicting and clashing violently at the cost of thousands of lives. For the civilian population, the blessing of having rich oil reserves has turned into a bloody curse.

Already during World War I, British military forces were deployed in the south of Iraq and Iran to protect the oil fields that were being exploited there. After two industrial revolutions, The West had started to realize the value of oil and all its different applications, as well as the strategic value of a local stronghold. In 1915, British Indian Army General Charles Townsend was ordered to advance up the Tigris river to capture Baghdad. Townsend and his forces stranded at about 40km south of the Iraqi capital, faced with an Ottoman army under German command: the Ottoman were led by Baron Wilhelm Leopold Colmar, Freiherr von der Goltz, aka Goltz Pasha, a man whose leadership in the field would earn the praise of Adolf Hitler himself.

"The old Reich knew already how to act with firmness in the occupied areas. That's how attempts at sabotage to the railways in Belgium were punished by Count von der Goltz. He had all the villages burnt within a radius of several kilometres, after having had all the mayors shot, the men imprisoned and the women and children evacuated."

Baghdad did fall to the British two years later, becoming the capital of the British Mandate of Mesopotamia, only to become the capital of the Kingdom of Iraq a few years later. Flash forward to missiles over Kuwait and Operation Desert Storm, and another flash forward to the Iraq war as we know it today. Nothing has changed.

Only an idiot would go to war against an opponent that you can easily buy out with a fraction of the money you stand to make in the end.

Now in general, the bloodcrusted backside of a medal is always as big as its shiny facade, and the Middle East's richness in resources is no exception. Ever since the discovery of its importance, the entire region has grown into an ever deepening bloodbath that still goes on today. The same scenario has been playing out in places like Georgia, where the tanks were Russian instead of American. Although it doesn't always take tanks and F-16's to get into an oil reservoir. You can also buy whatever government happens to be in power in a developing country that has a lot of reserves and give them a lot of money and military equipment. Why? So you can plunder their natural resources in relative peace and quiet, that's why! Only an idiot would go to war against an opponent that you can easily buy out with a fraction of the money you stand to make. That's why Saddam got hung in front of the world's television cameras, and why some other butchers will never be brought to what passes as justice nowadays. And why some countries are going to be brutally raped by foreign oil companies for many years to come. But we tend to forget about those countries, because they're not being invaded; they've been bought.

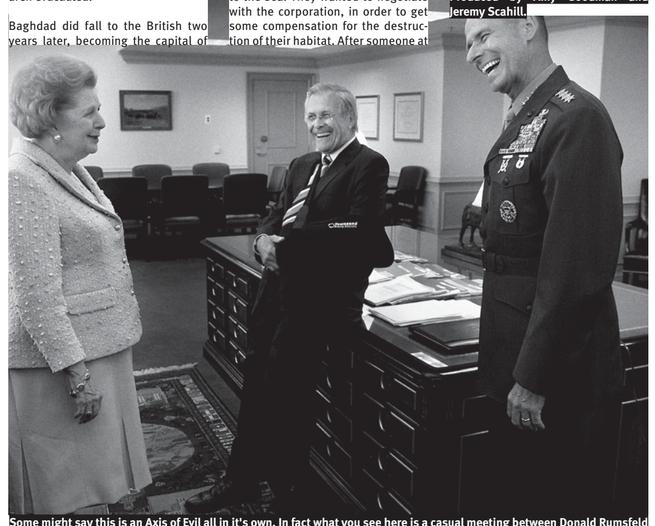
If you buy a government in one of these countries, it's like a discount: you get the full package. It basically means you also buy the army, the police, the media and whatever else you would like. More bang for your buck, so to speak. So when oil-tycoon Chevron bought the Nigerian government, it bought enough firepower to chase an entire village full of protesters off of one of its off-shore drilling platforms. The date is may 28th, 1998. About a hundred unarmed villagers had taken post on the platform because Chevron was severely polluting the local environment with oil spills, and ruining the freshwater through the digging of canals to the sea. They wanted to negotiate with the corporation, in order to get some compensation for the destruction of their habitat. After someone at Chevron gave the order, helicopters with Nigerian Mobile Police and military troops landed on the platform to 'regain control', killing two protestors in the process: Jola Ogungbeje and Aroleka Irwaninu. Other villagers were captured and tortured into signing confessions and release forms, before being buried in the Nigerian penal system for a few weeks. No triggerman was ever prosecuted, the people who gave the order were never pressed for an explanation. And don't fool yourself, this was not an isolated incident. This is the way of the world beyond our own little protected bubble, and beyond where our television cameras go.

