

NUCLEAR MONITOR

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SWEDEN: BARSEBÄCK 2 TO SHUT DOWN 2005?

The political manoeuvres surrounding the fate of the second unit at the Barsebäck nuclear power plant appear to have entered a new phase. The Social Democrat government, who along with the Centre Party and the Left form a majority in the Swedish Riksdag (parliament), have agreed to order the closure of Barsebäck 2 next year. But nothing can be taken for granted - this is not the first time the Swedish government has promised to close down Barsebäck 2.

(617.5643) WISE Sweden & Green-peace Sweden- Minister for Industry and Commerce, Leif Pagrotsky's announcement of the decision (on 4 October) raised an outcry from the nuclear industry, the bourgeois parties and many Social Democrats.

The Liberals termed the shutdown "disastrous" for Swedish energy supply, and the Conservatives lamented a "sorry waste" of resources. The dissident Social Democrats fear that the closure of Barsebäck 2 may threaten jobs in heavy industry at a juncture when major Swedish industrial employers are under pressure and the economic outlook is uncertain.

As a result of recent, and current investments, on the part of nuclear operators, production at the remaining ten Swedish reactors has increased substantially (by about +1400 MW) and will continue to increase over the next few years. Consequently, the loss of Barsebäck 2 (615 MW) will have

negligible impact on energy supply — a fact that Minister Pagrotsky underlined in an interview with Swedish radio on 13 October. In fact, fears of electricity shortages, stoked by the nuclear industry to garner support amongst the public, have proven to be unfounded.

What the Minister did not say, however, is that two additional Swedish reactors — for example, Sweden's two oldest reactors at Oskarshamn, both over 30 years old and producing only 600 MW each — could also be shut down without any major consequences to electricity supply.

Swedish nuclear operators have announced investment plans for existing nuclear plants amounting to US\$ 3.6 billion over the coming twelve years. These plans include the replacement of three turbines — in Ringhals 1 and 3, and Oskarshamn 3 — which is expected to increase the total capacity of generated electricity by

approximately 7.4 TWh.

Sweden's phase-out story

The road toward nuclear phase-out in Sweden has twisted and turned continuously. In 1981, influenced by the unequivocal results of a national referendum in which 80% voted to end the dependency on nuclear energy, Sweden's parliament voted to phase out nuclear by 2010. In true compromising style, it was agreed to phase out nuclear power AFTER doubling existing nuclear capacity with few steps actually ever being taken to implement the phase-out decision.

At the time of the referendum, six reactors with a capacity of 4150 MW were online and six reactors, with a capacity of over 6000 MW, were in different stages of construction. The Riksdag decided to complete those under construction put the six online and phase all 12 reactors out together by 2010 — 25 years after connecting the last reactor to the grid. The reactors would be replaced with renewable energy sources and energy efficiency.

One important development on the energy supply side was the deregulation of the Swedish electricity market in 1996. By 1997, the 'alternatives' to nuclear power were still not being developed and time was running out on the originally set phase-out date. The aforementioned triad of parties agreed to abandon the 2010 "deadline", and to phase out nuclear only if and when renewable

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electricity production could fill the supply gap. In 2002, a new strategy was introduced with the Government appointing a negotiator to bring about a voluntary phase-out agreement with Swedish nuclear operators, more or less according to the German model. It was only when the negotiator admitted defeat this past spring that the government decided to take matters into its own hands and announced the closure of Barsebäck 2.

Political obstacles

Since the 2002 elections, the Social Democrats have formed a minority government supported by the Left Party and the Green Party. The energy pact between the Centre Party and the Left Party is a parallel agreement to that and now, in preparation for the 2006 elections, is a potential stumbling block to forming an alliance of the conservative parties.

The closure of the second reactor at Barsebäck will solve a few political headaches. Opposition to Barsebäck 2 remains strong, not to say vehement, in Denmark — the reactor is within clear view of the Danish capital. And what is more, the area surrounding the reactor is the best agricultural land in the whole of Scandinavia!

Closing Barsebäck 2 will get the Danes off the government's back, opens the possibility for Centre Party negotiations on a coalition with the other conservative parties, and also calms the anti-nuclear sentiments of the Left and Social Democratic parties.

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The next issue (618) will be mailed out on 12 November 2004.

Thus, the move to close the remaining Barsebäck reactor cannot be taken as a progressive step toward phase-out. In the interval since the 1980 referendum, several parties have changed their stance on nuclear energy. The Liberals, for example, stood together with the Social Democrats on a platform of "phase-out in due course" (as opposed to a more radical platform calling for immediate shutdown). Today, the Liberals are perhaps the most outspoken proponents of nuclear energy.

Similarly, the Christian Democrats, who stood on the radical no nukes platform in 1980, are no longer in favour of a phase-out. In short, the Conservatives, once alone in advocating continued reliance on nuclear power, have been joined by two of the three other bourgeois parties.

Anti-nuclear sentiment has also eroded among the general public. In Sweden today, the majority favour continued reliance on nuclear energy. The change is hardly surprising when one considers that a whole generation of Swedes have been told — by the power lobby and major trade unions, in stereo — that they might not be able to take hot showers if Sweden were to phase out!

The decade from 1985-1995 was marked by enormous over-capacity in electricity, leading to price dumping and huge losses for the operators of nuclear reactors, which in turn was compensated by low production costs from the existing, and written-off, large hydro.

