

NUCLEAR MONITOR

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RUSSIAN GOVERNMENTAL REFORMS

Entitled “administrative reform” by newly re-elected president Vladimir Putin, historic changes in Russian government have placed the nuclear industry in a troubled position. Analysts and environmental activists have concluded that the reforms may limit the political influence previously enjoyed by the nuclear industry.

(607.5592) **WISE Russia** – Following 12 years of public protests, the Russian Ministry of Atomic Power (Minatom) that lobbied in the interests of the nuclear industry, has finally been disbanded and is to be replaced by the Federal Agency of Atomic Power to be headed by former minister, Alexandr Rumyantsev.

The entire governmental structure has been altered to three-tier system where ministries (first level) will determine general policy; supervision services (second level) will control, license and regulate various activities; and agencies (third level) will be responsible for the practical implementation of policies.

It is very clear that agencies within the new structure will not be able to influence the whole government, and will only have limited influence inside its ministries. Minatom had previously been able to lobby its initiatives directly at the Cabinet of Ministers.

Responsibilities formerly held by

Minatom will be divided between two existing ministries. Nuclear weapon related issues are to be included among the responsibilities of the Ministry of Defense, headed by Sergey Ivanov and controlled by President Putin directly.

Non-weapon issues (construction and decommissioning of reactors, nuclear fuel cycle, and science) will be in the competence of the Ministry of Industry and Energy (Minprom) headed by Victor Khristenko.

The Ministry of Industry and Energy formally includes the Federal Agency of Nuclear Energy established to replace Minatom. The same ministry presently also includes Gosatomnadzor or GAN (Federal Service for Nuclear Regulation) headed by former deputy minister for atomic power, Andrey Malyshev.

Perhaps, the most surprising fact is that the reforms have provided nuclear regulators (GAN) with higher ranking compared to the Federal Agency for

Atomic Power since regulating bodies belong to the second structural level while the agencies belong to the third level. In a way, the two institutions have exchanged places in the pecking order, at least formally.

It is difficult to imagine that Gosatomnadzor (GAN) will use its power to withdraw the operating licenses of the most persistent violators, like the “Mayak” nuclear complex, which has been dumping radioactive waste to the environment for years. For the past year, the regulating body has been under the leadership of Andgey Malyshev, who appears overly concerned with treating any directives from Minatom with great respect.

The governmental reform has also resulted in budgetary changes for the ministries concerned. The Ministry of Finance of course leads the way with its budget of over 1 trillion Rubles (US\$39 billion). The Ministry of Defense, which now includes the nuclear weapons industry, is the second with over 332 billion Rubles (nearly US\$12 billion).

Minprom comes in 8th with its relatively humble budget of 39.7 billion roubles (almost US\$1.5 billion). It should be taken into consideration that, besides the ex-Minatom and GAN, Minprom includes six other structures such as the Federal Service for Technical Regulation and Metrology, Federal Service for Technological Regulation, Federal

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BAN ON PROTESTS?

Activists from political and environmental organizations staged a protest near the State Parliament (DUMA) in Moscow on 31 March opposing the approval of a new law (in the first of three readings) introducing a ban on protests across the country. All demonstrations near administrative buildings, embassies and dangerous facilities, including nuclear, will be banned according to new law. Three activists were arrested.

Ecodefense, 31 March 2004

Space Agency, Federal Agency of Industry, Federal Agency of Construction and Housing, and Federal Agency on Energy.

Shortly before the reforms were announced, Minatom officials had given interviews proclaiming confidently that Putin would not disband their ministry but later rejected the opportunity to make any official comments on the presidential decision.

One major industry website, www.Nuclear.ru, did later publish

comments from anonymous officials lamenting the fact they "...could not save it" [Minatom] and blaming environmental activists and liberal politicians for pushing the idea to disband Minatom onto the presidential program.

Environmentalists have welcomed the changes with hopes that it should now become easier to oppose dangerous projects.

Source and Contact: WISE Russia

SPAIN: PSOE TO FULFILL NUCLEAR PHASEOUT PLEDGE?

The recent Spanish parliamentary elections were won by the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE) in an outcome undoubtedly influenced by the 11 March terrorist attacks on Madrid that killed over 200 people three days earlier. With the PSOE about to form a new government, the question of what they will do about the country's nuclear energy future arises, especially given the pre-election pact made with the Green Party to phase out nuclear energy.

(607.5593) **WISE Amsterdam** – The PSOE won 164 parliamentary seats in the elections, just 16 more than the former governing party, Partido Popular (PP), which has now 148 seats. The remaining 38 seats are divided between nine smaller parties, ranging from 1 to 10 seats each.

The PSOE will need to negotiate a coalition with one or two smaller parties in order to achieve a parliamentary majority of the 175 members required to get laws approved. It is expected that the IU and the ERC (United Left and Republican

Left of Catalonia; 5 and 8 MPs) will become PSOE's coalition partners but there are other parties that share its anti-nuclear stance that could also be approached.

The PSOE and Green Party (Los Verdes) pact close the country's nine reactors by 2024 was agreed on 22 January and two weeks before the elections, presidential candidate Jose Luis Zapatero reaffirmed his pledge for a phase out "in an orderly way over time".

When the PSOE had previously come

to power in 1983, they adopted a "freeze" on the construction of new reactors, leaving five proposed reactor projects in disarray. Eventually, one reactor (Trillo-1) was completed but six more were cancelled indefinitely. The nine reactors were responsible for 23.6% of the country's electricity supply in 2003.

Despite a promise to close reactors by 2024 it is unclear how the phase out will be realized. The PSOE have not made any statements calling for the short-term shutdown of the most unsafe reactors, Santa Maria de Garoña and Jose Cabrera, Zorita. For Zorita, a final closure date of 30 April 2006 was already set two years ago, but Greenpeace Spain has demanded the immediate closure of both reactors arguing that a 20 year period is too long considering that it is technically feasible to close reactors much earlier.

