

NUCLEAR MONITOR

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U.S. APPROVES \$95 MILLION AID FOR “AXIS OF EVIL” COUNTRY

Following President Bush’s description of North Korea as part of an “axis of evil” it may seem strange that he recently signed a memorandum authorizing US\$95 million for the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), which is building two nuclear reactors in Kumho, North Korea.

(566.5390) WISE Amsterdam – Although the President’s memorandum was dated 1 April 2002, it was no April Fools joke. Instead, it was the latest move in the bizarre “replace-nuclear-with-nuclear” plan to stop North Korea’s nuclear weapons program.

North Korea – officially called the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea – has long been suspected of developing nuclear weapons. The country had its own 5-megawatt experimental reactor and was building two power reactors, one 50-megawatt and one 200-megawatt.

More worrying still was the partially completed plutonium extraction facility, which U.S. intelligence agencies believe had been used to separate enough plutonium for 1 or 2 nuclear weapons.

After diplomatic pressure, North Korea agreed to stop its homegrown nuclear program, but insisted that it needed the electricity that the power reactors were intended to generate. This led to the “Agreed Framework” which the U.S. and North Korea signed on 21 October 1994. Under this agreement, in return for halting activities at the existing 5-megawatt

reactor and reprocessing plant, and halting construction of the 50 and 200-megawatt reactors, North Korea was to be supplied with two new 1,000-megawatt light-water reactors (LWRs). All these reactors, the old as well as the new, would be subject to International Atomic Energy Authority (IAEA) safeguards. Until the first of the new reactors is finished, North Korea would receive 500,000 tons per year of heavy fuel oil for heating and generating electricity.

A new international organization, the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) was set up to finance and build the two new reactors and supply the heavy fuel oil. KEDO’s board members are South Korea, Japan, the U.S. and Euratom (effectively the European Union). KEDO has a further nine member countries, but North Korea is not formally represented. It has a main office in New York City, plus an on-site office in Kumho, North Korea, where the new reactors are being built.

Work on the site is still very much at a preparatory stage. Kumho is in a remote part of North Korea’s east coast, and the infrastructure has had to be built from scratch: a new harbor, roads, and a full range of facilities for the construction workers (accommodation, catering, medical and recreational facilities.)

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Work on preparing the site for the reactors themselves only began last September with the excavation of the bedrock plateau on which the reactors will be built. The first delivery of components and building materials is planned for this spring, and the first pouring of concrete for the nuclear power station has been set for August 2002.

“Axis of evil”

However, relations between the U.S. and North Korea deteriorated considerably after President Bush described North Korea as part of an “axis of evil”, along with Iran and Iraq, in his State of the Union address on 29 January. Bush accused the three countries of developing weapons of mass destruction.

Things got worse still after excerpts from the U.S. Nuclear Posture Review, leaked in mid-March, suggested that the Bush administration had contingency plans to attack sites associated with weapons of mass destruction with nuclear weapons. North Korea was on the “contingency” list of countries, and was singled out, along with Iraq, for “chronic military concerns”. North Korea responded angrily to the reports, threatening to pull out of the “Agreed Framework”.

On 19 March, Bush declined to certify to Congress that North Korea was upholding the “Agreed Framework”, although he offered no evidence that the agreement had been violated.

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The next issue of the *WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor* (567) will be mailed out on 3 May 2002.

On 22 March, North Korea repeated its threat, but with a new twist: A high-level delegation from North Korea had visited Russia and asked Russia to build a nuclear power station in North Korea.

Bush then decided to release US\$95 million to KEDO, apparently for heavy fuel oil for North Korea, although this was not specified in the official White House memorandum. Normally this money would only be released on three conditions: implementation of the Joint Declaration on Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, North Korea complying fully with the Agreed Framework, and progress in eliminating the North Korean ballistic missile threat.

Bush did not certify that these conditions were met. Instead, he waived the conditions, determining that it was “vital to the national security interests of the United States” that the money was released.

North Korea responded on 3 April saying that it would resume its regular monthly meetings with KEDO, which had been suspended following the Nuclear Posture Review leak. KEDO confirmed that they had been contacted by North Korea about resuming talks.

Nuclear gamble

Although the new reactors are supposed to be “proliferation resistant”, they could actually produce more plutonium than the gas-graphite reactors which North Korea stopped building. This is because they are much bigger (see *WISE News Communiqué* 545.5260, “What is the best solution/future for North Korea?”).