It was also marked by the intense lobbying of the energy companies and energy-intensive industries against a phase-out after 25 years of lifetime, combined with an attempt by reactor owners to redefine the lifetime of a reactor from 25 to 40 years.

Lobbying initiatives have also included the (ab)use of the public's growing concern about climate change to argue for the halt of a phase-out of nuclear power in Sweden. The public has been bombarded with claims that phasing out would automatically lead

to increases in greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuel-based electricity supply, both domestic and imported. The same companies were also able to block the development of energy-efficiency measures and renewable energy with the price dumping of electricity, leading to much higher levels of electricity consumption in both the industrial and domestic sectors than compared to average EU levels.

Giant-steps in the wrong direction

The Swedish environmental movement sees the billion-dollar investments in nuclear as far removed from the government's stated goal of sustainability in the country's energy supply. Asked just how sincere the government is about sustainability, Pagrotsky responded that he sees no credibility problem whatsoever in the government's plan to replace nuclear with nuclear.

On the contrary, "The move strengthens our credibility in that we are showing that we can shut down a poorly situated reactor while, at the same time, taking measures to ensure that Swedish households and industry have enough electricity. No jobs will be endangered and no prices will spike even if we take this little reactor, right between Malmö and Copenhagen, off line," Pagrotsky said.

Shortly after the disaster at Chernobyl in 1986, the then Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson — also a Social Democrat — promised the Danes that Sweden would shut down the two reactors at Barsebäck. Not only that, he said that nuclear power had no place in our culture. If only his current successors had the same insight!

There are still a few possible banana skins for the government to negotiate. It must decide on whether or not to approve the requests for increased capacity at the remaining nuclear reactors — the nuclear safety agency has already received applications and published a list of upgrade plans at different reactors — and what level of investment it is willing to make in order to truly transform the energy

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 6 of *WISE Bulletin* we reported on a demonstration against plans for a reprocessing plant at Gorleben, Germany, which was broken up by the police: "On June 8, police in Gorleben, the proposed site for reprocessing and waste disposal, used chemical mace to break up an anti-nuclear bicycle demonstration. [...] The bicycle demo, made up of 200 anti-nuclear pedallers, followed a sit-down which successfully blocked drilling rigs on their way to the site [...] of the reprocessing plant". (*WISE Bulletin* 6, October 1979)

Now

In the 1960/1970s, German authorities opted for nuclear waste disposal in a salt mine and the realization of one national "nuclear back-end center", including reprocessing and deep geological waste disposal. Gorleben was designated as potential site in 1977, which resulted in strong opposition from local citizens and anti-nuclear groups nationwide culminating in a March 1977 rally attended by 100,000 participants. In 1979, the idea for a reprocessing plant was abandoned. (*Discussions on Nuclear Waste*, Laka Foundation, January 2000)

Two underground research laboratories in the salt dome were excavated in the 1990s. Facilities for the storage of low-/medium-level waste were built as well as a storage facility for spent fuel and high-level waste Castor storage containers.

In the initial plans it was expected that an underground repository would be ready to receive waste before 2000. But the Gorleben salt dome has a number of disadvantages that make it unsuitable for waste storage: gaps in covering clay formation and direct access of the salt to groundwater layers.

In 2000, a research moratorium of 3-10 years was established in an agreement with the nuclear industry and remains in place today. In the meantime, the German government will reconsider other possible storage sites in the country and final storage is now not foreseen before the year 2030. (*WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor*, 13 February 2004)

Seven transports of Castor containers to Gorleben have taken place to date. The first Castor, with spent fuel from the Phillipsburg reactor, arrived in April 1995 and was 'escorted' by more than 2,500 demonstrators. In May 1996, a second transport arrived, this time containing high-level waste from the La Hague reprocessing plant and between 3,000 and 5,000 demonstrators attempted halt its path by blocking the roads. A combined high-level waste and spent fuel transport took place in March 1997 but no transports took place between 1998 and 2001 due to a scandal involving transport containers which appeared to be contaminated on the outside surface.

After having dealt with this problem, in March 2001, a "six-pack" Castor arrived from La Hague, followed in November by a single transport of twelve Castors. Also in 2002 and 2003 transports were conducted in November, each time carrying 12 Castor containers. The next transport, number 8, will leave France on 6 November and will be 'escorted' by several demonstrations and direct actions. (*WISE News Communiqué*, 19 May 1995; 17 May 1996; 14 March 1997; 6 April 2001; *WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor*, 22 November 2002; www.castor.de)

system, rather than just replacing current nuclear capacity with imports of nuclear or fossil based electricity.

Whether the closure of Barsebäck 2 is merely a sedative or is in fact the start of real transformation in the Swedish energy system towards sustainability remains to be seen and will have to be judged on future energy decisions.

There is, however, some hope for progress because on 21 October, the government announced a reshuffle that will see the Energy portfolio moved into the Environment Ministry

from the Ministry for Industry. It is thought that an openly anti-nuclear heavyweight Minister will now be put in charge of the Energy portfolio.

