

# Electric Funeral

An In-Depth Examination of the Megamachine's Circuitry

The Havoc Mass

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In a single superpower world, there is a single best target for those dissatisfied with the status quo. Critical infrastructures are the best target sets within that best target, and the electric power infrastructure is arguably the most vulnerable of the critical infrastructure.

-Lt. Colonel Bill Flynt, Office of Homeland Security

It's 2004 and the planet is under assault by an exterminist megamachine following its own techno-logic of self-annihilation. This now monolithic power structure, with its vast web of administrative grids and military networks, is the suicidal unconscious(ness) of patriarchal history marshalling toward armageddon – the burning, blood-soaked finale of civilization's pathological death instinct. Two worlds, uncompromisingly opposed to one another, have come into furious collision: the flowing waters of free life and the stagnant, poisoned wells of techno-industrial civilization.

A storm is gathering, and out of the death rattle of our age a wave of new life is arising: new anti-authoritarian resistance movements that are awakening to the horror and desperation of our plight, movements that are ready to throw themselves into open warfare with the techno-industrial system and its omnicidal trajectory. These new movements – born out of a hope for liberation in our Earth's darkest hour – have inspired millions worldwide and have opposed the system with a ferocity that hasn't been seen in this country in decades.

But one thing many of these new rebel movements seem to be lacking is an overall strategy, a strategy which calls for and which can actualize the collapse of the Death Machine. If we're in agreement that our objective is to shut down the Megamachine, then we need to take a close look at the physical anatomy of the Mechanistic Order and figure out actions we can take to "level the playing field". Machines, institutions and "reality" itself are socially constructed and are thus amenable to *de-construction*. The civilization we inhabit (or more accurately, *of which we are prisoners*) is an Electrical Civilization and it seems obvious to us that the electrical grid offers a soft underbelly to saboteurs at every turn. Let's face it: the eleventh hour is approaching, Moloch is feeding on war victims beyond measure, the genetic structure of life itself is being manipulated by the death merchants of science, and we're running out of air to breathe...

Our tactics NEED to escalate if we're going to tear this diseased system down – physically – and drag its filthy corpse off the planetary stage once and for all.

## Italy in the Eighties: A Strategy Emerges

These writings appeared in Palermo in solidarity with the actions where electricity pylons of the ENEL company were sawn through in Caorsa and Montato (the central line). These are the latest examples in a series of acts of sabotage that have been carried out for some time now all over Italy. Why are the police and the judiciary unleashing such a disproportionate response to this kind of action? In our opinion these direct actions that anyone can accomplish at any time and in any place, possibly frighten them more than the very formation of a closed armed group. This is because the specific armed group is controllable due to the programme and logic that it adheres to, while the spreading of acts of sabotage puts the power structure in difficulty because anyone can carry out such acts. It is enough to obtain a hacksaw and hoose a pylon.

This does not please the Greens, the pacifists or environmentalists because such actions undermine their work as politicians tending to homogenize the movement to their practice of platonic dissent.

Against the high priests of ecology we reaffirm our antagonism and disdain. For we antagonists direct action is an attack against the structures producing nuclear energy.

-Palermo anarchist group, 1987

In the late 1980's in Italy a heated (and we mean this literally) battle was being fought against the construction of nuclear power plants and the industries and think-tanks responsible for producing this technology. On one side of the struggle were all the various reformist political forces (Greens, the Communist Party, "environmentalists", pacifists) who proposed anti-nuclear legislation and referenda and who attempted to put the struggle on an institutional level, thoroughly integrated into governmental/parliamentary logic. But an equally important component of the struggle was a loose confederation of insurrectional anarchists, libertarians and non-aligned comrades who operated outside and against the institutional framework and who actualized their resistance, not just as blockades at the nuclear power plants, but as a generalized attack on atomic energy.

