

Kevin Myers: Energy policy based on renewables will win hearts but won't protect their owners from frostbite

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Russia's main gas-company, Gazprom, was unable to meet demand last weekend as blizzards swept across Europe, and over three hundred people died. Did anyone even think of deploying our wind turbines to make good the energy shortfall from Russia?

Of course not. We all know that windmills are a self-indulgent and sanctimonious luxury whose purpose is to make us feel good. Had Europe genuinely depended on green energy on Friday, by Sunday thousands would be dead from frostbite and exposure, and the EU would have suffered an economic body blow to match that of Japan's tsunami a year ago. No electricity means no water, no trams, no trains, no airports, no traffic lights, no phone systems, no sewerage, no factories, no service stations, no office lifts, no central heating and even no hospitals, once their generators run out of fuel.

Modern cities are incredibly fragile organisms, which tremble on the edge of disaster the entire time. During a severe blizzard, it is electricity alone that prevents a midwinter urban holocaust. We saw what adverse weather can do, when 15,000 people died in the heatwave that hit France in August 2003. But those deaths were spread over a month. Last weekend's weather, without energy, could have caused many tens of thousands of deaths over a couple of days.

Why does the entire green spectrum, which now incorporates most conventional parties across Europe, deny the most obvious of truths? To play lethal games with our energy systems in order to honour the whimsical god of climate change is as intelligent and scientific as the Aztec sacrifice of their young. Actually, it is far more frivolous, because at least the Aztecs knew how many people they were sacrificing: no one has the least idea of the loss of life that might result from the EU embracing "green" energy policies.

Frau Merkel has announced that Germany is going to phase out nuclear power, simply because of the Japanese tsunami. Well, that is like basing water-collection policies in Rhineland-Westphalia on the monsoon cycle of Borneo. As I was saying last week, the Germans have a powerfully emotional attachment to everything that is "green", and an energy policy based on renewables will usually win German hearts. But it will not protect the owners of those hearts from frostbite and death due to exposure, for wind can often be not so much a Renewable as an Unusable, and also an Unpredictable, an Unstorable, and -- normally when it's very cold -- an Unmovable.

The seriousness of this is hard to exaggerate. The temperature in the Baltic countries last weekend was -33 degrees Celsius. The Eurasian landmass from Calais to Naples to Siberia was an icefield in which hundreds of millions of people were trapped. Without coal, oil and nuclear energy, mass deaths of the old and the young would have occurred on the first night. Three nights on of such conditions, and even the physically fit would

have been dying of exposure, as the temperature inside dwellings fell and began to match that of the outside, an inverse image of what happened during the French heatwave 10 years ago, when there was no escape from the heat.

Yet you will see nowhere in Dail Eireann, or Brussels, or the Palace of Westminster, a serious discussion about energy policies based on these realities, or which acknowledges that wind usually doesn't blow when it is very cold, or that even when you have strong and steady winds blowing, you will still have to have created a parallel and duplicate energy supply to provide cover for when the wind stops. And merely to create that standby energy system will generate a zillion tons of carbon dioxide.

Wind power in Ireland actually produces only 22pc of its capacity: would you spend €100,000 on a car if it meant that €78,000 of the purchase price was wasted? It gets worse. On a really cold day, we actually need about 5,000 megawatts, but yesterday wind was producing under 50 megawatts: a grand total of 1pc of requirements.

Yet despite such appalling figures, we legally prohibit civil servants from even looking at the nuclear option. They won't even take a phone-call on the subject. Instead, the fiction has taken hold amongst our media classes that we are close to being an exporter of renewable energy through the much-vaunted interconnector with Britain. But this is grotesquely untrue. We shall actually be exporting through the connector only 3pc of the time, and importing 86pc, with the system otherwise idle.

Mad, isn't it? And madder still that RTE or the BBC will continue to trot out their pet wind-enthusiasts to bluster balderdash and poppycock about global warming and how renewables are the solution -- and without the contrary point of view ever being given an airing. This is dogma, as created, promulgated and enforced by the John Charles McQuaids of our time -- and if sceptics are not actually anathematised from the pulpit, they are ruthlessly and systematically ignored. These dishonest, hypocritical and deceitful energy policies are now widely accepted by our political and teaching classes as being the very embodiment of environmentalist virtue. Such imbecilic virtue, if implemented as energy policy across Europe, could have brought about a human catastrophe last weekend.