The counter-argument usually put forward is that plutonium produced in LWRs is less suitable for making nuclear weapons than plutonium produced in a gas-graphite reactor. However, the U.S. Department of Energy has said that it is still possible. Indeed, “proliferating states using designs of intermediate

sophistication could produce weapons with assured yields substantially higher than the kiloton-range possible with a simple, first-generation nuclear device.”

In the case of Kumho, this is more of a future problem. North Korea is not due to receive “key nuclear components” of the reactors until 2005, and then only if it has “come into full compliance with its safeguards agreement with the IAEA.”

In the meantime, by releasing the US\$95 million, the Bush administration hopes to encourage North Korea to begin full cooperation with the IAEA. The KEDO money is intended as a message that the U.S. is complying with the agreement, and North Korea should do so too. Shipments of fuel oil to North Korea can then continue in the meantime.

However, this short-term solution does not address the other problems of the Kumho project. As well as the plutonium issue, there is the problem that the North Korean electricity grid is not adequate to cope with the two new reactors. Without a stable grid, there is a danger that external power might fail, hampering equipment needed to ensure a safe shutdown of the reactor. Also, there is of course the high project cost, and the question of whether North Korea will be able to pay back the loan for the project. All in all, it would be far better to re-negotiate the Agreed Framework so that North Korea can invest in energy-saving measures and cheaper, safer sources of electricity rather than staying on the nuclear treadmill.

Sources: White House press release, 2 April 2002; KEDO web site www.kedo.org; www.bullatomsci.org; BBC, 22 March 2002; boston.com, 4 April 2002; U.S. Department of Energy, *Nonproliferation and Arms Control Assessment of Weapons-useable Fissile Material Storage and Disposition Alternatives* (draft, October 1996); Washington Post, 3 and 4 April 2002

Contact: WISE Amsterdam

NEVADA'S VETO SENDS YUCCA DECISION TO CONGRESS

Kenny Guinn, Governor of the U.S. State of Nevada, delivered his veto of President Bush's decision on Yucca Mountain to Washington D.C. on 9 April. The decision on the nuclear waste dump. The U.S. Senate and House of Representatives have 90 legislative days in which to confirm or override Guinn's veto.

(566.5391) NIRS/WISE Amsterdam – Guinn's Yucca veto is the first time in U.S. history that a state governor has vetoed a decision by a president. It was made possible by a unique 1982 federal law on nuclear waste disposal. However, Guinn's veto can itself be overridden provided that both the Senate and the House of Representatives agree to do so on majority votes within the following 90 legislative days.

The House of Representatives is expected to hold a vote as soon as possible, possibly before the end of April (see *WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor* 564.5381, "Yucca Mountain update"). Stopping this will be an uphill struggle, because of the Republican majority in the House.

Pro-dump forces will face a tougher job in the Democrat-controlled Senate, where Senator Harry Reid from Nevada is the Assistant Majority Leader. Reid, together with the

Majority Leader, Senator Tom Daschle, will try to delay the override vote as long as possible, but they may not be able to stop it occurring within the 90-legislative-day period.

In order to muster as much public support as possible against the dump, opponents are stressing that it's not just Nevada that will be affected, but the 44 States which "Mobile Chernobyl" waste transports would have to pass through en route to the dump. The dangers of these transports were highlighted by a video of a test in which an anti-tank missile blew a hole in a nuclear waste cask (see *WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor* 563.5372, "Security upgrades for U.S. reactors; waste casks vulnerable to attack").

Besides the legislative process, numerous lawsuits are underway against the dump proposal. These include a lawsuit opposing the weak Environment Protection Agency

radiation release regulations for the site. These lawsuits could significantly delay or even defeat the Yucca Mountain Project. Governor Guinn said of the lawsuits, "if the political system fails us, the court system will not".

Actions against Yucca continue. As this *WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor* is going to press, the "People's Summit on High-Level Nuclear Waste" is taking place in Connecticut (12-14 April). This will be followed by a national rally and lobby day at the U.S. Capitol in Washington D.C. on 16 April. NIRS/WISE along with Public Citizen and other groups will be arranging a grand tour of mock nuclear waste casks, which will visit dozens of States on the Yucca transport routes to underline that fact that Yucca is not just Nevada's problem – it's everyone's problem.

Sources: Reuters, 10 April 2002; NIRS
Contact: NIRS

BRITISH NUCLEAR WASTE TO BE SENT TO RUSSIA ?