In 1986, a vital crossroads in the struggle was reached, when anarchists - frustrated with the constrained "game-playing" of the nuclear reformers - began to develop a movement against the nuclear project that was autonomous and radical. As the "ProvocAzione" editorial group put it at the time: "To the mountains of scrap paper produced by those who support and practice parliamentary referendums, we propose direct action, the only possibility of really transforming this society because it points out the need for attack against the structures of dominion (including the nuclear ones) and the objectives to aim at. Our allies and accomplices are the antagonists and rebels, because they want to live, not vegetate, rising up and making a mockery of the reformists preaching survival." It was in this social context that new and effective strategies against nuclear energy and the power grid itself began to emerge...

-On July 12, 1987, a high tension ENEL (Ente Nazionale per L'Energia Alternativa) pylon in Cosenza, Italy, was sawn at the base. After having sawn the pylons, the unknown nightworkers pulled them down, putting out of action an electroduct line of 150 thousand volts. The same fate befell another ENEL pylon in the area of Pec del Brasimone on September 9, 1987. That pylon, which feeds the nuclear reactor of Pec, was also sabotaged by unknown persons who left a leaflet at the spot: "No to the nuclear and coal power stations, no to war, no to the energy bosses."

-On March 8, 1988, a group calling itself Antinuclear Revolutionaries attacked another electrical pylon in Italy. Here is an excerpt from their communique:

On March 8, we cut down a high tension pylon in the Cosenza region. In this way we mean to strike at the infamous ENEL gang, protagonists in the atomic project in Italy and abroad. We delegate our freedom to control our lives to no one and want to destroy the one they have organized for us now. The misery of waged work, nuclear death, the increasing militarisation of our territory and society itself are the prisons that call themselves social democracy.

The nuclear nightmare is an effective policeman for terrorising the population, creating that state of impotence and delegation in order to continue to govern us. The

complicity of the political parties, with words and power games and sweet illusions through referendums, is clearly trying to kill the antinuclear struggle and bury it in an institutional field. We refuse this.

The farce of the National Energy Conference called by the ENEL and the Government, shows the clear will to make a choice decided long ago seem like something to be discussed in Parliament. Let us spread sabotage over the whole territory, striking the structures that are bringing about such projects of death.

-During the night between March 12 and 13, 1988, another two pylons were sawn down: one in the area of Rome Settebagni, another in the Cosenza area. The sabotage was claimed with a letter to the press agency Ansa, in which unknown comrades declared themselves to be against nuclear power stations.

-On April 13, 1988, the day on which the Regional Administrative Tribunal of Lazio granted a repeal to ENEL who were asking for work to be allowed to recommence on the electronuclear plant at Montalto di Castro, three bomb attacks took place against the nuclear industry. During the night, paper bombs exploded at an ENEL research laboratory and at two firms: the Carlo Gavazzi Control Co., which produces condensers, and the Passoni and Villa Co., which produces electrical and electronic components. The attacks were claimed by anarchist comrades in a leaflet which reached the ANSA press agency and Radio Popolare in Milan the next day. About a week later, on April 19, another antinuclear bomb exploded at the FITRE electronic communications agency in Milan. This attack was signed with an encircled A.

-On June 9, 1988, a main electrical line of the municipal firm of Vicenza was destroyed by flames. A leaflet was published in Sicilia Libertaria concerning the attack on this power line:

We have sabotaged a high tension pylon above Crotone, where factories pour out toxic clouds, pollution, exploitation, products as useless as they are poisonous. THE MAFIA OF CAPITAL AND ITS STATES IS PUTTING INTO EFFECT THE ABSOLUTE DESTRUCTION OF LIFE ON EARTH! Their accomplices are the politicians, parties, trade unions, "men of culture", "scientists". The enforced accomplices to their own extermination are the people corrupted and subjected by the myths of "wellbeing", "commodity", "civility", "progress". We are fighting to free ourselves from this imminent perspective. That can only seriously come about after the elimination of the exploitation of man by man and of the environment.

So we are attacking with sabotage, with the *refusal of consumerism and waste*, and say: stop immediately every kind of industrial production and carburation (traffic, heating, industry) that is even slightly polluting, and all the other processes of plundering of the environment that are just as stupid and homicidal.