Sources: Riksdag och Departement nr. 30, 2004; Sveriges Radio www.sr.se; Oskarshamns KraftGrupp website www.okg.se

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TEMELIN: BORDER BLOCKADE AGAINST MELK BREACH

On Monday, 11 October, the Czech authority for nuclear safety, SUJB, issued an operation permit to Temelin NPP for the next 10 years although the agreed safety regulations have still not been met. Last Saturday about 200 antinuclear activists from Austria, the Czech Republic and Germany blocked the Czech border at Wulowitz (near Freistadt) from 12 p.m. until 3 p.m. in order to protest against a breach of the Melk agreement between Austria and the Czech Republic.

(617.5644) **WISE Austria / WISE Amsterdam** - The Melk agreement was struck in December 2001 and was meant to demonstrate the Czech government's commitment to raise safety issues concerning the plant with Austria as well as sharing technical information in return for Austria not blocking Czech entry into EU (see also *WISE News Communiqué* 546.5265: "Temelin opponents: Melk is a farce").

The operational license issued by SUJB for a 10-year period is in fact the start of the commercial operation of Temelin and comes after four years of trial operation, marked by a vibrating turbine, leaking and breaking pipes and several other incidents which forced the reactor to be shut down several times (see for instance *WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor* 588.5519: "Temelin in 2003: on – off – on – off").

To date, 71 incidents have been reported at both reactors and in many cases have led to an emergency shutdown.

Immediately after the issuing of the license on 11 October, SUJB announced it as the start of the commercial operation of Temelin. But, following accusations that it was a breach of the Melk agreement, SUJB toned down and stated that not all licenses had been issued for the commercial phase as yet. In fact, Temelin still needs the construction permit (with retroactive effect). The issuing of the 10-year license is a violation of the Melk agreement and SUJB's statements that the commercial operation requires more permits is an attempt to deny the blunder made by issuing the present permit.

All participating in the blockade criticised the decision of SUJB and the Austrian Environmental ministry and expressed understanding for, and support, of the action. The protestors also agreed that Austrian Environmental Minister, Josef Proell should have protested against the breach of the Melk agreement. Instead, Proell defended SUJB's decision stating that it was merely as one of many "permissions" for the NPP on its way to full commercial operation. Fortunately, Minister Proell is quite isolated with this view.

The activists demanded that the Czech government make a technical statement in response to the open questions remaining (on High Energy Pipelines at the 28.8 m Level and the Qualification of Valves), which had also been raised by the international expert commission. The expert commission is not only discussing these

INTERMEDIATE STORAGE

Within just three weeks, 25,000 signatures were collected in Upper Austria against the plans for an intermediate storage facility for spent fuel at Temelin NPP. Over 300 municipalities with more than 1.25 million inhabitants also objected to the nuclear waste depot, which is supposed to be sited at the South Bohemian plant.

The signatures will be submitted to the Czech Environmental Ministry to illustrate the resistance among the public in Upper Austria to the plans for intermediate storage at Temelin.

The result of the signature collection campaign was declared at a press conference on 18 October, at which members of all Austrian political parties were present. Governor of Upper Austria, Josef Pühringer stated that a critical submission on the environmental assessment had been initiated. Rudolf Anschober of the Green Party said that the campaign's huge success showed that resistance to Temelin has not decreased over the years, but is still increasing - in part due to the recent decision, by SUJB, to give a 10 year operational license for Temelin.

The operating company CEZ is finding itself under increased

pressure as Austrian opposition is stepped up. NGOs have continued to stress the fact that any electricity produced at Temelin would be surplus to requirement in the Czech Republic and would be exported. Energy exported would also be sold at a loss, which would in all likelihood mean that domestic prices would rise to cover the shortfall.

Hundreds of people in the Czech Republic have already signed the petition against the intermediate waste depot and the inhabitants of the municipality in which Temelin is located have called for a referendum, which will now be forced by law.

In the municipality of Temelin, over 30% of inhabitants signed a petition to get a local referendum against the intermediate storage. The local municipality authorities refused to accept the petition, which led to the local Temelin board being sued by NGOs. The county court of Ceske Budejovice, capital of the country in which the plant is located, will make its judgement within 30 days and could overrule the local board's decision and the allow the referendum to take place.

Source and contact: WISE Austria

two open questions but also five other outstanding safety issues and its final report is not expected before mid 2005.

For four years, attention has been drawn to a non-permissible repair in the primary circuit of the first unit. One of the main coolant pipes was incorrectly welded 180 degrees onto the reactor vessel, cut on the welding seam, turned around and re-welded. This may have caused a weak spot in an essential part of the safety system. Investigations were started after this incident but SUJB withheld relevant reports from the public (see also *WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor* 573.5438: "Czech

Republic: Temelin-1 off and on - Temelin-2 on and off")

Although not officially sanctioned, local Austrian authorities in attendance disregarded the peaceful demonstration. Like four years ago, during the permanent blockades, politicians from all parties attended and gave speeches during the protest. Also, for the first time, there was participation by a Czech politician, Vladimir Halama from the South Bohemian parliament. Austrian farmers, who used tractors to block the border crossing, also supported the demonstration.

Austria's Environment Minister Proell is expected to demand a guarantee of safety issues to be fulfilled. If this is not done, NGOs have stated that protests will continue with a "March to Vienna".