On the afternoon of 10 April, the head of Russian ministry of atomic power Alexander Rumyantsev met environmental activists for the first time since he was appointed as a minister in 2001. At the meeting, the minister said that the British nuclear industry wants to dump research reactor waste on Russia.

(566.5392) WISE Russia – The head of the Russian ministry of atomic power (Minatom) was answering the questions of 7 leading environmentalists opposing nuclear power. The activists were mostly concerned about the plan to import high-level radioactive waste (or "spent" nuclear fuel) to Russia. The plan was sponsored by Minatom and approved by both the Russian parliament and the president in 2001. According to Alexander Rumyantsev, next year a contract to import spent nuclear fuel from British research reactors will be signed. The minister

refused to say how much irradiated nuclear fuel and at what price it will be imported. Speaking on the prospects of importing spent fuel from foreign civil reactors Rumyantsev said he sees "no opportunities for any contracts to be signed in the next few years".

"Describing publicly the plan to import nuclear waste, Minatom repeatedly insisted that there is the spent fuel reprocessing market across the world where Britain and France are main competitors to Russia. Now it appears that British industry wants to dump its

nuclear waste in Russia because reprocessing is no more economically profitable", said Vladimir Sliviyak, co-chairman for Russian environmental group Ecodefense, who participated in the 10 April meeting with Rumyantsev. "Import of nuclear waste is a crime against the environment and future generations. Britain should not dump its radioactive garbage on Russia!"

The minister said that the U.S. controls over 80% of the world's spent nuclear fuel and his ministry works to get

American permission for importing this fuel. Alexander Rumyantsev said Ministry' representatives repeatedly asked the USA after the attack of September 11 to offer Minatom the possibility to earn enough funds to improve physical protection of nuclear facilities in Russia. Such funds could be obtained through nuclear waste import, the minister said.

Alexandr Rumyantsev also commented on the issue of possible import of low-level radioactive waste to Russia, and on disposal of Asian radioactive waste in Russian Far East. "There is great economic profit Russia may get [from low-level waste import], but I can't call

for this because Russian law prohibits such import", the minister said. On 27 March 2002, Ecodefense made public the documents confirming that Russian nuclear industry and politicians are involved in a secret deal with Taiwan, aimed at importing radioactive waste and dumping it on Simushir island (see "Russia to dump radwaste in volcano?" in this *WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor*). Several media reports in Russia pointed at minister Rumyantsev as the main "shadow-supporter" of the Simushir project. Alexander Rumyantsev refused to comment on whether or not his ministry would lobby to change Russian legislation in order to allow the import of low-level

radioactive waste from Asia.

Source: Ecodefense!/WISE Russia press release, 11 April 2002

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RUSSIA TO DUMP RADWASTE IN VOLCANO?

Russian Minister for Atomic Energy Alexander Rumyantsev announced on 28 March that Russia would be willing to accept low-level radioactive waste from Taiwan for permanent burial on a seismically unstable volcanic island in Russia's far eastern Kuril chain, near Japan.

(566.5393) Bellona Foundation - Speaking in *Izvestiya* on 28 March, Rumyantsev casually said that Russia would be willing to work with Japanese engineers to build on Simushir Island — home to the active 1539-meter Milna volcano — a permanent radioactive waste burial facility that would be capable of withstanding the island's shifting and jarring earth. The volcano is one of several such volcanoes on the island chain located off the northern coast of Japan and south of Kamchatka.

According to confidential Duma documents obtained by Vladimir Sliviyak, co-chairman of Moscow's Ecodefense!, the Taiwanese will supposedly be paying the Russian government up to US\$10bn, including \$2.5bn of construction costs, to host its radioactive waste in this seismologically volatile environment on a permanent basis. This contradicts the law signed last year on nuclear imports to Russia that stipulated that only "spent" nuclear fuel could be imported into the country. The Russian Atomic Energy Ministry, or Minatom, has argued that

spent nuclear fuel is a resource that could be reprocessed and reused. The waste generated during reprocessing could stay in Russia, given there is no possibility to return it. It appears that Minatom is starting now to advocate for import of not only spent nuclear fuel but also other types of radioactive waste.

From spent fuel import to radioactive dumpsite

A more subtle revelation contained in the Rumyantsev interview — which was buried in the *Izvestiya* interview's last paragraph — as well as the documents obtained by Sliviyak is this: Russia will accept radioactive waste.

This is wholly inconsistent, say a host of environmentalists, with the conditions surrounding the lifting of spent nuclear fuel import restrictions last year, which stipulated that no radioactive waste, but only spent nuclear fuel is legible for import.