-And finally, on October 15, 1988, in the mountainous area of "Noce" in the province of Catanzaro, a 150 thousand kilowatt ENEL electricity pylon was partly sawn down. At the base of the pylon, the Carabinieri (Italian pigs) found a timer device and some leaflets which the unknown saboteurs had left behind.

Since that period of time, attacks on the electrical power-structure seem to be a favored tactic of anarchists in Italy. In the 90's- alongside the blitzkrieg infestation of computers and cell

phones – came a deepening of the critique and a broadening praxis that addressed the whole electrical web by which we are ensnared. Microwave towers and cellular antennae are now common targets for revolutionary sabotage, as it becomes more and more obvious that our planet is being transformed into an all-pervasive, deadly electro-magnetic field where invisible emissions and silent currents of cancer course through our bodies daily. (See this issue’s “Direct Action” news sections for more recent examples.)

## **You Have the Power, But the Night Belongs to Us!**

There have also been several noteworthy instances in North America of radicals hitting the electrical infrastructure “where it hurts”, though they’ve been more sporadic and more censored by the State. Still, bits and pieces of radical folklore concerning these incidents survive in the “oral tradition” of certain anarchist circles, and the memory of these rebellions hasn’t been completely smothered by decades of establishment propaganda. One of the more interesting (and widespread) incidents of electrical sabotage in North America occurred during the so-called “Trouble on the Prairie” which erupted in the 1970s, during the “energy wars” between Minnesota farming communities and both public and private electrical utilities.

For example, in Lowry, Minnesota, a community group named “General Assembly to Stop the Powerline” organized to stop a powerline “right-of-way” crossing through their rural farmland. It was decided by the community that a “total tactic” would be used: demonstrations were staged, protest letters were written to State representatives, but the power plans still moved ahead. Then foundations and building materials were destroyed, and tractors pulled down dozens of transmission towers as they were erected. Finally, the State Police were called in, people were arrested, and the power-plants and power-lines were finally constructed and made operational. But in their 1981 manifesto, the community of Lowry discusses how their confrontation with the government dispelled many illusions they once had about “democracy”:

We survive. We were not stopped when we were repeatedly and shamefully betrayed by the politicians. We continue to endure the injuries inflicted by a parade of incompetent bureaucrats acting in collusion with the utilities. We were not defeated when callous judges kept deciding that the time and money of the power companies was more important than truth, and even more important than their law. The combined brute force of the FBI, the BCA, the State and local police, and private armies hired by the utilities, has not been strong enough to destroy us. And we have survived the lies, the threats and intimidations and deceptions, and the arrogant destruction brought upon us by the power companies themselves. The line went into commercial operation two years ago, and we are still survivors! That has never happened before...

On July 3, 1981, near Moab, Utah, saboteurs toppled a Utah Power and Light transmission tower carrying 345,000-volt power lines seven miles south of Earth First!’s second annual Round River Rendezvous. No one was ever arrested for this action, nor for a similar one that occurred a year earlier in Colorado in which 3.2 miles of power lines were downed after their line supports were sawn through – costing the Colorado Ute Electric Association \$270,000 in repair bills.

There are a few more incidents of electrical sabotage in the nineties that we know about, but sadly, the practice has yet to really catch on in North America (the purpose of this article is

to discuss this). In 1990, after Earth Day celebrations, unknown individuals calling themselves the Earth Night Action Group made two consecutive hits in Freedom, California, sawing first through two wooden power poles and then toppling a steel transmission tower belonging to the Pacific Gas and Electric Company. This caused a massive power failure that cut off electricity for Santa Cruz County residents for 10 to 18 hours. And in February 1996, pipebombs were used to attack a SCADA system at a hydroelectric plant in Oregon.

## **Sabotage: The Way to Success!**

The imperialist nature of the power grid has long been recognized and resisted by indigenous communities as well, but space constraints prohibit us from tackling this subject in too much detail. Among the numerous examples of indigenous resistance to the encroachment of the electrical world is the struggle of indigenous Venezuelans against the state-run company “Electrificación del Caroni” (EDELCA). In the late 1990’s, the Indigenous Federation of Boli’var State, which encompasses the Pemon communities and other native groups, protested the construction of an electrical line system, fearing that it would lead to new mining settlements, tourism and urbanization in their ancestral lands. When their protests were ignored people began knocking down electrical towers intended to carry electricity from the Guri Dam in southeast Venezuela to northern Brazil. EDELCA reported at least four incidents of sabotage in September of 2000, including one in which seven towers were toppled overnight.