Sources: ATOMSTOPP International; www.antiatom.info/temelin; Greenpeace press release, 12 October 2004; *Prague Post*, 21 October 2004; *Nucleonics Week*, 21 October 2004; WISE Czech Republic, 22 October 2004

Contact: WISE Czech Republic or Roland Egger or Elvira Poeschko at WISE Austria

NUCLEAR WEAPONS = NUCLEAR POWER AND VICE VERSA

One of the outcomes of the symposium "The Lie of the peaceful use of atomic energy; nuclear weapons and nuclear power plants – two sides of the same coin" organized by Atomstopp International (WISE Austria) and held in Linz, Austria on October 1-2, was a draft sign-on letter on the IAEA's untenable dual-role of promoting nuclear technology AND regulating the global nuclear industry.

(617.5645) **WISE Amsterdam** – The fact that many within the anti-nuclear community still divide themselves into anti-weapons and anti-power camps illustrates just how controversial and divisive a topic this is. In fact, organizers Atomstopp International experienced much resistance to the idea and fought hard to be able to hold the meeting. Several organizations that had attended the Linz symposium in 2003 withdrew participation based on the subject matter alone.

In a workshop entitled "Nuclear programmes as a pretext for world-wide armament", Professor Alexey V. Yablokov, recipient of the 2002 Nuclear-Free Future Award and former advisor to former Russian President Gorbachev, gave a presentation on the inevitable connections between nuclear power and the nuclear bomb.

Despite apparent ongoing efforts to halt international nuclear proliferation and the various nonproliferation regimes in place, the discovery of A. Q. Khan's nuclear black market has proven just how ineffective these measure have been to date (see

also *WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor* 602.5573 "Proliferation: focus on enrichment issues").

In his presentation, Professor Yablokov raised, and answered, the question of why nuclear proliferation is able to continue and increase. Politically, proliferation is able to occur because the Nuclear Weapons States refuse to demolish their nuclear arsenals – in fact, many are seeking to strengthen these – and technically, it is able to flourish because of the existence of the supposedly "peaceful" nuclear power industry.

The Professor also confirmed the legal, historical, physical and technological connections between nuclear weaponry and energy. On the legal side, there are various international treaties that expose the connection. Two examples given were the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). Stripped down to bare essentials, the FMCT basically bans the production of new weapons-usable fissile materials, civil and military. The CTBT, which does exactly as its name suggests, cannot enter into force

until 180 days after ratification by all signatory States – over one hundred countries have ratified this treaty to date, however, France, the UK, the US, China and Germany are NOT among that list.

IAEA reform essential

The IAEA's role in proliferation is quite clear given its official mandate. The agency has been directly responsible for assisting countries, like Iraq, in building up nuclear infrastructure and has helped "provide training in the operation and maintenance of nuclear facilities" under the guise of 'development'.

During an interview with Friends of the Earth Europe in May (see *WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor* 609.5606 "IAEA chief sees no case for reform"), the agency's director general, Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei said that he "did not accept" that promotion of nuclear energy and safety regulation conflicted.

In an article published in *The Washington Times* on 1 October, John Bolton, US undersecretary of state, expressed frustrations at what he

called the "ineffectiveness and inefficiency of UN agencies". Bolton also complained that the agency spent the vast majority of its resources (human and financial) on peaceful nations although 'rogue' nations were the real threats.

This view is, of course, one that receives little or no support from the anti-nuclear community because it yet again implies that nuclear technology is safer in some hands than in others. The point that John Bolton and his masters in the Bush administration fail to acknowledge, or understand, is that nuclear is unsafe, period.

The IAEA should not spend more time investigating the so-called 'rogue' nations than it does the supposed

'peaceful' nations since none can be trusted to behave responsibly where nukes are concerned. As the world has discovered of late, much of the materials available on the nuclear black market have actually originated from these so-called 'peaceful' nations.

Professor Yablokov's workshop concluded with the drafting of a letter, addressed to the UN Secretary General with copies to the IAEA and national representatives to the UN and will be sent before 1 March 2005 – the anniversary of the H-bomb test at Bikini Atoll.

The letter draws attention to some of the obvious deficiencies in international nonproliferation regimes, states the connection between nuclear power

and nuclear weapons and suggests substituting the IAEA with a new agency for the promotion of renewable energy amongst other things.

Those wishing to obtain a copy of the draft and organizations willing to add their signatures to the letter are asked to contact Elvira Poeschko at Atomstopp International (elvira.poeschko@aon.at) by 31 January 2005 at the latest.

Sources: Inevitable Connections between N-power and N-bomb, Alexey V. Yablokov, October 2004; IAEA, www.iaea.org; *The Washington Post*, 1 October 2004; Kollert, 1996, p. 63

Contact: WISE Amsterdam

BELENE TENDER PROCESS FAILS

On 7 October, the Board of the Bulgarian National Electricity Company (NEK) closed the tender process for consultants to find an architect-engineering contractor for the Belene nuclear power plant. Just two offers were received by the deadline where the law prescribes a minimum of three. The consultants that did bid were Impresarios Agrupados (Spain) and Parsons Europe Ltd. (UK), a daughter company of Houston, Texas based Parsons, which was also responsible for the coordination of the Environmental Impact Assessment and the feasibility study for Belene.

(617.5646) WISE Czech Republic & CEIE/CEE Bankwatch – A new tender process is expected to be announced in the coming week with the period allowed to complete the bid being extended from 30 to 52 days. Repeating the entire tender process could result in a delay of at least 2 months so the Bulgarian Ministry of Energy is now looking at options to overcome a setback including shifting the project from Belene to Kozloduj. Unfortunately for the ministry, a Kozloduj 7 project would, however, constitute a new project and thus be required to go through the entire range of EIA and permit application procedures and is therefore not thought likely.