In the meanwhile, the game of death goes on. Earlier this year, Russia announced that future energy conflicts could "violate the existing balance of forces near the borders the Russian Federation and its allies." So wait, what you're actually saying is that you might invade a country of your choosing if the shit finally hits the proverbial fan. Or when you feel like it. Other Cold War-ish statements were made along the following line: "Russia is seriously concerned about the growing gap between the US and Russia in the military field, and about America's attempts to dwarf Russia's nuclear potential by creating new arms systems, placed close to Russia's borders and in space. It is also worried about the US's high-precision, long-range, non-nuclear weapons." Almost makes you feel like Dickie Nixon is going to pop out of somewhere with a renewed budget for nuclear firepower, doesn't it?

Let's face it, for as long as there is oil, blood is going to flow because of it. But one thing is also for sure: it's going to end one day, and those who are reaping the spoils know this too. So right now, it's like everybody has his fork out, and pretty soon we're going to start stabbing others in the hands and arms, trying to spear the last piece of chicken. Only the forks will be giant warships and nukes, and the chicken is buried under land & sea. Countless countries are mutilated and defaced so that faceless, calculating corporations can suck dry their blackened hearts. But we're running out of blood. For the first time ever, mankind is going to run out of something. Not to worry though, when the last drop of oil finally evaporates into our smogged up atmosphere, we will undoubtedly have found another base and honourless reason to kill each other. Enjoy it while it lasts.

Hitler, Adolf (1953). Hitler's Secret Conversations. New York: Farrar, Straus and Young. pp. 25.

Check out DRILLING AND KILLING: CHEVRON AND NIGERIA'S OIL DICTATORSHIP, an audio-documentary Produced by Amy Goodman and Jeremy Scahill.



Some might say this is an Axis of Evil all in it's own. In fact what you see here is a casual meeting between Donald Rumsfeld in the middle, former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher on your left and the Chairman of the JCS General Peter Pace on the right.

Field Report

THE THIN LINE BETWEEN ANARCHY AND APATHY

WHAT KEEPS YOU POWERED?

When it comes to exploring the intriguing field of human energy, a music festival is the ideal matrix for some merciless, energy-burning sensory perception. Just take a look back at Woodstock, which unexpectedly became the paragon of positive energy, and one simply can't deny the social aspect that keeps a crowd going through the night. It's a proven fact that people feel more energy when they take part in an activity in a group. An army division that is jogging for hours and hours straight is mainly motivated by a group feeling. Even if one of the soldiers is at the end of his rope, he will continue his efforts to succeed. Of course music festivals are also powered by a wide range of other natural and not so natural sources such as music, sunshine, sex, alcohol and other means of mind expansion.

That's why we gave the (in retrospect) slightly duped protagonist of this field report an all-area access pass and the permission to go absolutely batshit bonkers during a four-day-trip to the Belgian Dour Festival. Naturally, we took no responsibility for either physiological or mental damage. Our good intentions were expressed in a sponsored visit to a psychologist afterwards. This way, our subject would be able to see things in perspective and to understand his own excessive behavior through an abstract term such as "arousal", described as a mixture of physiological and psychological activity in a person that determines the intensity of your motivation. It's a spectrum with low arousal on one hand (sleep or coma, not charged at all) and full arousal on the other (intoxication, madness, rage). During the making of his report, our subject came dangerously close to both these extremes.