"What Rumyantsev is doing here is entirely illegal," said Sliviyak in a telephone interview on 29 March.

"Aside from breaching the laws about protecting the environment — which were breached by the lifting of the [nuclear spent fuel import] ban anyway — Minatom is breaching its own self-tailored law allowing it to import plain radioactive waste for permanent burial."

The leaked documents that Sliviyak's associates showed Bellona on 1 April also allegedly reveal that Duma Deputy Sergei Shashurin was the lynch-pin in arranging the nuclear waste deal with the Taiwanese nuclear plant, which he supposedly achieved with the cooperation of the Taiwanese-Japanese company Asia Tat Trading Co Ltd. All were supposedly cooperating with Moscow's Kurchatov Institute Nuclear Research Centre to develop designs for the storage facility for the waste. (See box for excerpts from these documents.)

Despite three days of telephone calls, Shashurin neither returned messages nor was available for comment. The embassy of Japan, near whose territory the waste will be located, also declined comment.

Reached in Taipei, an Asia Tat Trading Co. Ltd official piquantly referred all inquiries on the shipment to Minatom.

At the Sakhalin Oblast Administration — located eight time zones East of Moscow and under whose jurisdiction Simushir Island falls — authorities were surprised to hear about the project. Simushir is an uninhabited island except for a periodically staffed weather station, but one administration official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said, “It would have been appropriate of them to inform us — we have heard nothing.”

Minatom, in its turn, confirmed the deal, but urged the press to steer clear of the issue because the public and the media could not possibly understand the implications of a nuclear waste dump on a volcanic, earthquake-prone island in some of the Pacific Ocean’s most fertile fishing waters.

“Society is far from informed on these matters and so is not prepared to make any judgment on the issue but panicked gossip,” said Minatom spokesman Yuri Bespalko in a telephone interview on 1 April. “These are top people — Russian and Japanese teams — working to assure the safety of this endeavour. The Japanese have experience with storing waste under favorable seismological circumstances. But we are building more than a metro tunnel here, so it will be beyond the grasp of most people.”

When asked whether a contravention of the law on permanent storage of foreign nuclear waste was afoot, he responded: “That is for judiciary bodies to decide.”

At the Kurchatov Institute, which, according to Sliviyak’s research, was contracted to help design the storage containers, press officer Andrei Gagarinsky at first denied the institute had any hand in the container designs, and called what Rummyantsev said in *Izvestiya* a

EXCERPTS FROM LEAKED DOCUMENTS

In a 11 February letter, Duma Deputy Sergei Shashurin writes to Ivan Zhdakaev, the member of the lower house of parliament (Duma) who represents Sakhalin: “I’m asking for your support concerning construction of waste reprocessing site in Simushir island... hope to make with you a joint appeal to the governor of Sakhalin”

Another document is a memorandum between Asia Tat Trading Co Ltd, Kurchatov Institute, Neftegas and a group of Russian parliamentarians. Here is an unofficial translation by WISE Russia of excerpts from the leaked memorandum:

From the general part:

“Article 1. This protocol aimed at solving problems related to reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel and low level rad waste from nuclear plants of Russia and other Asian-Pacific countries”

From the part about responsibilities of parties:

“ATT [Asia Tat Trading Co Ltd.] responsibilities:

1. organizing of contracts between facilities offering services concerning spent fuel and rad-waste.
2. financing.
3. making budgets and diving funds between participants of project”

“Kurchatov Institute:

1. Safety assessment for the project
2. Monitoring and analysis of radionuclides migration in location where spent fuel and low level waste stored or reprocessed.
3. Environmental assessment.

...

6. Assisting in [establishing of] legislative support for activities on storage and reprocessing of spent fuel and low level waste.
7. Obtaining IAEA support and other countries support for the project”

“Neftegas company responsibilities:

1. Choosing the place of storage of radioactive waste.
2. Construction of facilities for storage of rad waste, supplying it with equipment”

“Group of Russian parliamentarians:

1. Legislative support for storage and reprocessing of spent fuel and low level rad waste.”

All 4 parties signed the memorandum. Neftegas is a Russian company working mainly in the field of oil and gas transportation, also geologic support for oil and gas drilling. Most of the projects Neftegas works on are located on Sakhalin in the Russian Far East.

“typical journalistic red herring.”