In the meantime NEK has removed the summary of the EIA report from its website but the report can still be found in English on the website of the anti-nuclear BeleNE coalition at: http://bluelink.net/belene/e_index.shtml

The EIA hearing that took place in Turnu Magurele, Romania, on 8 September resulted in the Romanian government issuing a very critical statement on the Belene EIA, and drew protests from local citizens during the actual event.

In an attempt to avoid such censure and objection, NEK had sought to manipulate attendance to the hearing by planning it to coincide with a local religious holiday (the day of the Virgin Mary) and by only informing a limited number of local press. Despite this, the Romanian NGO Terra Mileniul III received notification of the EIA and circulated the information in the national media in the week before the hearing.

On the Bulgarian side, critical farmers and local NGOs and representatives of the Nikopol municipality seeking to attend the event were banned from the ferry boat that took the Bulgarian delegation to Romania. This incident

prompted an investigation, by WISE, Greenpeace and Bankwatch, into possible abuses during all previous Belene hearings.

The ensuing report was published earlier this month and concluded that the meetings were so strongly influenced that they should either be repeated or rejected by relevant authorities. Austria and Greece are now also considering the possibility of participating in the Belene Environmental Impact Assessment on the basis of the Espoo convention, which states that neighboring countries must be notified and consulted on all major projects likely to have a significant adverse environmental impact across boundaries.

Meanwhile, during the IMF/World Bank annual meeting in Washington D.C. on 2-3 October, Mr. Hans Flikenschild, the chief of the IMF mission to Bulgaria, recommended

that the Belene NPP be done without state guarantees. "If the project starts we would like to see a minimal influence over the country's finances", he said.

This statement follows an IMF study earlier this year in which the Fund staff "questioned the wisdom of devoting public resources to build new

power generation capacity at a time when the government is proceeding with the privatization of existing plants".

Sources: www.unece.org; BG media, 9 October 2004; *Nucleonics Week*, 21 October 2004

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BNFL TALKS END

After a mammoth six years of seemingly endless rounds of meetings, the structured dialogue between British Nuclear Fuels plc and its so-called stakeholders has finally come to an end, with the final plenary session taking place in Manchester, UK, last week. The talks, which began in September 1998, aimed to "inform the company's decision-making process about the improvement of its environmental performance in the context of its overall development."

(617.5647) **Mark Johnston** - Whilst it is easy to claim this has happened ('the company process was informed'), it is far less clear what, if anything, has changed on the ground as a result. Both the main reprocessing plants continue to operate, as do most of the remaining Magnox generating stations.

And in 2001, in the middle of the talks, BNFL began commissioning its new MOX fuel plant, angering many of the participants (see also *WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor* 555.5319 "UK: Sellafield MOX plant gets go-ahead").

The real story, however, is somewhat more complex and is best understood by considering the context in which the talks were taking place.

Around 1998, BNFL executives began to privately admit the extent of the problems facing the company: the order book for reprocessing, its main income earner, was shrinking; the UK's waste disposals plans had collapsed; and there was no adequate provisioning, or even full accounting, for the nuclear liabilities the company was carrying at its dozen or so sites. In short, the company was running out of work and money, whilst its liabilities continued to pile up.

A strategic change of direction needed to be executed, and the best way to do this, so they thought, was in effect to set up 'a big tent' in which everyone

could talk through the big changes to come and the circumstances that were driving them. 'Improving environmental performance', the stated aim of the dialogue, became the proxy for strategic and structural change.

With the government also in on the process, what then followed in parallel was a new 'Nuclear Decommission Authority' (NDA), a state body funded by the taxpayer, that will take over BNFL's sites and, in most but not all cases, eventually begin decommissioning them (See also *WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor* 601.5568 "UK parliament considers industry restructuring").

The NDA is expected to begin operations in April next year (subject to EU state aid clearance) and will employ BNFL, and later perhaps other contractors, to begin dealing with the nuclear legacy in a way previously ignored by BNFL.

Was it worth anti-nuclear groups being involved in the talks? It's hard to say. For some groups, involvement confirmed that BNFL, despite the reality it faces, was and still is resistant to change. The result being that those groups soon left the talks to continue with the traditional campaigning they saw as more effective. While for other groups, it at least allowed a specific issue – for example, controls on

plutonium and its long-term management – to be addressed in a substantial way, or for some extra information to be squeezed out of the company.

Overall, the final results of the restructuring of the UK nuclear sector, which also includes UKAEA and British Energy, remain to be seen. One real risk still to be faced is that an apparently cleaned-up and recast industry is better placed to make a comeback at some point the future. This is particularly so if, as expected Tony Blair is re-elected as Prime Minister next year.

For more information on the BNFL Dialogue visit <http://www.the-environment-council.org.uk/>

(Please note that the above article represents the author's personal view and not that of the organisation he works for.)