PSOE energy experts explained the lack of a clear timeframe as due to "different internal approaches": there is agreement over a phase out, but not everybody is in favor swift action. The party also acknowledged the serious

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Editorial team: Tinu Otoki (WISE Amsterdam), Michael Mariotte (NIRS). With **contributions** from WISE Argentina, WISE Austria, WISE Czech Republic, WISE Japan and WISE Russia.

The next issue (608) will be mailed out 16 April 2004.

Oops! In issue 604, we mistakenly reported that Buan was in Taiwan... we, of course, meant South Korea – well done to those who spotted the (not-so) deliberate mistake! In the same issue, "25 Years Ago" wrongly claimed that Monju had been connected to the grid in 1985, but in truth it was 1995. In issue 605-606, "A Personal Remembrance" stated that TMI-Alert had been formed in 1979 but the correct date was 1977. We are mortified by our errors and will endeavor never to repeat them.

25 YEARS AGO

What happened 25 years ago? We go back to news from our 1979 WISE Bulletin, comparing anti-nuclear news "then" and "now".

Then

In issue 4 of *WISE Bulletin* we wrote about a BBC film on the Karen Silkwood murder case. The documentary was made 5 years after the death of Karen Silkwood, on 13 November 1974. "This 50 minute film made by the BBC in England is worth a group hire. It is a documentary, on the spot reporting of the disarray in the Kerr McGee plutonium plant in Oklahoma U.S., where Karen Silkwood was an employee until her murder in 1974. The film concludes that the cost of plutonium is certainly too high for any society". (*WISE Bulletin*, March 1979)

Now

Karen Silkwood started to work at the Cimarron River plutonium fuel plant of Kerr McGee in the early 1970s. She joined the Atomic Workers Union and discovered evidence of spills, leaks and missing plutonium. Kerr-McGee faced litigation involving worker safety and environmental contamination and Silkwood testified, before the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission (now NRC), that she had suffered radiation exposure in a series of unexplained incidents. Gloves in a glove box used by Silkwood appeared to be contaminated with plutonium, though strangely enough there was no indication of a leakage and no explanation as to how the gloves became contaminated. Plutonium was also found at her home, in the kitchen, toilet and bedroom. An autopsy showed that she had been contaminated with plutonium before her death. (*The Handbook of Texas Online*, updated 4 December 2002; *Los Alamos Science*, 23 November 1995)

On 13 November 1974, she was killed in an automobile crash under highly suspicious circumstances while on her way to a meeting with a union official and a reporter from the *New York Times*. Silkwood was thought to have had documents with her that proved allegations for quality control falsifications of fuel rods - no documents were found after the crash. Three months before her death, she had given a detailed list of safety violations to the Atomic Energy Commission. (United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America Union website, January 2000)

Her case emphasized the hazards of nuclear energy and raised questions about corporate accountability and responsibility. According to the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union, the Kerr-McGee plant had manufactured faulty fuel rods, falsified product inspection records, and risked employee safety. Eventually, Kerr-McGee closed the plant.

Silkwood was the subject of a motion picture, *Silkwood*, released in 1984. In 1986 her family settled a US\$11.5 million plutonium-contamination lawsuit against Kerr-McGee for US\$1.38 million. Kerr-McGee did not admit liability in settling the case. (*The Handbook of Texas Online*, updated 4 December 2002)

safety problems at Garoña but decided not to discuss short-term closures prior to the election.

Greenpeace Spain is concerned that there is too little political will to implement a phase out plan in the next four years and considers strong public pressure necessary to prompt action.

Nuclear Safety Council (CSN)

The PSOE has promised to reform the authority responsible for nuclear safety, the CSN – over the years anti-nuclear groups have often demanded a reform. CSN is criticized for a lack of transparency and its openly pro-nuclear attitude. It was considered as too passive or lax following a series of safety problems, such as cracks in the Garoña reactor vessel and deficiencies in the Zorita cooling systems.

Four advisors within the CSN

expressed concerns to parliament recently when they criticized the CSN's president, Maria Teresa Estevan Bolea, for acting unilaterally and in contravention to the views of the majority at CSN.

Greenpeace Spain has called for president's resignation in addition to a legal reform. The law on nuclear energy must be revised to ensure it no longer promotes the use of nuclear energy, that nuclear utilities are made legally responsible for waste disposal, must include more opportunities for public participation and ensure that whistle-blowing workers are protected against reprisal.

The CSN itself should be more open to public input, fully independent of the industry and should be monitored by an independent. Parliament should also have more control over CSN decision making.

Garoña

The reactor at Garoña continues to suffer serious safety problems after cracks were found in the control rod system. Cracks were found in 70% of the guide tubes, through which the control rods enter the reactor core – such cracks are dangerous as they could lead to the control rod guide tube breaking and a loss of coolant accident.

Alternatively, such cracks could leak coolant water that can corrode the reactor vessel head. This problem led to the closure, in 2002, of the U.S. Davis-Besse reactor, where acid from the coolant water had almost completely eaten through the reactor vessel lid, leaving a hole of 15 centimeters deep (see *WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor* 565.5385: "Millimeters from disaster").

When almost 200 cracks were found in

1994 in the Zorita reactor vessel head, the complete reactor vessel lid was removed and replaced by a more corrosive resistant lid.

Since then, Zorita has been placed under a "short-license" regime, which means it gets operational licenses only for a few years (last one for six years)

(see WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor 572.5430: "Spain: Zorita re-fuels in anticipation of license renewal").