Later in the interview, Gagarinsky backed off slightly, and admitted that designs for permanent waste storage in the Kuril Island chain had been considered. When asked if those

plans are materializing, he said, “The Kurchatov Institute supports the notion of a permanent waste storage facility — be it somewhere else in Russia or in the Kuril islands.” He refused further comment.

Regulator's waning role

For all the institutions allegedly privy to this deal, one is conspicuously absent — Gosatomnadzor, or GAN, Russia's nuclear regulatory body, which under the import law is to be informed of shipments. It is GAN's responsibility to license these imports.

When contacted by telephone on Friday regarding the Taiwanese waste shipment to Simushir, GAN's deputy director, Alexander Dmitriev, was taken entirely off-guard. "Rumyantsev said what?" Dmitriev asked when told of the news. "We know absolutely nothing about this."

Obviously taken aback, Dmitriev told a room full of colleagues to find the copy of the *Izvestiya* that contained the Rumyantsev's comments. When it was finally located, the line went silent as Dmitriev read the report.

"I am the deputy director of Gosatomnadzor and should have known about this," he said, his colleagues chattering nervously in the background. "I don't know what sort of nonsense they are up to [at Minatom], but we will have no further comment on this rubbish until we see official notification," he said.

Slivyak, with his cadged Duma documents on the waste transfer, may or may not be official enough for Dmitriev, but the fact that remains is

that the input of the deputy director of GAN matters less and less to the consolidated lobby of Minatom. This state agency would make all decisions about nuclear issues in Russia, including those about safety, said Green World's Sergei Kharitonov, a former nuclear power plant worker turned whistle-blower.

Laws circumvented

On paper, the 2001 law governing the import of spent nuclear fuel from other countries is clear on the point that no radioactive waste will be shipped into the country for permanent storage. But the law has been abused and outright ignored by Minatom a number of times — even before it was signed into force. This slap-dash approach by his ministry was not a point that seemed to concern Rumyantsev in his *Izvestiya* interview, where he didn't make reference to the import law once — instead taking a snipe at the "greens for pestering [him]" about his decisions.

Among other radioactive shipments were the cases of a Bulgarian and a Hungarian consignment of spent nuclear fuel. The Bulgarians shipped spent nuclear fuel into Russia in autumn 2001 after the Russian President signed the importation laws. Neither an environmental impact study, stipulated by the spent fuel import law, nor the personal control of President Putin, as was promised, were in place.

In a similar deal, the Hungarian Paks Nuclear Power Plant sent spent nuclear fuel to Russia backed by a governmental decree, issued in 1998, which allowed as an exception storing in Russia spent nuclear fuel (SNF) from the plant.

As a result, environmental groups of Chelyabinsk — the southern Urals city where Mayak is located — as well as the environmental group "Greenpeace" filed suit with the Russian Supreme Court on the basis that the legislation at the time the decree was issued prohibited importation of radioactive waste. The current legislation, although allowing import of spent nuclear fuel, declares the "priority [for Russia] of the right to return the radioactive waste, generated after the reprocessing [of SNF] into the country of its origin." The court agreed with the plaintiff, but the Federal Government intervened with an appeal — which according to a spokesman for the Supreme Court, reached by telephone Monday, "could delay the case for months." The spokesman did not know, however, if the Hungarian plant would be able to continue its imports pending a decision on its appeal.

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NUCLEAR ISSUE AFFECTS FRENCH PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

The future of the French nuclear industry has become an issue in the upcoming French presidential elections. Noël Mamère, the Green candidate, has said that the Green-Socialist coalition may be in danger unless the Socialists make a "gesture" towards nuclear phase-out – something which Socialist candidate and current Prime Minister Lionel Jospin has so far refused to do.

(566.5394) WISE Amsterdam – A record number of 16 candidates obtained the 500 signatures from elected officials needed to run in the first round of the presidential elections, which will be held on 21 April. Two of these will then go

forward to the second round on 5 May. The two most likely to go through to the second round are the incumbent president Jacques Chirac from the conservative RPR party (Rally for the Republic), and the current Prime Minister, Lionel Jospin,

from the Socialist Party.

Opinion polls indicate that assuming the second round is Jospin versus Chirac, both will receive very close to 50% support, which means that small political parties can have a "king-

maker” influence by recommending their supporters to vote for one or other of the two main candidates.

The Green candidate Noël Mamère is one of the candidates in this “king-maker” position. He has repeatedly called for a phase-out of nuclear power in France, and an end to reprocessing nuclear waste.