Source and contact: Mark Johnston at mark.johnston@foeeurope.org

IN BRIEF

EU takes action against Britain over nuclear waste. Britain faces legal action from the European Commission over its failure to notify Brussels over how it disposes of radioactive waste at the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE), home to its nuclear weapons industry. The UK Environment Agency failed to notify the EC of an authorisation granted in 2000 for the disposal of nuclear waste from AWE. Under EU rules, governments must inform the Commission in advance if it wants to grant authorisation for radioactive waste disposal so that it can assess the risks to health in neighbouring countries.
Reuters, 13 October 2004

Russia completes Iran's Bushehr plant. Russia's top nuclear authority announced, on 14 October, that it had finished construction of the Bushehr nuclear plant. But a spokesman for Russia's Atomic Energy Agency (RosAtom) said that Russia still needs to work out the agreement for returning spent fuel to Russia with the Iranians. To allay US concerns, Russia has promised not to start up the plant until Tehran guarantees to return all spent nuclear fuel. The 1,000-megawatt, US\$ 800 million Bushehr plant is due to be launched in 2005 and reach full capacity in 2006. Work still remains to be done on assembling some security and control equipment.
Reuters, 14 October 2004

Slovakia seeks to keep Bohunice operational longer. In a new offensive in support of the nuclear industry, Slovak Minister of Economy Pavol Rusko has proposed to keep the first block in Bohunice V1 open until 2008. Slovakia had agreed to close down the first V1 block in 2006 and the second in 2008 as part of its EU accession. Rusko argues that analysis of the shutdown procedures shows that it is safer to close both blocks simultaneously, reasoning that refuelling of the second block during shut down operations for the first block would increase risks.

Mikulas Huba of the Society for Sustainable Development said that "If Rusko is convinced that the blocks need to be shut down simultaneously, and if he cares so much about the safety of the process, why not propose switching both blocks off in 2006?" Huba and Juraj Rizman of Greenpeace have suggested that the move is more a political attempt to keep open Bohunice V1. Changes in the shut down plans of Bohunice V1 are very unlikely because they would require a unanimous support from all EU member countries. Neighbouring Austria is not likely to accept any delays.
www.slovakspectator.sk/clanok-17571.html, 18 October 2004

Kyrgyzstan blocks nuclear shipments. The Kyrgyz government has blocked efforts by British Nuclear Fuels (BNFL), to send uranium-contaminated graphite for processing in Kyrgyzstan. BNFL and other western firms are struggling to dispose of these materials because of strict controls at home and growing environmental opposition in developing nations.
Institute for War & Peace Reporting, 13 October 2004

Greenpeace warns of Iraq nuclear contamination. Greenpeace has echoed a call by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to permit the UN watchdog's return to Iraq to track nuclear-related materials looted after the 2003 U.S.-led invasion. The appeal followed the release of an IAEA report on 12 October, which found that significant quantities of specialized equipment and material that could be used to build a nuclear or radioactive bomb had disappeared from sites monitored by the agency before the invasion. Greenpeace, whose mission to Tuwaitha in June 2003 alerted the world to the extent of post-war looting of nuclear-related material and the possible health threats, charged that the response of both the U.S. occupation authorities and the new interim Iraqi government to the problem of looting and possible radiation exposure has been

inadequate to date. It also stressed that that the new regime in Baghdad has apparently failed to follow up repeated offers by the IAEA to advise on the safety and security of nuclear and other radioactive materials, although it has reportedly asked the agency to facilitate the sale of equipment recovered.

In another development, diplomats have said that missing nuclear-related equipment in Iraq was removed by experts working systematically over an extended period, contradicting Iraqi officials who suggested that little was taken and only randomly by looters. The comments were in response to assertions from Baghdad that high-precision equipment removed from Iraq's nuclear facilities was stolen haphazardly and immediately after last year's US invasion. The diplomats, who are familiar with the work of the IAEA, suggested the UN agency was concerned that, because of the planning and operational skills of those involved, the equipment could be sold to rogue governments or terrorist groups interested in making nuclear weapons.
AntiWar.com, 14 October 2004; The Associated Press, 15 October 2004

Ex ministers demand inquiry into UK Sellafield plant. Two former UK environment ministers, Michael Meacher and John Gummer, are demanding a parliamentary inquiry into the wasting of hundreds of millions of pounds by British Nuclear Fuels (BNFL) on a new plant that it cannot get to work. Their initiative follows the news that BNFL has had to call in its chief competitor, the French company Cogema, to try and get its controversial GBP 473m (around US\$ 864 million) Mox plant to operate properly. The plant, for producing nuclear fuel of mixed uranium and plutonium, is central to the Cumbrian complex's viability. Environmentalists always opposed it as a waste of money. BNFL, however, insisted on building the plant.
The Independent, 17 October 2004

Greenpeace activists block Spanish nuclear plant. Activists from Greenpeace blocked the entrance to the main Spanish nuclear power plant on 19 October, urging the government to honour its promise to abandon nuclear energy. Six of the about twenty activists chained themselves to the upper part of the main entrance gate to the plant in northern Garona. When he took office in April, Socialist Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero promised to gradually phase out nuclear power and reform Spain's energy policy. According to Greenpeace campaigner Carlos Bravo, the Garona plant is one of the most dangerous in Spain and should be closed immediately.
AFP, 19 October 2004