Sources: Greenpeace Spain press releases, 14 January, 22 & 25 March 2004; email from Greenpeace Spain, 30 March 2004; *Nucleonics Week*, 29 January & 11 March 2004

Contact: Carlos Bravo at Greenpeace Spain, San Bernardo 107, 1^o, 28015 Madrid, Spain
Tel: +34 91 444 1400
Fax: +34 91 447 1598
Email: cbravo@es.greenpeace.org
Web: www.greenpeace.es

CZECH GOVERNMENT ADOPTS NATIONAL ENERGY POLICY

The Czech government adopted a new national energy policy on March 10 and, following repeated postponements, ministers agreed on a strategic document that outlines the development of the energy sector until 2030. The decision supports a draft policy proposed by the Ministry of Industry and Trade (MIT) which accommodates the interests of the nuclear and coal industries instead of the country's citizens. At a time when much of Europe seems to be gradually veering away from nuclear power, the Czech Ministry of Industry and Trade continues to foster intense contacts with the nuclear industry.

(607.5594) **WISE Czech Republic** - The Ministry of Industry and Trade (MIT) was mandated to develop a proposal for a new national energy policy in the autumn of 2002 and last spring, MIT revealed a draft version containing six different scenarios. Although varying in emphasis, each scenario would basically have the same result - continuing the current direction of the energy sector, which is overwhelmingly based on coal and nuclear power, for the next 30 years.

The draft policy has met with a wave of criticism with dissatisfaction expressed by, among others, the Ministry of Environment (MoE) which had offered its own version of an energy policy as an alternative to the MIT proposal. The MoE version focuses on energy efficiency and supports a rapid switch towards the use of renewables, although it does suggest that (given current technology) renewables would not be able to deliver more than 20% of the Czech consumption by 2030.

Therefore, its version relies on increased use of natural gas, most probably to be imported from Russia, in the interim. The scenario would prevent the Czech Republic from having to build new nuclear reactors and from extending coal mining activities beyond the territorial limits set in 1992 to protect northwestern

villages from the threat of further destruction in future years.

MIT's original draft proposal drew widespread censure during public debates and following these, MIT decided to modify one of the scenarios, the so-called "green" scenario. This modified "green" scenario was submitted to the government as the final draft and proposes the construction of two new nuclear reactors to be connected to the grid after 2020 in addition to the removal of the territorial limits on coal mining in North Bohemia.

While drafting the plan, MIT correctly identified the Czech populations increasing loss of trust in the nuclear industry and its new expansion plans as a danger and postponed the need for new nuclear power plants from 2015 to 2020. MIT clearly hoped that such a delay would crush public opposition now and derail plans for upcoming protests in the Czech Republic and neighboring Austria.

Completely true to form, MIT has been actively probing the environmental movement to find ways of reducing resistance to its plans. During several meetings between environmental NGOs and MIT representatives, deputy Industry Minister Pecina tried to obtain information on which issues

were most likely to enrage civil society and cause the government problems. As a result, the issue of sustainable development was adopted as one of the Energy Plan goals and a last minute upgrade of the projected amount of renewables was included.

With the new 15,8% target for 2030 (up from 11%), the government obviously hopes to avoid criticism during the Renewable Energy Conference in Bonn to be held in June. Despite the increase of the renewable share, the modified proposal remains inferior to the MoE scenario, both environmentally and socially.

Public voices opposition

On 28 January, a protest rally organized by environmental NGOs and North Bohemian villages endangered by lignite (brown coal) mining was held in front of the government building in Prague. People from regions being researched as potential sites for a national deep geological repository for high-level nuclear wastes also participated in the protest.

In all, around 200 protesters expressed disapproval with MIT's draft policy and declared support for the MoE's proposal. Two MPs, musicians and writers who spoke and played in support of the action also attended the protest.

Ministers received letters of protest from the public and over 100 mayors or village assemblies signed a letter urging the government to stop all research activities concerning a deep repository of nuclear wastes and to halt plans for the construction of any new nuclear reactors until the problem of how to manage spent fuel from existing plants is solved. At the beginning of February 23 renowned Czech cultural and intellectual figures also expressed their opposition to the government by letter.

The government postponed the debate on the energy policy until 3 March when it finally reappeared on its program. Around 150 people, mostly residents of endangered north Bohemian villages of Horni Jiretin and Cernice, gathered in front of the government seat again and protest representatives delivered a "memorial list", signed by mayors of North Bohemia and villages threatened with nuclear waste repositories, to ministers to remind them of the day they should have decided the fate of many villages.

The debate did begin but again the actual decision making was postponed for another week. So for the third time, the villagers of Horni Jiretin and Cernice were forced to return to Prague to defend their villages on 10 March.

Decisions, decisions

Ministers had already discussed the draft energy policy at the beginning of January but had postponed the final decision for a few weeks because it appeared that, faced with the differing proposals from MIT and MoE, ministers were not capable of making an "informed decision". Prime Minister Vladimir Spidla ordered a workshop to help clarify the disputed energy issues for ministers but it was only attended by 5 out of 17 ministers when held in early February.

Following two further postponements, the government finally decided on 10 March and ministers approved the proposal put forward by MIT by a majority of 9 to 8, with one change to

the text: in the case of territorial limits for lignite mining, the government agreed on a compromise formulation that instead of "removal" speaks of "rational re-assessment" of the current limits.

Adoption of the MIT energy policy means that ministers have agreed to the option of two new nuclear reactors (additional to the current six) in the Czech Republic to be connected to the grid between 2020 and 2025.

In addition, the ministers broke their own commitment, made just one week earlier in a national climate plan, to curtail national greenhouse gases emissions to a limit of 8.7 tons per inhabitant per year (T/I/Y) or by 30% by 2020. The energy plan supports a limit of 10.1 T/I/Y.

It is worth noting that the Social-Democrat Industry Minister, Milan Urban, pushed his department's

proposal through despite opposition from smaller coalition parties (all three Christian-Democrat and three Liberty Union ministers voted against) and some of his party colleague-ministers. Rumors abound behind the scenes claiming that party leaders had put some Social-Democratic ministers under pressure to vote for the proposal.

Minister Urban, with the support of the Prime Minister, was able to rule the MoE proposal out of the debate process arguing that energy policy proposals fell exclusively within the competency of his department.

Future development

Ministers, influenced by the active lobbying of the Industry Ministry, have accepted an old-fashioned "central-planning" attitude - future consumption is estimated first, then a plan made to fulfill the projected numbers.