The “Réseau Sortir du Nucléaire” has asked all candidates what their positions are on four issues:

- a redistribution of energy research funds, currently dominated by nuclear research, towards alternatives (energy saving, cogeneration and renewable energy)
- a first concrete step towards phase-out: shutting down the oldest operating nuclear power station, Fessenheim (25 years old)
- stopping the La Hague nuclear reprocessing plant
- stopping construction of the potential nuclear waste dump (officially a “laboratory” to “study” nuclear waste disposal) at Bure.

On the basis of this, six candidates were awarded the label “certified pro-nuclear”, including both Chirac and Jospin. Two candidates (Mamère and the Trotskyist Olivier Besancenot) are in favor of phasing out nuclear power, and the rest could not be categorized (no reply, a mixed response or an unclear response).

The “Réseau Sortir du Nucléaire” is now following this up by printing and distributing 200,000 postcards to send to presidential candidates, pressing for them to take the four steps listed above as a first start towards phasing out nuclear power in France. Many of the local groups that make up the “Réseau” are organizing local initiatives around the 16th anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster, which falls between the two rounds of the presidential elections.

Given that both main candidates support the nuclear industry, there is

still an uphill struggle for nuclear phase-out in France. This situation is compounded by the fact that Jean-Pierre Chevènement, a left-wing nationalist who is No. 3 in the opinion polls, is probably the most pro-nuclear of all. However, all is not lost, because there is an additional opportunity for the anti-nuclear Greens to use their influence.

Parliamentary elections

The presidential elections will be followed on 9 and 16 June by parliamentary elections. The Greens are a junior partner in the current coalition government, but Mamère has said that the future participation of the Greens in government will depend on the stance taken by their coalition partners on the nuclear question. “There cannot be a [left-wing] coalition”, Mamère warned, “if there is not a strong signal from the Socialist candidate for a nuclear phase-out.”

France has the highest percentage of nuclear-generated electricity in the world (around 80%), and exports electricity to several other European countries. The French nuclear lobby is powerful and has at times seemed almost unassailable. However, it has become more and more isolated as neighboring countries have chosen the path of nuclear phase-out. Italy closed all its power reactors following the Chernobyl disaster, and Spain has had a moratorium on new reactors since 1982. The German nuclear phase-out has received a lot of publicity. Belgium, where about 60% of electricity is of nuclear origin, has recently confirmed its phase-out plan (see *WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor* 564.5383, “Belgian nuclear phaseout”).

No new reactors have been ordered in France since 1991, when construction of Civaux-2 began. The two reactors at Civaux, together with Chooz B1 and B2, have been plagued with problems (see *WISE News Communiqué* 495.4891, “France: Serious accident at Civaux-1” and 507.4986, “New delays for plagued French N-4 Series”). Since

then, anti-nuclear actions have succeeded in stopping preparatory work at Le Carnet, which had been earmarked for a prototype of the European Pressurized Water Reactor (EPR) (see *WISE News Communiqué* 478.4744, “France: The end of the Carnet project, finally”).

Nevertheless, Chirac is in favor of the EPR and says that France must soon take a decision to build a prototype.

The French reprocessing plant at La Hague has also come under increasing criticism. The possibility that terrorist attacks could result in radioactive releases many times greater than the Chernobyl disaster has led to surface-to-air missiles being positioned around the plant, though these have now been removed. However, even in normal operation, the plant is responsible for 80% of the collective radiation dose of the French nuclear industry (see *WISE News Communiqué* 559.5348, “STOA report condemns reprocessing”).

Chirac has said that a decision on the future of reprocessing and disposal of nuclear waste must wait until 2006, when a decision on a repository should be taken according to the 1991 Nuclear Waste Law. Jospin has proposed a “citizens’ conference” on the issue, to be held by 2006 at the latest. However, both failed to mention the delays and setbacks in the French nuclear waste plans which mean that Parliament is unlikely to be in a position to take a decision in 2006 (see *WISE News Communiqué* 550.5284, “The history of the French waste policy”).

Sources: news.bbc.co.uk; opinion polls at www.2002.sofres.com; Emails from Solange Fernex; AFP, 24 March 2002; Reuters, 26 March 2002; WISE-Paris news release, 29 March 2002; “Réseau Sortir du Nucléaire” newsletter, April 2002

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DISINFORMATION ON CHERNOBYL FALLOUT IN FRANCE

The 16th anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster, 26 April 2002, has a special significance in France. Falling between the two rounds of the French presidential elections, Chernobyl Day follows admissions from health authorities in Corsica of a “lie by omission” about contamination. The government has set up a committee to investigate, but the committee’s independence was quickly called into question. Meanwhile, more and more thyroid cancer patients are taking legal action for the French State’s failure to take protective measures in the aftermath of Chernobyl.