The lone yet highly entertaining descent into delirium took off on Thursday July 16. Although over the last few weeks John Doe's mental state came very close to a burn out, the contagious outlook of a four-day bacchanalia alongside his buddies seemed to spark an energy boost. 'There's the idea of reuniting with your friends, the concerts you will see and the relaxed atmosphere where this will be happening', psychologist Caroline Jannes explained afterwards. 'These positive thoughts obviously incite positive feelings. Both the emotion of joy and enthusiasm and the perception of this physiological arousal keep your battery charged for the festival.'

By that time, the use of alcohol had already enlightened his atrophied body with outrageous amounts of energy.

So the entire POSTRmagazine staff slipped down south, packed with nothing but some clean clothes, half of the magazine's research budget and a dazzlingly varied array of liquor. After an infernal two-hour drive – during which a couple of beers and some small amounts of whiskey were consumed – our subject arrived at the scenery in the early afternoon. By that time, the use of alcohol had already enlightened his atrophied body with outrageous amounts of energy. None of us considered this energy to be a clever trick of mankind's very own magic box: the mind. Think again.

'Although you get the feeling of more energy, alcohol doesn't actually lead to more energy', Jannes told us. 'It's really a myth. Alcohol consumption creates a form of relaxation and actually suppresses the arousal. It's only causing a sense of "more energy" or "high arousal" when given uncomplicated tasks, like chatting with your friends and laughing. The compounds in alcoholic beverages tangle directly or indirectly with certain aspects of our consciousness. The more we drink, the more we experience loss of efficiency, reliability and predictability. Scientific studies show that alcohol disrupts neurotransmission and affects your feelings, thoughts and behavior. You feel euphoric and cheerful. Moreover, the serotonin receptors also appear to be disturbed which leads to a greater uptake of serotonin neurotransmitters. Alcohol creates more GABA (gamma aminobyturic acid) so you will move slower and less accurately. It creates more dopamine which makes you think that the next drink is ok. Any feelings of fatigue and discomfort are replaced by positive feelings and thoughts. You start feeling relaxed and you appreciate the amusing atmosphere which leads to more euphoria, pleasure, charging and ... another drink. Why not? But that doesn't last for long.'

Even if our volunteer had known this, he wouldn't have cared about the psychological justification. Unawarely he continued his auto-intoxication with more booze, singlehandely consuming half a bottle of pastis before the last sunrays disappeared. The first day of the festival would end abruptly at about 3.30 am with a brutal vomiting session on the camping lot, immediately followed by an instant black out on the backseat of his car. 'Beer contains no sugar. It decreases the sugar level in your blood, so eventually you get a feeling of sleepiness and low energy. Beer is also a diuretic. The more you drink, the faster you dehydrate. On warm days, it's best not to drink too much alcohol, or at least to vary with water or soda which keeps your energy on the right level.'

Our partner woke up with a throbbing hangover, but surprisingly enough felt as fit as a fiddle.

At dawn, barely a few hours later, our besotted partner woke up with a throbbing hangover, but surprisingly enough felt as fit as a fiddle. With the rest of the staff still violently snoring, he took a shower, drove to the city center to bumrush the local supermarket and diligently fired up a miniature barbecue set to prepare food for the whole crew. 'Several scientific studies show that the first night of short sleep gives a brief surge of energy. The brain creates more serotonin than usual and experiences a greater sense of euphoria, energy and fun. After a second night of short sleep however, you will start feeling much more tired and irritable. As far as the hangover, a good breakfast for a festival-goer who likes to drink lots of beer may include water, bread with honey, yogurt and cereals or sweet tea.' Our subject instead, served beer & cheeseburgers for breakfast and took to the festival ground where he managed to finish a bottle of 15 year old rhum before the majority of the party-goers even considered having a beer.

The creature that woke up on the third festival day looked like something out of a zombie flick and decided to tone down his self-destructive lifestyle for a bit. After all, music is what these kinds of festivals are all about, and he had to admit that he hadn't really paid any attention so far to any of the approximately 200 acts programmed throughout the festival weekend. He dragged his wrecked body to one of the stages where some of his favorite bands happened to play that day. Out of nowhere, the energy came back with the first tones blasting through the speakers, causing him to dance like a madman in the eye of the mosh pit for several hours. 'Some clans from Ghana or the Kalahari region play stirring music with drums to bring the villagers in a trance', Jannes continued. 'Mostly ongoing fast beats and fast rhythms affect the brain activity which can change the state of consciousness. You can get a heightened sense of euphoria and a sense of deepening and "peace". These fast beats and rhythms increase the arousal and also add a specific focus. So you can either get charged by music with a high tempo or simply experience music you like as more exciting.'