CEZ AND ENERGY PLAN

The Czech Republic's main electricity company CEZ (Czech Energy Utility), is currently attempting to buy into the Slovak and Bulgarian energy markets in efforts to establish itself as the Central European electricity giant following its disastrous privatization attempts towards France's EdF last year. In order to safeguard the Czech expertise in nuclear engineering, the State incorporated engineering contractor Skoda Praha into CEZ at the end of 2003 and sold large machinery and nuclear reactor builder Skoda Plzen to the US based financial holding Appian Group. Appian and CEZ are close friends - for instance, CEZ's new general director is the former director of Skoda Plzen.

Within the national energy plan, there is evidence that these two players had active roles at all levels. It is rumored that Appian's capital came from schemes in which large sums of money were siphoned out of the energy and engineering industry during the chaotic privatization schemes of the early 1990s but the true source of Appian's capital

remains unknown. What is certain is that Appian's influence with the Czech government goes hand in hand with that of CEZ.

Skoda Praha and Skoda Plzen specialize in large energy projects and were the main building contractors at Temelin but urgently need new nuclear work since the task at Temelin was completed last year. CEZ is favored to secure the purchase of Slovak utility Slovenske Elektrarne (SE) and under terms currently put forward by Slovak Economy Minister Pavol Rusko, this also includes the duty to complete SE's nuclear blocks Mochovce 3 and 4.

Once CEZ succeeds in its attempts to acquire SE, it will be able to maintain its, and Appian's, nuclear expertise and will undoubtedly seek to move on to building new plants in the Czech Republic. With the SE option, which did not exist at the beginning of the drafting process for the energy plan, Industry Minister Urban could postpone new nukes until the end of next millennium (2020).

WISE Czech Republic

AUSTRIAN REACTIONS

Anti-nuclear NGOs in Austria were disappointed by the decision of the Czech government not to ban any further nuclear power plants. Mathilde Halla, Chairwoman of the Upper Austrian Platform against Nuclear Danger and WISE Austria, fears that this decision indicates, and will be interpreted as, a green light for an extension of the plant at Temelin. Halla calls for Austrian politicians to respond rapidly to the Prague decision instead of waiting as in the 1990s when the Czech Republic initially decided to build the Temelin plant.

In January, the Environmental Committee of the Austrian Parliament approved text requiring the government to take all possible steps against any nuclear expansion in the Czech Republic and Halla calls for the government to act accordingly, immediately.

The Austrian Environmental Minister, Josef Prátl, has expressed regret at the Czech decision but appeared willing to respect it. The Social Democrats have called the energy plan stone-aged, while the Greens in Upper Austria emphasized that the current policy is to be revised in two years, claiming that it would then be possible to voice its objection more effectively.

Czech NGO, the South Bohemian Mothers is to launch a campaign against the plans and will begin collecting signatures in May for a petition to be presented to politicians. The group aims to show that a clear majority of the population is opposed to the plans and to help make their resistance more visible to the wider world.

WISE Austria, 18 March 2004

The alternative MoE proposal was more "modern" in the sense that it responded to the current knowledge of the state of global natural energy resources and to global environmental problems. Its primary strategy was to regulate the consumption with targeted steps.

Nevertheless, the adoption of a national energy policy still has far to go before its proposals are implemented. "Rational re-assessment" of territorial limits is in fact just another postponement of the dispute on lignite mining.

With regard to the new reactors proposed, the government will have difficulty finding investors and Minister Urban's idea that the state (or more accurately, its tax-payers) would pay for the 100 billion Czech crowns (EUR 3 billion, US\$ 3.7 billion) investment is almost absurd in the context of a liberalized European electricity market.

The commitments to reducing greenhouse gas emissions will depend amongst other things on internal technical and political developments in addition to international debates.

The question is, which goal is valid for the Czech Republic? That suggested within the new energy policy or the other adopted by the Czech government a week before within the framework of its climate protection strategy.

The adopted energy policy is a step in the wrong direction for the Czech Republic, but it is certainly not an indisputable victory for CEZ (the national electricity "giant"), Appian Group (a US investment group with a strong hold on mining and engineering) and their fossil-nuclear lobby.

The citizens trying to protect their villages from destruction or becoming host to nuclear installations have made their voices heard during recent debates. North Bohemians have already announced their determination to continue defending their villages, be it rationally or emotionally. 90-95% of participants in all eleven local referenda rejected proposals for research for nuclear waste disposal in or around their villages. If the citizens maintain their determination not to be sacrificed for the interests of nuclear and coal industries, then Mr. Urban and his followers will have problems trying to put the current policy into practice.

Source and contact: Libor Matousek or Jan Haverkamp at WISE Czech Republic
Email: libor.matousek@hnutiduha.cz, jan.haverkamp@ecn.cz

JAPAN: MOX PROGRAM TO RESTART AT TAKAHAMA

Governor Nishikawa of Fukui Prefecture approved the restart of the controversial MOX "Plutothermal" program at Takahama nuclear power plant operated by Kansai Electric Power Company (KEPCO) on March 20. The program has been dogged with problems and was already aborted twice previously. If executed, it would be the first occasion of Japan's MOX being used in conventional reactors.

(607.5595) WISE Japan - Citizens and local groups are mobilizing to protest against the decision to restart the dangerous and uneconomical MOX program. According to Mihama-no-Kai, an Osaka based anti-nuclear group, the Governor of Fukui

Prefecture has already received 516 protest emails from all over Japan – a number that far exceeded the organizer's expectations – in addition to an unknown number of faxes and postcards. Governor Nishikawa has however dismissed all voices of

opposition by authorizing the contract with KEPCO.

Liberal Democrat legislator, Koji Seki has strongly criticized Governor Nishikawa for apparently trying to avoid a debate on the subject – he had

ACTION ALERT CHERNOBYL DAY PROTESTS

Environmental organization, Wiener Plattform "Atomkraftfreie Zukunft", invites you to join in a **Europe-wide day of protests at French and Finnish embassies** to highlight their governments efforts to further the calamitous nuclear industry.