(566.5395) Solange Fernex - On Chernobyl Day 2002, new thyroid patients will join the “complaint against X for putting their health at danger in 1986” as plaintiffs, bringing their total number to 300 (see *WISE News Communiqué* 556.5327, “France: Thyroid patients in court in Paris”). Judge Bertella-Geoffroy is investigating the case, and she has already seized valuable material from French ministries and agencies.

The “scandal of the contaminated land” erupted in February 2002 in Ajaccio, Corsica, where Criirad(1) and the “Thyroid Patients Organization”(2) forced the health authorities which were present to admit their “lie by omission” in front of a fully packed and angry audience.

In the European Cesium Atlas (3), France sent only 32 Cs-137 measures (on a total number of 400.000), none in Corsica. On the other hand, measurements performed by André Paris and Criirad, and published in their own Cs-137 Atlas (4), showed radiocesium values indicating that the I-131 values in 1986 were very high and dangerous, and that preventive measures should absolutely have been taken, especially regarding milk, cheese and vegetables, and especially for pregnant women and children. Unfortunately, in central Corsica, up to 5 thyroid patients can be found in some villages.

In the following days, the French Health Minister, Bernard Kouchner, created an “investigative committee”, to find out the truth about the Chernobyl contamination in France.

Unfortunately, he nominated as Head of this “neutral, independent and transparent” body Professeur A. Aurengo, member of the board of Electricité de France, and member of UNSCEAR, a body which continues to state, against every available evidence, that Chernobyl caused only 32 immediate deaths and 2000 thyroid cancers, and that, “from a radiological point of view, the future looks rather good for the Chernobyl regions” (5).

This decision shocked deeply the French Chernobyl community. Criirad immediately launched a petition asking for the replacement of Aurengo, and refused to sit in this committee, not willing to be taken as hostage by such biased representatives of the nuclear lobby.

This year, Chernobyl day falls between the two presidential elections days in France, and the nuclear issue has become an issue in the campaign (see “Nuclear issue affects French presidential elections” in this *WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor*). The “Réseau Sortir du Nucléaire” has printed and is distributing 200.000 postcards to send to presidential candidates, asking for them to take concrete steps to leave the nuclear age (6).

A similar campaign is planned for the parliamentary elections next June, demanding that the candidates promise to initiate a walkout of the nuclear deadlock.

Meanwhile, the campaign for the liberation of another victim of Chernobyl disinformation, Prof. Y.I.

Bandazhevsky from the Gulag in Minsk (7), is getting new impetus. a rally is planned by Criirad on 4 May in Geneva, Switzerland, in front of the UN.

References:

- (1) Criirad, 242 av. V. Hugo, 26000 Valence, France
- (2) Association des Malades de la Thyroïde, BP 1, 82700 - Bourret, France
- (3) de Cort et al., “Atlas of Cs deposition on Europe after the Chernobyl Accident” EU, Luxembourg, 1998
- (4) Criirad & André Paris: “Contaminations radioactives : Atlas France et Europe”, Ed. Yves Michel
- (5) UNSCEAR: “Exposures and Effects of the Chernobyl Accident”, UN, 2000
- (6) Réseau Sortir du Nucléaire, 9, rue Dumenge, 69004 Lyon, France
- (7) See web site www.nirs.org/FREEBandazhevsky.htm or *WISE News Communiqué* 553.5308, “Belarus: Bandazhevsky adopted as prisoner of conscience” for more details on Bandazhevsky’s imprisonment. Write to Yuri Bandazhevsky, 220600 Belarus, Minsk, Ul Kalvarijskaya 36, PO Box 3521, and write a “Free Bandazhevsky” letter to the Ambassador of Belarus in your own country.

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NGO CONFERENCE ON RADIOACTIVE CONTAMINATION OF THE NORTH SEA

The regional branch of Norges Naturvernforbund, Naturvernforbundet Hordaland (Friends of the Earth, Norway) held a conference in Bergen on 20-21 March 2002, coinciding with the North Sea conference elsewhere in Bergen which was attended by ministers from all the countries around the North Sea. Here is an evaluation by the organizers of the conference.