## **Silencing Telecommunications: A Dialogue With the Problem**

The grand project that is cyberspace is grounded in the mundane realities of what is required to sustain it. The artificial, virtual worlds of the internet are completely interconnected with the Electrical Order that permeates everything that exists, and are still reliant upon ancient and recurring themes tying the diagnostic “health” of civilization to its sources of energy, war and ecologic exploitation. Together this infrastructure materially represents and sustains the spectacle of otherworldly immateriality while simultaneously depending upon a physical assemblage of wires, plugs and sockets to distribution lines and poles, to transformers and electrical power plants. Without these extensions – and without electricity – cyberspace would cease to exist, and so too would the new global economy as it depends upon electrical power, media and technology in order to function. Given the magnitude of the telecommunications industry (particularly the internet) and its criticality to other infrastructures, it’s easy to see how the vulnerability of information communications systems could cripple even the most “impervious” power structure.

An AT&T network failure, for instance, would definitely affect the airline industry, which would have to cease operations because control towers could not communicate with each other. Computer viruses – another form of electronic warfare – could easily be unleashed with the intent of damaging networked computers on a global scale, including electronic banking and stock markets. In fact, we don’t need to look any farther than the U.S. military for an idea of how effective electrical warfare can be. In Serbia, the U.S. and its Allies tested a “graphite bomb” cruise missile, in which canisters of graphite tape exploded into great nets of ribbon above power lines, which then short-circuited the electrical grid by causing power spikes and arcing. In the Gulf and Serbian wars, electronically guided “smart bombs” sought out electrical power plants

and telecommunication facilities via artificial intelligence (AI) software and global positioning systems (GPS), so as to nullify the electrical command of the enemy forces.

As these recent nation-state conflicts have shown us, the first step towards defeating your opponent lies in disabling or destroying their sources of artificial power. In addition to rioting outside of global economic summits, perhaps it's time for anarchists to look for ways to render industrial civilization inoperative by pulling the plug on its power grid (liberals who love their computers and the "networking" opportunities they supposedly afford us are advised to reflect on the Greek root of the word "cyber" – kybernan – which means to control or govern).

## Objects To Be Destroyed!

It could be that, in the future, people will look back on the American Empire, the economic empire and the military empire, and say, 'They didn't realize that they were building their whole empire on a fragile base. They had changed that base from brick and mortar to bits and bytes, and they never fortified it. Therefore, some enemy some day was able to come around and knock the whole empire over.' That's the fear.

-Richard Clarke, head of the President's Critical Infrastructure Advisory Board

The U.S. power transmission grid alone has 204,000 miles of transmission lines served by four regional grids located across North America: Western Interconnection, Eastern Interconnection, Electricity Reliability Council of Texas, and Province of Quebec. The grid has a generating capacity of 800,000 mega-watts and is divided into Electricity Generation, Transmission and Distribution Sectors. These sectors contain a nationwide network of 5,000 power plants fueled by natural gas, nuclear energy, hydropower (dams), oil, and coal, as well as a physical network of more than 4000 miles of gas pipelines, refineries, communication systems, and substations.

The basic structure of an electric power transmission and distribution system consists of a generating system, a transmission system, a subtransmission system, a distribution system, and a control center. Generally, the communication between the control center system and the field equipment takes place over utility-owned communications networks. Today, the majority of these networks are based on analog and digital microwave technology, though dedicated leased lines, power line carriers, satellites and fiber optics certainly play their role. This field equipment, called Remote Terminal Units (RTU's), acts as a clearing house for incoming data.