The Franco-German consortium of Siemens and Framatome (now Areva) developed the European Pressurized Water Reactor (EPR) in the 1990s. Finland has already agreed to build this experimental reactor and France is also rumored to be making plans to follow suit.

Demonstrations will be held on 26 April. Chernobyl Day, to remind the world against complacency. The governments of France and Finland must be reminded of the possibly disastrous consequences of flirting with nuclear power and dissuaded from continuing on their current ruinous paths.

For information on how you can participate, contact:

Wiener Plattform "Atomkraftfreie Zukunft", Fehnerweg 16, A-2380 Perchtoldsdorf/Wien
E-mail: i.scherff.b.brauchinger@aon.at

previously promised to consult with the Fukui legislature and the mayor of Takahama before coming to any final decision on the restart.

MOX problematic

The Japanese government had planned to consume plutonium in the Fast Breeder Reactor at Monju but adapted its plan, following a sodium fire at Monju in 1995, to use conventional light water reactors instead. Apart from KEPCO's plans for Takahama, there are also proposals to use MOX at Fukushima NPP, Fukushima Prefecture and Kashiwazaki-Kariwa NPP operated by Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) at Niigata Prefecture.

Experts have warned that LWRs (and BWRs) are not suitably designed to

burn uranium, plutonium, or plutonium-uranium mixed fuel and any such attempts could have dangerous consequences.

Local people fighting to stop the MOX program have taken every possible measure; court cases have been filed and referenda held, in addition to signatures being collected for petitions. In Niigata, the majority of Kariwa Village residents demonstrated in opposition and in Fukushima, backed by public opinion, the Governor was able to halt the program.

When the world was astonished by revelations in 2002 that quality control data on MOX fuel made for TEPCO by BNFL had been falsified, the government and utility were forced to delay the planned MOX program at Takahama and Japan's nuclear energy policy suffered a huge blow. (See *WISE News Communique* "Another MOX Scandal" 542.5236 & *WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor* "Japan: Whistleblowing turns to tornado" 573.5436) Citizens and legislators are now demanding that there should be complete disclosure of information concerning the quality of the MOX fuel.

Shipment dangers

The huge scale of plutonium utilization could increase the threat of theft and/or terrorism, in addition to the usual risks attached to the shipment of such dangerous materials. Physicist, Dr. Frank Barnaby, has stated that it would not be difficult for terrorists to build a primitive explosive device using stolen MOX fuel.

Since the plutonium shipment from Cherbourg (France) to Tokaimura on the cargo ship Akatsukimaru, there has been deep concern and strong protests against the transportation of high level wastes and MOX, by en route nations in the Caribbean, Pacific Islands, and Latin American. In January, the Argentina government banned a US nuclear waste shipment from San Onofre NPP via Cape Horn.

Though the Japanese government dismisses the growing concerns and criticism expressed by en route states,

the case of HMS Nottingham highlights one reason why en route nations are opposed to nuclear shipments. The British warship sunk near Australia in July 2002 after hitting a rock and despite denials by BNFL, it is widely believed to have been acting as escort to the British flagged MOX shipment travelling from Japan to Britain.

More MOX planned

Another utility, Kyushu Electric Power Company, also announced plans to start its MOX program at Genkai NPP (four PWRs) in Saga Prefecture on Kyushu Island, Japan's most western point, by 2008 at the earliest.

Local anti-nuclear groups immediately responded by announcing the launch of a petition campaign. Mamoru Fukae, Director of local groups near Genkai said they hoped to collect 200,000 signatures against this program.

The local legislature of Takashima Town, Nagasaki Prefecture passed a

ACTION ALERT COMPLAIN TO FINNISH AUTHORITIES ABOUT FIFTH REACTOR

Finnish Energy Company, Teollisuuden Voima (TVO) has made its application to the Ministry of Trade and Industry for rights to build a 1,600 MW EPR reactor in Olkiluoto in the west coast of Finland.

Private citizens, movements and organizations whose living environment and/or working conditions may be affected **have the right to express their concerns** to the Finnish Ministry of Trade and Industry.

Nuclear accidents do not respect geographical borders therefore this reactor poses a threat to vast areas beyond Finland.

Please send comments/complaints by mail to: Kauppa-ja Teollisuusministerio - rekisterointitoimisto (Ministry of Trade and Industry - register office), PB 32, 00023 Valtioneuvosto, Helsinki, Finland
Or by email to: ydinenergia@ktm.fi

resolution on 12 March opposing the MOX program at Genkai NPP.

Takashima Town faces Genkai NPP across a body of water, and the Chairman Kenji Shiiyama reportedly said, "in an emergency, we in Takashima Town, which is just across the sea, will be affected. We fear the potential impact caused by rumor on

fishery. All the town people will stand up to stop the program."

On 26 March, KEPCO announced its basic contract with COGEMA for the fabrication of MOX fuel and it is expected that the official contract will be finalized this summer with operation due to begin in 2007. Citizens are reportedly demanding

that KEPCO keep to its earlier pledge to hold public debates before signing MOX fuel fabrication contracts.

Sources: WISE Japan and Green Action press release, 20 March 2004

Contact: WISE Japan

ATUCHA-2 IS NO ANSWER FOR ARGENTINA

Environmental organizations have again reaffirmed their view that the Argentinean National Commission of Atomic Energy (CNEA) has over exaggerated the costs of failing to complete the construction at the Atucha-2 nuclear power plant and have criticized Germany for offering financial support to the nuclear industry instead of promoting renewable energy.

(607.5596) **WISE Argentina** – In a continuation of established clean energy campaigns ("No Nuclear Power, Yes Clean Energies" and "Choose Positive Energy") WISE Argentina and Greenpeace Argentina protested in front of the incomplete installations of the Atucha-2 plant on 23 March.