IAEA inspectors visit Brazil uranium plant. United Nations inspectors visited a uranium enrichment plant in Brazil on 19 October, seeking to resolve an impasse over the country's refusal to permit visual inspection of its uranium centrifuges. Three International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors from France, the United States and South Africa visited the plant in Resende, about 60 miles northwest of Rio de Janeiro. Brazilian officials do not want to allow full visual inspection of the centrifuges, citing fears the plant's advanced technology could be stolen by other countries if outsiders were allowed to view it. Brazil claims it has developed new electromagnetic technology that reduces friction in the centrifuges and makes them 30% more efficient than those used in other countries. Some analysts however suggest that Brazil could have purchased the technology on the nuclear black market.
The Associated Press, 20 October 2004

EU trio promise Iran nuclear technology. Britain, France and Germany are ready to provide Iran with nuclear technology, including a light-water nuclear reactor, if Tehran takes steps to show it is not secretly trying to make atomic weapons, according to a confidential document obtained by Agence France-Presse on

19 October. The paper, presented at a meeting of the Group of Eight (G8) industrialized nations in Washington, outlines the EU trio's position in the run up to an International Atomic Energy Agency meeting on 25 November. If Iran fails to suspend uranium enrichment, the European nations will join the US in calling for Iran to be reported to the UN Security Council, which could impose punishing sanctions. Gholamreza Aghazadeh, head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, said Iran is determined to press ahead with its atomic plans and will not give up its right to enrich uranium.
The Washington Times, 20 October 2004; Iran News Daily, 20 October 2004

Euratom's birthplace revisited. On 29 October, European Union political leaders will gather in Rome to sign a new treaty 'creating a constitution for Europe'. The agreement combines all but one of the treaties on which the EU has so far been built. The venue is the Campidoglio Palace, which is historically significant as it is the same location in which the original treaties of Rome were signed in 1957.

According to the new constitution, just one of those original treaties, the agreement to set up Euratom Community, will stay in force, operating alongside the constitution and having the same legal status. As reported previously in the Nuclear Monitor, this situation leaves the EU still with a pro-nuclear primary law that has gone unchanged since first written half a century ago.

However, momentum on fixing Euratom appears to be growing. Since the political summit fix the constitution in June, Sweden and Hungary are reported to have joined Germany, Ireland and Austria in demanding a review of Euratom. More states may well join in, especially as national referenda in roughly half the EU states puts the content on the constitution under heavy scrutiny.
Friends of the Earth Europe, by email 20 October 2004

New EU energy commissioner supports nuclear. In the first week of October, the European Union's (EU) next commissioner responsible for energy, Laszlo Kovacs, admitted that he shares the same position on nuclear power as that of outgoing EU commissioner for transport and energy Loyola de Palacio. According to Kovacs, EU states should be allowed to pursue the nuclear option, which he said ensured a third of the EU's electricity. Kovacs also showed himself to be somewhat ill-informed by repeating the false claim that all nuclear proponents cling to, that it produces no greenhouse gases...
Nucleonics Week, 7 October 2004

Licensing process for USEC centrifuge plant begins. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) commissioners are expected to begin the licensing process for USEC Inc.'s (United States Enrichment Corporation) commercial centrifuge plant by issuing an order accepting USEC's application to build the plant in a former gas centrifuge enrichment plant at Portsmouth, Ohio. After the order is issued, NRC will make USEC's application, filed in August, available to the public at www.nrc.gov. ADAMS.
Platts Nuclear News Flashes, 5 October 2004

Senior US reactor operator who fell asleep on duty leaves utility. Entergy no longer employs the reactor operator who fell asleep on duty at the Pilgrim nuclear power plant. Another reactor operator, who observed that his colleague was sleeping but did not report, has also left the company. A Pilgrim spokesman declined to comment on whether the two employees were fired or resigned voluntarily. The almost six-week investigation into the incident, which occurred in late June, was completed on 6 October. Entergy management held mandatory meetings with all plant employees on 12 October to discuss the incident, disciplinary action taken, and workers' responsibilities to intervene in and report on potential safety hazards. A

Nuclear Regulatory Commission spokesman said the agency has not finished its probe into the incident.
Platts Nuclear News Flashes, 13 October 2004

Nuclear industry contributions influenced Bush administration. The advocacy group Public Citizen have claimed that large contributions from the nuclear industry in the US appear to have influenced the Bush administration on security matters for commercial nuclear plants and other major infrastructure in the US. In a report, "Homeland Unsecured: The Bush Administration's Hostility to Regulation and Ties to Industry Leave America Vulnerable", the group claims that "the result of the contributions is that the administration is heavily indebted to the nuclear industry and electricity utilities for generous campaign contributions". According to the report, the Nuclear Energy Institute, nuclear plant owners, and other industry companies have contributed a total of nearly US\$8 million to the Bush campaign since the 2000 election cycle.
Platts Nuclear News Flashes, 18 October 2004

Ukraine's Energoatom to supply electricity to Russia. According to the Ukraine's Ministry of Fuel & Energy, nuclear utility Energoatom will export 500-million kilowatt-hours of electricity to Russian per month. The contract only covers November and December but is likely to be extended into 2005. During the official start-up ceremony of Rovno-4 on 16 October, Ukrainian Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich declared that the start-up of the Rovno-4 VVER-1000 and another unit at Khmel'nitski-2 would enable Ukraine to increase electricity exports.
Platts Nuclear News Flashes, 18 October 2004