After an unbearable headache, abdominal pains, giddiness, nausea and a slight form of paranoia preluded the last night of the festival, some of the subject's remaining affiliates introduced him to an innocent looking, 17-year-old girl to spend the last hours of the festival with. Although he felt kind of numbed, he was relieved he didn't have to scrabble around the debris of the festival on his own. But shortly after midnight he was fed up with the beer and the small talk. For his own health, he decided to catch some sleep but the harmless looking female offered him a bottle of water that was spiked with MDMA (Methylene dioxymethamphetamine, the psychoactive component in XTC). The substance forced him back to party grounds where he tore the roof off until 6 o'clock in the morning. 'By taking this party drug, the secretion of neurotransmitters is increased. You will feel euphoria, intimacy, altered visual perception and energy. It creates the same feeling as when you listen to rapid rhythms or use alcohol. But these drugs are much stronger and have more severe and immediate side effects. They each have a shorter term of addiction. Some drawbacks include agitation, anxiety, tachycardia and hypertension. Sometimes triggering cardiac arrhythmias or extreme increase in body temperature. High drug doses can lead to a reduction of muscle control or loss of consciousness. So you should avoid using these excessively.' Orphaned by his contractors however, our subject took another gulp and decided to take it all the way back to his hometown, where yet another energy-sapping ten-day festival had just taken off.

THE EXPERTS

QUESTIONS:

1. **How justified is the energy issue?**
2. **What is the best technological solution for the energy crisis, or in other words, which energy is the energy of the future and why?**
3. **If we eventually make the switch to renewable energy as the main source, how will this affect the world's biggest conflicts that often have energy as a mainspring?**
4. **Which regions in the world will see their energy consumption increase drastically and how will this affect the global power relation?**
5. **What will change for the average citizen when we switch to renewable energy sources?**

Paul Maertens
Corporate Affairs Director
SPE-Luminus

"We need to rule out the option that we'll be able to respond to future energy demands by using renewable energy only."

1 The world is certainly in need of renewable energy and more particularly of a diversified energy mix. We have to apply the most diverse energy sources. All studies show that there's a lack of capacity in Belgium. So, all energy producers must make major efforts to increase the production capacity. This is possible through classic, thermal plants but also through renewable energy. SPE is a company that is investing a lot in renewable energy. But it is not an exclusive choice between classic and renewable. We think that a diversified supply of energy is important.

2 Let's be reasonable. We need to rule out the option that we'll be able to respond to future energy demands by using renewable energy only. We will still have to use energy plants as we know them. But for the next decades, most producers will be increasing their investments into renewable energy. Our company is doing so as well, in line with the European 20/20/20 programs. I think that the idea of giant solar plants has to be viewed as very long term. In our country, SPE Luminus will continue to invest in increasing the production capacity of renewable energy (and more particularly wind farms) which already takes 11 procent of our total capacity. In relative terms, we are currently the biggest producer of renewable energy in the marketplace.

3 This is beyond our influence as an individual company. Our corporate responsibility is essentially aimed at measuring up to the energy demands in our country. Even in our own supply of materials, we depend on the external evolution of the prices. We purchase natural gas, the price of which is partly linked to the oil prices. We undergo the evolution more than we influence it.

4 China and all the other emerging economies are regions where the energy consumption increases very strongly. This consumption growth was only temporarily affected during the economical crisis and recession. These countries are the fastest to regain the same growth pattern again, so over there, the increasement of the energy consumption is the largest. Of course this will influence the energy prices and the prices of the materials needed to produce energy.