Both organizations argued that Atucha-2 is the worst possible option to energy generation in Argentina, stating that the project could only lead to "risks, wastes and more debt".

"This project is negative, highly risky, expensive, technologically obsolete and a legacy from the military dictatorship", declared Juan Carlos Villalonga, Campaign Director of Greenpeace Argentina.

"To restart this project with the excuse of reverting the possible energy crisis of Argentina, is a terrible mistake, for there are much more efficient ways of facing the crisis and investing the State's money".

According to a recent Greenpeace study, every peso spent on Atucha-2 would, if invested in wind energy, have represented twice as much progress in terms of energy generated.

After reviewing the financial investment needed to finish the plant, they concluded that the same amount of money would finance the launch of

local wind industry and generate more investment and employment than the nuclear industry.

The National Commission of Atomic Energy (CNEA) has been engaged in lobbying in an attempt to achieve the conclusion of the project. "The costs of closing this project were overestimated by the CNEA, to reach a similar amount to the costs of finishing the plant, and therefore force the continuation of the works", declared Pablo Bertinat, coordinator of Taller Ecologista and representative of WISE Argentina. "The completion of the Atucha-2 project is almost 20 times more expensive than closing the plant".

The Greenpeace report suggests brokering an agreement with Siemens, the German government and German banks that initially guaranteed funding for the doomed project in order to negotiate substantial support for the development of renewable energies.

There are already credits for US\$139 million agreed. "Germany is tearing down its nuclear program and leading the development of wind powered energy in Europe. An agreement like that would be much more coherent and wise", stated Bertinat.

Greenpeace proposes that the US\$480 million earmarked for the completion of Atucha-2's construction is redirected

to fund the development of the local aeolic industry.

The environmental organization recently presented an action plan, to achieve 3000 MW of wind power by 2013 and, together with the CADGE (Aeolic Business Chamber), a short-term plan to begin the manufacture of national generators.

As part of its "Choose Positive Energy" campaign, Greenpeace is striving to get the highest commitment of the State, for the development of the clean energy sources. It held a "cyber-vote" on its website where 10.000 people have already shown their support and commitment to choosing state-produced clean energy.

Source: Taller Ecologista/WISE Argentina and Greenpeace Argentina join press release, 23 March 2004

Contact: WISE Argentina

IN BRIEF

European loan for Cernavoda. The European Commission granted on 30 March a Euratom loan worth Euro 223.5 million (US\$ 277 million) for a new reactor at the Cernavoda NPP in Romania. The construction of the 700 MW Cernavoda-2 reactor started in the 1980s but was suspended in 1989 with the fall of the Communist government. Completion plans were launched some years ago with input from Canada, Italy and France. The EU loan is meant to complete the financing package (see also *WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor* 596-598 special issue *European Nuclear Threats: Old and New*).

The investments in Cernavoda have been strongly opposed by anti-nuclear NGOs who consider the loan for the CANDU reactor contrary to EU laws. The Euratom loans were only meant for improving safety and efficiency of Russian designed reactors. The loan for Cernavoda is considered as a back-door subsidy for a new reactor, notably of a Western design. Friends of the Earth Europe has called the decision a case of maladministration and is to ask the European Ombudsman to investigate suspected bogus nuclear safety claims made by the European Commission.

FOE Europe press release, 30 March 2004

Davis-Besse shut down; and restarted.

Barely 24 hours after FirstEnergy restarted the Davis-Besse reactor in mid-March, it was shut down again due to the failure of three valves, one of which could allow the release of radioactive steam into the air. The nuclear watchdog Public Citizen has expressed concern that these problems were not identified previously by either FirstEnergy engineers or Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) plant inspectors. A list of problems that the NRC had with Davis-Besse did not even include the malfunction of the valves that caused this recent shutdown. After repairs it was reconnected to the grid in the last weekend in March. In February 2002, a large hole was found in the reactor lid

due to corrosion (see *WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor* 565.5385: "Millimeters from disaster").

Public Citizen press release, 17 March 2004; *Nucleonics Week*, 1 April 2004

Congo: black market for uranium ore?

Authorities in Congo seized two cases containing uranium in the capital, Kinshasa, in March. The two cases, weighed over 100 kilograms. Some 50 cases of uranium and radioactive cesium have been seized by Congolese authorities over the last four years. The IAEA demanded information about possible illegal quarrying at the Shinkolobwe mine in the Katanga province. The government says it shut the mine down, but a BBC correspondent found 6,000 illegal miners at work extracting large amounts of material containing cobalt, copper, platinum and uranium. The uranium is reportedly sold to nearby furnaces operated mainly by private businessmen from China and India, and illegally exported to the world market via neighbouring Zambia. Uranium from the Shinkolobwe mine was used by the Americans in the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan during World War II.

World Environment News, 24 March 2004; BBC News, 25 March 2004

EU slams Sellafield. An EU commission said that the UK government has failed to fully account for nuclear material at Sellafield. According to an official at the EU executive commission that enforces laws in this field, there has been a continuous failure to produce and maintain operating records to permit inventorization of all nuclear materials in the B30 site at Sellafield. He said European inspectors had been unable to gain access to B30, a 44 year old pond storing old civil and military magnox fuel. The pond contains 1.3 MT of plutonium, including 400 kg of corroded spent fuel lying as sludge on the bottom. A British government statement said that safeguard

arrangements for B30 have been the subject of discussion with the Commission dating back some 15 years.

Reuters, 24 March 2004; *Nuclear Fuel*, 29 March 2004

Blast proof walls for Sellafield

plutonium stores. West Cumbrian local authority, Copeland Borough Council, has approved BNFL's plans to erect a concrete protective barrier around two of Sellafield's plutonium stores. Buildings B3023 and B3023.1 store plutonium in dioxide powder form recovered during reprocessing operations. Department of Trade and Industry figures from 2002 show that 86.5 tons of material is kept in the stores. In 2002, the report following a security review board described the stores as being "inadequate buildings... not much more than a shed" that needed 'to be rebuilt' and unable to resist fire or attack. It is unclear why BNFL have chosen to build a blast-proof wall rather than a complete rebuild of the stores.

