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## *The Slide towards a World Without Oil*



Oswald Spengler asserts in his masterful *Decline of the West* that civilizations, like humans, are born, grow, mature and perish. What the German historian called "Faustian Culture", the unlimited use of technology and energy, goes into decline due to the progressive exhaustion of the latter. The "peak of hydrocarbons" from which hydrocarbons will become increasingly scarce, difficult to extract and uneconomical, is already here. Such complex matter generates dissimilar forecasts, but everyone anticipates its proximity. Russian Finance Minister Vladimir Kolichev estimates that "the peak of consumption could well have passed."



British Petroleum estimates it will never return to the level of 2019, "the highest mark in oil history." Norway's state-owned Equinor puts production collapsing towards 2027-28; Norwegian researcher Rystad Energy forecasts it by 2028; France's Total SA by 2030; consulting firm Mc Kinsey by 2033; Bloomberg NEF group and consultants Wood Mackenzie by 2035; the most optimistic estimate is that of OPEC, which dates it towards 2040, in 18 years barely.

The energy treasure of hydrocarbons was spent and squandered because it was easier to invade, plunder or destroy the producing countries for capitalist plunder than to sensibly use non-renewable energy for its progressive replacement by renewables. Nothing more adventurous than guessing the future; nothing more necessary than to foresee it when it seems inevitable. Think of the unthinkable.



On the ecological level, it will be difficult to replace in a few decades the current energy consumption, which in 78.4% is supplied by fossil fuel, with other scarce, expensive sources and today barely in development, such as wind, geothermal, hydraulic, photovoltaic. Increasingly drastic extraction procedures, such as American *fracking*, will multiply energy costs and pollution. The peaks of extraction of other natural resources will also make them progressively unaffordable. This will lead to the depletion of organic fuels such as wood or river biomass. Food production will become the priority industry. The transnationals will intensify the dispute over the privatization and monopoly of land and fresh water, threatening the plant lungs of Siberia and the Amazon, patenting new species and modified organisms. Shortages of hydrocarbons and chemical fertilizers will hamper the massive cultivation of agribusiness. The peasants will increase the struggle for land and for the replacement of agri-food latifundia by communal, cooperative or family farms. Venezuela, owner of the world's first hydrocarbon reserve – twice that of Saudi Arabia, some thirteen times that of the United States – neither owes nor can cede its areas of natural resources free of charge to transnationals that will not pay taxes.

At the demographic and social level, the decline of the population in developed countries and its increase in underdeveloped countries will be accentuated. The progressive computerization of jobs will increase the unemployment of increasing strata of marginal and excluded strata. Think tanks of the hegemonic countries will formulate plans for population control and mass sterilization against non-owners and vast sectors not indispensable to the computerized mode of production. Progressive pauperization will favor the legalization of the purchase and sale of organs and assisted suicide. Increasingly harsh policies of migration and repression of ethnic minorities will multiply social conflict. Heating costs will encourage new migratory flows from cold and temperate areas to the tropics. Skyscrapers with their impracticable elevators and central ventilation systems will become unviable; food shortages will lead to migration from cities to the countryside. The uninstallation of industrial parks will multiply quasi-ghost towns, such as Detroit. There will be a constant struggle for demographic reproduction quotas. Intricate computer systems will extreme discrimination and exclusion of users without economic means. The collapse of institutions of assistance and solidarity will drive the resurgence of natural bonds of family and cultural, group, tribal identity, of mere survival and social class. Venezuela cannot and should not hand over its population to transnational corporations exempted from compliance with labor, trade union and social standards, which the constitution considers irreversible and inalienable. On the contrary, it must zealously devote its hydrocarbon reserves and the fruit of them to the survival of Venezuelans and their preparation for the harsh world with declining fossil energy.

At the economic level, it will be imperative to move from a consumption promoted by waste to one fueled by recycling. The growth of the tertiary sector of the finance, administration and entertainment economy will continue, at the expense of the secondary industry and transport and the agricultural and mining primary. Remote computerized work will reduce the need for daily physical transfer from the peripheries to urban centers, which could facilitate the spatial disaggregation of cities and administrative centers. The rising costs of energy and permanent recession will be unloaded by capitalism on the weakest link, the worker. The contraction of relative demand will perpetuate the economic recession and the inflationary spiral. Trade union organization will again be outlawed as a crime. A secret computer market but known to all will connect the supply and demand of everything that is supposedly not on the market.



More and more countries will join Russia, China, India, Iran and Saudi Arabia in the initiative to become independent of the dollar and demand payment for their products in foreign currency backed by oil or gold. The United States will lose the power to buy everything in exchange for unsupported bills, at a time when its oil reserves reach just eight years. Big capital will intensify efforts to plunder the energy, ecological, strategic and human resources of the peripheral countries by fragmenting them into special zones where their enclaves will not pay taxes and workers will not be recognized labor or social rights. The global banking system will face collapse; its practice of discretionary confiscation of the reserves deposited in it will lead to massive withdrawals and the almost total retraction of new deposits. Venezuela can and should exercise the right to demand the return of its confiscated gold assets and reserves, and the payment of its resources in backed foreign currency, or in goods and equipment indispensable to strengthen its economic and food autonomy.

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