Nuclear waste dumped in Tibet? The Dalai Lama's representative in Tibet has accused the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) of dumping nuclear waste in Tibet. Although the Dalai Lama did

not respond directly to this accusation, he said more and more animals and birds have been born with deformities in remote areas of Tibet. The CCP has five nuclear bases in Tibet, and the largest intercontinental ballistic missile base in Asia. The CCP detonated a nuclear device on Tibet's northern plateau in 1964 and had discussed using the area as a nuclear waste dump. Many residents and children living nearby have died from rare diseases, prompting fears of radiation leaking from a nearby nuclear weapons base at Lake Qingdao.
The Epoch Times, 20 October 2004

France: EPR preferred site chosen. On 21 October, the board of Electricity de France (EDF) chose Flamanville in Lower Normandy as the site for the first EPR reactor in France. Two coastal sites were preferred (Flamanville and Penly) to Tricastin on the Rhone river. Flamanville already hosts two 1300 MW reactors. EDF will formally refer the proposal to the National Commission for Public Debate and after one year of national discussion, formal licensing can begin. EDF expects that start up of the reactor can take place in 2012.
WNA Weekly Digest, 22 October 2004

ENEL to buy Slovak SE. The Slovakian government has decided to sell 66% of the shares of electricity company Slovenske Elektrarne (SE) to the Italian company ENEL. ENEL had already been recommended as best bidder by a government committee in September (see WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor 615,5639: "Slovakia: privatization of Slovenske Elektrarne"). Details about the deal have not been published as yet but from leaked information it is clear that ENEL rejected the Bohunice NPP and its (decommissioning) liabilities from the package and also did not want to be forced to buy electricity from it. However, it did agree with plans for the completion of the Mochovce 3 and 4 reactors.
Lidove noviny, 7 October 2004; WISE Czech Republic, 12 October 2004

Online petition against depleted uranium weapons. The International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons (ICBUW) has initiated an online petition. ICBUW campaigns for the realization of an international Ban Treaty on DU weapons. Their first appeal with signatures will be made in early 2005 to the European parliament and the UN Disarmament Committee. To sign the petition, go to www.bandedpleteduranium.org and click on 'petition'.
Friendly Fire Newsletter (ICBUW), 7 October 2004

Russia seeks to extend life of ancient NPP. State atomic officials revealed, on 20 October, that Russia does plan to extend the operating life of several of its old Chernobyl-style reactors by at least 15 years. Despite pleas from the EU to close down the eleven Soviet-era reactors, Moscow insists that it has modernized the reactors to avoid a repeat of the 1986 disaster. Vladimir Sliviyak of Ecodefence/WISE Russia refuted this claim, saying that it was technically impossible to modernize the reactors accordingly. The official, who spoke anonymously, said that lifetime extensions would be considered on a case by case basis once approval had been granted by Russia's nuclear security watchdog. Russia's oldest reactor, the Leningrad Power Plant was re-launched this month for another five years of operation pending modernization despite being shutdown last year.
Reuters, 20 October 2004

Report on floating NPPs in Russia. Bellona Foundation has published a third edition of a report on floating nuclear power plants in Russia. Floating NPP are currently being developed in Russia and the report gives an analysis of the environmental, economic and political consequences of implementation. It concludes that floating reactors pose a potential danger to the environment, their economic viability is questionable and nuclear weapons material is much more easily available. The report gives a good introduction into the history of

the floating NPP scheme. The report can be found at the main page of Bellona's website at www.bellona.org (section 'Reports').

Floating Nuclear Power Plants in Russia, Bellona Foundation, September 2004

Shellfish to exceed new safety limits.

Thousands of tonnes of shellfish from NW England and SW Scotland may likely to exceed newly proposed international safety standards for radioactivity in food, reports *New Scientist*. The UK Food Standards Agency has warned such foods could be banned. Lobsters, cockles and scallops are so much contaminated by Sellafield's discharges that they will breach limits due to be introduced by the UN in 2005. UN's FAO and WHO are proposing a safety limit for plutonium in food of 1 Becquerel per kilogram. A

recent report by the UK government shows that plutonium levels in Cumbria's coastal whelks and cockles are far in excess of the proposed limit, up to 100 to more than 200 times. **CORE Briefing, 13 October 2004**

Global stocks of bomb material

growing. The global stockpiles of plutonium and highly enriched uranium are growing, despite concerns about the security of nuclear materials. This is the conclusion of a report by the Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS). At the end of 2003, there were more than 3,700 tons of plutonium and highly enriched uranium in about 60 countries, enough for hundreds of thousands of nuclear weapons. Civil plutonium stocks are not expected to decrease in the next 15 years.

Reuters, 5 October 2004

Widow seeks compensation after

Monju cover up. The widow of an official involved in an internal probe into a December 1995 accident at Japanese Monju experimental fast breeder reactor has filed a damage suit claiming he died after being forced to assist in the cover up. Shigeo Nishimura was a deputy administration department chief at the then Power Reactor and Nuclear Fuel Development Corp., which ran the reactor. He died by his own hand on 13 January 1996. The Monju reactor, Japan's first prototype FBR has been shut down since a sodium coolant leak sparked a fire on 8 December 1995. According to the suit, Nishimura was a key person in the probe that tried to shed light on the attempt to conceal a videotape made shortly after the leak. **Kyodo News, 13 October 2004**

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THE NUCLEAR MONITOR

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