Digital control systems, such as SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition Systems) supervise and regulate real-world structures like gas pipelines, oil refineries, and power grids. There are four or five companies, three of them European, that make the SCADA software that's widely used in the electric power industry. Most SCADA systems are running Microsoft-operating software, which means they can be manipulated remotely and that their users essentially have a target painted on their foreheads.

Transformers, microwave towers, and transmission substations can often be found in isolated, unpopulated areas. Electrical substations will almost always be secured with nothing more than a lock on an access gate. Once inside, an experienced saboteur might destroy an entire substation. High voltage power lines are run on massive pylons, which are built on concrete foundations but are not designed to withstand sabotage. Each pylon has from four to eight legs, which are secured to their concrete foundations by massive bolts. Wrenches, blowtorches and explosives



would all be sufficient to destroy the integrity of the entire structure; many of these power lines run through desolate areas and are only inspected once a week by maintenance crews, usually by helicopter.

Probably the main thing that makes the electrical grid such an enticing target is the fact that it's already falling apart, on its own! The 1996 blackout on the West Coast that affected 4 million people from British Columbia to Mexico (including parts of the U.S. stretching from Oregon to Wyoming) was caused when Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) transmission lines sagged into tree limbs. Similarly, on September 28, 2003, a tree uprooted by storms in Switzerland was blamed for paralyzing electricity supplies across Italy when it cut a vital power line over the Alps. All of Italy, along with areas of Switzerland and Austria, were hit by the blackout. And of course, last August's huge blackout in the Northeast and parts of Ontario, lasted for days, and was the largest single power-outage in U.S. history.

The strong inter-linkages between industry sectors has also allowed non-human rebels to strike effective blows against the Empire: In 1986, in California, a beaver strategically felled a 10-inch thick tree so that it fell across a major powerline. As a result, 400 residents of Cottage Grove and several industries lost their electricity for 3 hours (the victorious monkeywrencher was not caught!). In 1987, in Ft. Pierce, Florida, two onslaughts by jellyfish (unfairly considered by many as one of Earth's more ignominious species) at the St. Lucie nuclear power plant caused two separate shut-downs (the first jellyfish attack blocked the ocean-fed coolant system of the plant, while the second covered the water filtering system: the combined financial loss to the Florida Power and Light, Co. was more than \$1 million). And in New York, thousands of dollars are spent every year to replace cable TV wires that are used as tooth sharpeners by rodents, much to the consternation of boob-tube enthusiasts.

## Lights Out!

As technology advances, so do its dependencies on other sectors: certain infrastructures are the customers of other infrastructures, and when electrical transmission capacity is unexpectedly lost, electrical generation must immediately be taken off-line. Otherwise, the generator's output will reroute and overload remaining transmission lines, causing "voltage oscillations" that will ripple through the power grid and pull down significant portions of it. Thus, a well-planned attack that cripples key energy facilities might severely hamper the distribution of natural gas and could easily lead to cascading failures of the power grid and the telecommunications system.

The costs associated with the August 2003 blackout in the U.S. are currently estimated at **\$700 million and growing**. One week after the U.S. power failure, Georgian separatist rebels shut down the Inguri hydroelectric station (in the zone of the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict), when two sections of a 500,000 volt powerline were damaged by shots from an automatic weapon. As a result, the Inguri hydroelectric station shut down automatically, leaving all of Georgia without electricity. And indeed, the efficaciousness of infrastructural sabotage has not been lost on the Iraqi insurgents, who routinely engage in attacks on the oil infrastructure, directly thwarting attempts at coalition "reconstruction" and undercutting the funding for the installation of a CIA-backed puppet regime. In Basra, circuits running underground and belonging to the Bechtel Corporation are routinely attacked by people who pour gas on them and set the fuel ablaze.

So welcome to the Wasteland! It's time to start anew...time to reclaim the earthly paradise our ancestors once knew... prophecies are coming true as a cycle nears completion... global warming, acid rain, advanced ozone depletion... the signs of the times are everywhere, so let's make sure that we're prepared... to finish off the Megamachine before it can be repaired... when the power lines come crashing down and the roads disintegrate... we'll blend in with the pounding rains and move to smash the state!

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