CORE briefing, 22 March 2004

Iran begins uranium conversion.

Tehran has begun operations at a uranium conversion facility at Isfahan and although uranium conversion is a preparatory step for uranium enrichment, the UN's nuclear watchdog argues that nothing is amiss. The IAEA has said that the plant opening is not controversial and seemingly accepts Tehran's claims that its nuclear program is for the peaceful generation of electricity only. The IAEA were informed in February that the plant would begin operation in March and the watchdog's spokesperson said that its inspectors would be examining the site this week. In January, a row ensued over Iran's use of semantics related to which activities were to be halted as part of its agreement with Europe's big three, France, Germany and Great Britain, to suspend "enrichment-related" activities in order to receive technological assistance. (See *WISE/NIRS Nuclear*

Monitor 602.5573: "Proliferation: focus on enrichment issues") The British Foreign office has expressed displeasure with the Iranian government's announcement and has officially registered the trio's disappointment at this latest development. The statement said that the announcement sent "the wrong signal about Iranian willingness to implement suspension of nuclear enrichment-related activities".
Reuters and AFP, 29 March 2004; The Guardian, 1 April 2004

French safety authority wants EdF to consider aircraft impact. France's nuclear safety authority, DSGNR, has asked Electricite de France (EdF) to consider the possibility of a civilian aircraft crash in safety scenarios for a proposed EPR and to propose modifications that might be needed. From the outset, the EPR was designed to withstand the impact of a fighter jet but following the attacks on the Twin Towers in New York, the agency has suggested that a nuclear plant should also be able to withstand the impact of a heavier civilian aircraft.
Nucleonics Week, 1 April 2004

Uranium scare hits mine staff in Australia. Australia's most controversial mine, Ranger in Kakadu National Park, was shut down on 24 March following a uranium scare affecting 20 staff. Workers coming off the night shift complained that the water in the shower was making them itchy. The water was found to contain levels of uranium up to 400 times safe drinking levels. The uranium mine's water systems were shut down. Most concern is held for several workers who took prolonged showers and there are also fears that some staff may have drunk the water. It is the most serious incident since the spill of 110,000 litres of radioactive liquid at Olympic Dam, South Australia, in October 2003.

The Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) said the incident was the latest in a history of spills, leaks and breakdowns. According to

ACF there have been over 100 leaks and spills since the mine commenced operation in 1981.
The Australian, 25 March 2004

German protests against transport of spent fuel rods. Some 700 demonstrators in Ahaus Germany and 150 in Rossendorf near Dresden protested on 21 March against the planned transport of 951 spent fuel elements 600 kilometers across the country. In Ahaus the demonstrators moved to the storage hall for waste, led by farmers on 75 tractors. The activists want waste produced in Rossendorf to stay there until a final storage place is identified. On 30 March, Federal environment minister Jürgen Trittin issued a transport license for transport by trucks. Most demonstrators expect that the transports will occur within two months.
IndyMedia Germany, 22 March 2004; Federal Radiation Protection Agency (BFS), 30 March 2004

10 new reactors for Russia by 2020. Rosenergoatom, the state-owned company operating Russia's nuclear plants has announced plans to invest US\$800 million for the development and construction of nuclear plants in 2004. Director of the company's international department, Anatoly Kirichenko, said the company invests US\$1 billion annually for new projects and plans to launch a new reactor at Kalinin NPP based on the VVER-1000 design. Work would also continue on Kursk-5 (RBMK-1000) and Volgodonsk-2 (VVER-1000) this year. The company plans to launch 10 new nuclear power units, 5 by 2010 and another 5 by 2020. Rosenergoatom currently produces 11% of Russia's capacity.
Russian Nuclear Watch, N3 (21), March 2004

Book accuses US Justice Department of nuclear plant coverup. Secret midnight burning of radioactive waste. An FBI spy flight with infrared cameras. An employee who contends she was contaminated by fellow

workers for reporting safety violations. These allegations are contained in a new book claiming that the Justice Department covered up environmental misconduct at the former Rocky Flats nuclear weapons plant near Denver more than a decade ago. *The Ambushed Grand Jury: How the Justice Department Covered Up Government Nuclear Crimes and How We Caught Them Red Handed* was written by Wes McKinley, the foreman of a grand jury that investigated activity at Rocky Flats, and attorney Caron Balkany.
The Associated Press, 27 March 2004

Japan: Hamaoka-5 critical. The Hamaoka-5 1325 MW Advanced Boiling Water Reactor (ABWR) of Chubu Electric Power Co. reached first criticality on 23 March.
World Nuclear Association News Briefing, 24-30 March 2004

South Korean reactor starts up. Ulchin-5, a 960 MW PWR at Kyong Sang Buk-Do, was connected to the grid at the end of January. It is the country's 19th power reactor. The plant was connected to the electricity grid on 18 december 2003.
World Nuclear Association Weekly Digest, 26 March 2004

HTR developments. The Chinese Tsinghua University and the Korean Atomic Energy Research Institute (KAERI) formed a partnership for High Temperature Reactor (HTR) research and will set up a joint research center for nuclear hydrogen production. China is planning to construct a 150 MW HTR in 2006, to be operational in 2010. Korea has plans for a 300 MW HTR and said it obtained 1 billion Won (US\$ 900,000), which is only 10% of the total construction costs. In the meantime, French company Areva is still interested in joining the South African HTR project, but has made no decision whether to join the PBMR company.
Nucleonics Week, 25 March 2004

Agreement on new Pakistan reactor. China has agreed with the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission on development of the new 300 MW Chashma-2 nuclear plant in the Punjab. The US\$600-700 million reactor will complement the Chinese-built unit 1 (aka Chasnupp), which went into commercial operation in 2000.
World Nuclear Association Weekly Digest, 19 March 2004