5 The customer is noticing right now because our economy is already gradually making the switch from a pure, centralized production to a decentralized production. Next to exclusively consuming, some people are already starting to produce their own energy. Some people invest in solar energy. Even small wind projects or CHP-projects (Combined Heat and Power) are possible. But it's an evolution that will spread out over decades. The entire electricity grid will gradually feel the impact. When it comes to the energy prices, we strongly depend on the global prices. As long as the larger part of the classic, thermal plants is based on the consumption of NG or coal, we will have to follow the evolution of the global market. And as long as the global energy demand continues to increase, we don't think the prices will drastically go down.

Johan Albrecht
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"It's a fact that the investments for energy research during the past few years are still lower than the investments in the eighties."

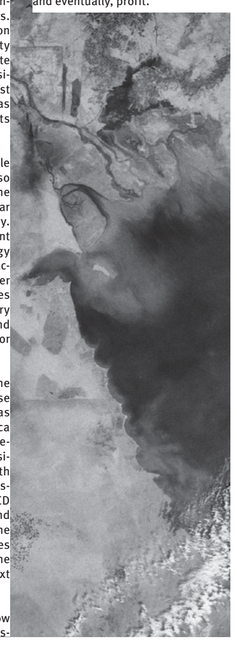
1 When we talk about the energy crisis, we refer to a scarcity in fossil energy. The current crisis is a precursor to the inevitable depletion of our fossil fuel reserves. But the high oil prices (up to $146/barrel), are not only a direct result of scarcity. Speculation by big financial parties is another important factor. When the economic crisis started, property prices and exchanges decreased significantly. A lot of big funds, such as the energy fund, played it safe. But when the recession eventually hit home, oil prices lowered to $43 per barrel. The biggest part of the increase was caused by speculation. So although fossil scarcity is a reality to come, it didn't strike us at full force yet.

2 We will come accross some big surprises when it comes to energy this century. It might be nuclear fusion or other things we can't comprehend yet, but only if we are willing to invest into knowledge. Everyone is talking about climate problems, but the current investments for research into energy are lower than the ones we made in the eighties. These investments decreased for a number of reasons, and despite all the attention paid to the energy issue, they haven't been raised. That's a bad sign. We must invest, and it's up to the rich nations to do it. Firstly, because they have a lot more resources and secondly, because they have used up so much fossil fuels in the past. They're responsible for the CO2 emissions as well, so they have a historical responsibility to finance the larger part of the research into new technologies. Of course there are projects like Desertec. The Portugese are working on tidal energy. Brasil is delivering great work on ethanol energy and California has been using Concentrating Solar Plants for twenty years. But these projects are small drops on a hot plate. They need another twenty years to become attractive for private investors. They're driven by subsidies, because governments invest in them temporarily. But as soon as that money is spent, these projects stagnate.

3 Conflicts like the ones in the Middle East aren't strictly energy driven, so I don't think that all conflicts in the Middle East will simply disappear when we switch to renewable energy. It's a fact that all major powers want to secure and diversify their energy supplies. That's why China is very active in Africa and becoming a leader in the manufacturing of gas pipelines from the Caspian Sea to Asia. Every big region has a big energy demand which is still mainly fossil-based for the next twenty or thirty years.

4 According to the IEA's reports, the demand for energy will increase strongly in China and India as well as in the Middle East and North Africa within the next twenty years. Especially China is developing quickly, signing up for 75 procent of the growth in demand. But in that same timespan, demand will lower in the OECD countries as industry reduces and becomes more energy efficient. The number of cars in the rich countries isn't growing as fast anymore, so the demand will decrease during the next by ten or even twenty procent.

5 Something will, but we don't know what exactly. There won't be a drastic change of energy supply for the next twenty or thirty years. So we"ll depend on the fossil and nuclear system for a while. But we can expect a growth of the fossil energy prices in the same period. When the recession will be over, the oil prices will gradually increase to up to $150 or $200 per barrel. The prices of natural gas and coal will follow the same pattern because they are replacable, but in the long run, the prices of gas and coal will follow the oil price. The best thing the average citizen can do, is to invest in saving energy and increasing energy efficiency. The stronger the prices increase, the more people will invest and eventually, profit.



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