

WAR FOR OIL OR PEACE THROUGH THE SUN?

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At the beginning of the third millennium our energy consumption is greater than ever before. The comfort required in Western civilisation, the demands of international trade, and population growth in the developing countries are burning up our stocks of fossil energy at headlong speed.

Scientists predict that the production of greenhouse gases will lead to a dramatic rise in temperature during the present century – with consequences for our society that cannot be foreseen. Franz Alt shows that the anti-terrorist alliance set up by the USA after 11 September also aims to secure the oil deposits of Central Asia. To continue development along the present lines, however, would lead to further acts of terrorism and put the environment under even greater pressure. Franz Alt analyses the background of the political and economic situation. He makes it quite clear that only if we move away from oil will the climate change. Only by using less harmful sources of energy can we hope for a peaceful future.

An international coalition to oppose terrorism has been in existence since 11 September 2001. It will not achieve its aim unless we succeed in organising an international coalition to oppose hunger.

A world in which the four richest men in the USA have more money than a billion of the poorest is a sick world. NATO spends as much in a day and a half as the UNO budget for an entire year – to cover everything including all its aid projects. Can peace be achieved in this way? The worst and most widespread form of terrorism is hunger. And the greatest threat to our future is the greenhouse effect. These urgent problems of the present and the future have admittedly been correctly analysed, but not yet adequately tackled in political terms. The prevailing policy world-wide is to combat symptoms – but the causes of terrorism are suppressed, forgotten and neglected. World climate change means a state of emergency in the world's home policies, and we entered that state of emergency long ago. But the forces of destruction are still many times stronger than those of construction.

11 September was probably merely a prelude to the horrors we shall see if we do not succeed in achieving peace through justice and making our peace with nature. We know the way we ought to go. Everything now depends on our taking it. Although we know what we are doing, we still do not act on our knowledge. The present riches of the West depend on the availability of energy resources, but within five to ten years we shall have consumed more than half of all available oil deposits. Those who are children and young people today will see the planet's reserves of oil and gas run out. In mere decades we are consuming what nature created over millions of years. Like a generation of pyromaniacs, we are burning our children's future. The World Energy Council prognosticates that:

Oil supplies will last about another 40 years, natural gas supplies will last about another 50 years, Uranium to operate nuclear power stations will last another 60 years, and Coal will last about another 100–120 years.

And then what?

The fight against terrorism is also a fight for the control of world energy supplies. We have waged wars for oil, and we still do. Examples are:

- the Gulf War of 1991,
- the Afghan War of 2001–2002,
- the Chechen War,
- wars in Africa and future wars in Central Asia, which still has the largest reserves of oil and natural gas,
- The war in Iraq 2003.

The appetite for energy of the industrialised states will lead to the greatest bloodbath in human history if we do not manage to switch to the 100 per cent use of renewable energy sources, and do so quickly too. The sun sends us fifteen thousand times more energy than all six billion people on the planet need at present

And it is free. In addition, there are indirect sources of solar energy such as wind power, terrestrial warmth, the energy of the waves, biogas, biomass energy and solar hydrogen. The old strategy of oil, coal and gas will lead almost inevitably to a third world war. But a solar strategy opens up the chances of world peace. International groups such as Shell and BP are already rethinking their approach. Oil companies are becoming solar companies. BP itself says that it will soon stand not for British Petroleum but for Beyond Petroleum. And most important of all, a change to solar energy can create millions of new jobs for forward-looking members of the middle classes.

The great political question of the 21st century will be: war for oil or peace through the sun? That is the ultimatum we now face as an international society. The first part of this book describes the catastrophe towards which we have begun to stumble, blind to the future. The second part considers the escape route from the greenhouse and the dangers of war. A world of peace, freedom and justice is possible. To achieve it, what we need is not the old fossil fuel international economy, but an international solar economy in a solar age.

LITERATURE

Franz Alt: "Krieg um Öl oder Frieden durch die Sonne"
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