U.S. attorney seeks report on risk of terrorism at Diablo Canyon. California Attorney General Bill Lockyer and his counterparts in three other states (Washington, Utah and Massachusetts) accused the Bush administration on 19 March of brushing off the danger of a terrorist attack on stored spent fuel at Diablo Canyon and asked a federal appeals

court to order an environmental review. They asked the court to order the NRC to examine how Pacific Gas and Electric Co., the plant operator, could reduce the possibility of a successful attack and to study the health and environmental effects of an attack. A similar complaint had been filed earlier by the Sierra Club and the anti-nuclear group San Luis Obispo Mothers for Peace. They challenged the refusal of the NRC to hold hearings or conduct a study of the environmental consequences of an attack. The scientist Frank Van Hippel of Princeton University said that an attack on stored waste at Diablo Canyon could release deadly clouds that would force long-term evacuation of an area the size of the state of New Jersey.
San Francisco Chronicle, 20 March 2004

UK hosts security sessions. A joint British, U.S., and Russian initiative was recently held near Sellafield where 12 senior Russian officials assessed a specially developed training course designed to prevent terrorists stealing nuclear materials. BNFL said the aim of the course is to improve Russia's first line of defense. BNFL security staff in partnership with the U.S. Department of Energy, the UK Office for Civil Nuclear Security and the UKAEA Constabulary developed the course attended by Russian guard forces and commanders.
CORE briefing, 22 March 2004; Nucleonics Week, 1 April 2004

NIRS/WISE offices and relays

WISE Amsterdam

P.O. Box 59636
1040 LC Amsterdam
The Netherlands
Tel: +31 20 612 6368
Fax: +31 20 689 2179
Email: wiseamster@antenna.nl
Web: www.antenna.nl/wise

NIRS

1424 16th Street NW, #404
Washington, DC 20036
USA
Tel: +1 202 328 0002
Fax: +1 202 462 2183
Email: nirsnet@nirs.org
Web: www.nirs.org

NIRS Southeast

P.O. Box 7586
Asheville, NC 28802
USA
Tel: +1 828 675 1792
Email: nirs@main.nc.us

WISE Argentina

c/o Taller Ecologista
CC 441
2000 Rosario
Argentina
Email: wiseros@ciudad.com.ar
Web: www.taller.org.ar

WISE Austria

c/o Plattform gegen Atomgefahr
Mathilde Halla
Landstrasse 31
4020 Linz
Austria

Tel: +43 732 774275; +43 664 2416806
Fax: +43 732 785602
Email: post@temelin.at and post@atomstopp.at
Web: www.temelin.at and www.atomstopp.at

WISE Czech Republic

c/o Jan Beranek
Chytalky 24
594 55 Dolni Loucky
Czech Republic
Tel: +420 604 207305
Email: wisebrno@ecn.cz

WISE Japan

P.O. Box 1
Konan Post Office
Hiroshima City 739-1491
Japan
Tel/Fax: +81 82 828 2603
Email: dogwood@muc.biglobe.ne.jp

WISE Russia

P.O. Box 1477
236000 Kaliningrad
Russia
Tel/fax: +7 0112 448443
Email: ecodefense@online.ru
Web: www.ecodefense.ru

WISE Slovakia

c/o SZOPK Sirius
Godrova 3/b
811 06 Bratislava
Slovak Republic
Tel: +421 905 935353
Fax: 421 2 5542 4255
Email: wise@wise.sk
Web: www.wise.sk

WISE South Korea

c/o Eco-center
110-470 3F Yeonji Building
219 Yeonji-dong Jongno-gu
Seoul
South Korea
Tel: +82 2 741 4978
Fax: +82 2 741 4979
Email: wisekorea@orgio.net
Web: www.eco-center.org

WISE Sweden

c/o FMKK
Barnängsgatan 23
116 41 Stockholm
Sweden
Tel: +46 8 84 1490
Fax: +46 8 84 5181
Email: info@folkkampanjen.se
Web: www.folkkampanjen.se

WISE Ukraine

c/o Ecoclub
P.B. #73
Rivne-33023
Ukraine
Tel/fax: +380 362 284 166
Email: nat@rv.uar.net
Web: www.atominfo.org.ua

WISE Uranium

Peter Diehl
Am Schwedenteich 4
01477 Arnsdorf
Germany
Tel: +49 35200 20737
Email: uranium@t-online.de
Web: www.antenna.nl/wise/uranium

THE NUCLEAR MONITOR

The Nuclear Information & Resource Service was founded in 1978 and is based in Washington, DC. The World Information Service on Energy was set up the same year and is housed in Amsterdam, Netherlands. NIRS and WISE Amsterdam joined forces in 2000, creating a worldwide network of information and resource centers for citizens and environmental organizations concerned about nuclear power, radioactive waste, radiation, and sustainable energy.

The *Nuclear Monitor* publishes international information in English 20 times a year. A Spanish translation of this newsletter is available on the WISE Amsterdam website (www.antenna.nl/wise/esp). A Russian version is published by WISE Russia and a Ukrainian version is published by WISE Ukraine (available at www.nirs.org). The *Nuclear Monitor* can be obtained both on paper and in an email version (pdf format). Back issues are available through the WISE Amsterdam homepage: www.antenna.nl/wise and at www.nirs.org.

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New Board Member

NIRS is pleased to welcome **Chris Williams** as the latest addition to NIRS' Board of Directors. Chris currently is executive director of Citizens Action Coalition in Indiana, and was a leader at the three Nuclear-Free Great Lakes Action Camps. NIRS is continuing to expand its Board, and the related Core Group of NIRS' supporters who are willing to help us with contacts and outreach. If you'd like to nominate someone for either position, e-mail to nirsnet@nirs.org or call Michael Mariotte at 202-328-0002.

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Nuclear Information and Resource Service
1424 16th Street NW, #404
Washington, DC 20036

First Class Mail