(566.5396) - Naturvernforbundet Hordaland - Our main objective was to gather members and lecturers from environmental and anti-nuclear organizations from countries around the North Sea, in order to put pressure on the ministers who were discussing these issues. It took longer than expected to get funding for the project and our goal was therefore not fully reached, because there was not enough time to get everybody we wanted for the conference. Still, we are quite satisfied with what we have accomplished.

We arranged lectures by internationally acclaimed scientists and environmentalists. Janine Allis-Smith, CORE talked about "effects of Sellafield's operations and the way it has affected people in Cumbria". Mycle Schneider, WISE-Paris, held a lecture on "Pollution from Sellafield and La Hague". Rachel Western, FoE-UK, talked about "Sellafield- the contaminated legacy. Future contamination in Norway". Chris Busby from Green Audit, Wales, discussed the risk models for radiation and the possibility of creating new ones. Busby claimed that a "Copernican" revolution with respect to risk calculation is nearing.

Shaun Burnie, Greenpeace, talked about reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel and the production of MOX as the wrong way of dealing with atomic waste. Katrine Kristiansen, a Norwegian working for the Neptun Network, held a lecture on "the wet and dry storage of spent nuclear fuel as a safe alternative to reprocessing."

Lars Asplin from the Norwegian Institute of Marine Research

presented the measurements taken by Norwegian scientists to calculate the amount of radioactivity along the Norwegian coast. The conference ended with a panel debate around these three questions:

1. What are the current problems with regards to the radioactive contamination of the North Sea?
2. What have been done about these problems so far?
3. What can Norwegians do to make sure this is taken seriously by the people in power?

On the Wednesday evening we arranged a torch-lit protest march which included about three hundred participants. Moreover we held short protest speeches outside the hotel where the ministers held *their* conference. The English and the Norwegian environmental ministers, Michael Meacher and Borge Brende, came out and received a letter containing demands about Sellafield which they promised they would distribute to the other ministers as well. The letter was signed by 14 environmental and anti-nuclear organizations from countries around Sellafield.

Regional politicians supported our protests and attended our conference. Among the 60 participants there were people from political parties, environmental organizations and people representing the Norwegian fishing industry.

We think that our conference has enhanced people's knowledge about Sellafield. We also feel that we have reached important people and that we have managed to spread quite a lot of accurate information in a

debate that, until now, has been largely based on assumptions. The knowledge about Sellafield in Norway is very limited, even among the politicians dealing with the North Sea. On the other hand, politicians and people in general in the areas near the Norwegian coast show great concern about the measurements of radioactivity taken in seaweed and lobster in Norwegian waters. The debate is largely centered around Tc-99. Our scientists claim that our

MOX MUST ALSO STOP

Friends of the Earth, Norway are pleased with the way Borge Brende has put Sellafield on the political agenda, but we demand that he takes this even further by investigating Norway's own nuclear endeavors. Institute for Energy Technology (IFE) started their research on MOX in the late 1960s. The Institute has thus been dealing with MOX for more than three decades and their research is, according to IFE, respected worldwide. The MOX-research is supported by the Norwegian authorities, as part of their annual funding for the Institute.

Six of a total of 30 projects at Halden deal with MOX or other forms of plutonium fuel. The MOX research is an important part of the activity in Halden and generates about 20% of the income. We demand that the Norwegian government discontinue their support of the MOX-research in Halden.

Naturvernforbundet Hordaland

waters are among the cleanest in the world, but because of the “better safe than sorry” principle, the discharges of Tc-99 have to be stopped.

The Norwegian Minister of environment, Borge Brende, is also demanding that the British government take action in order to stop the discharges. University professors, who are ridiculing our demands claiming that it is “radiophobia”, have affected

discussions in the media. They claim that the discharges from Sellafield are small in quantity compared to the background radiation. There is little debate about what is happening in La Hague.

Because of this rather confusing situation, we feel that Friends of the Earth, Norway and other Norwegian environmental organizations should work to make sure that the correct information is spread to the right

people. We need to start a dialogue with the professors and the politicians. We think our conference was an important contribution in this respect.

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AUSTRIA ´S ANSWER TO TEMELIN: A SPECIAL PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE

As the second reactor at Temelin in the neighboring Czech Republic is being loaded with fuel, the Austrian government’s position on Temelin remains ambiguous.

(566.5397) Global 2000 - The anti-nuclear policy of the Austrian government in general and of the extreme right wing Freedom Party in particular is extremely two-faced and ambiguous. First the government (including the Freedom Party) agreed to close the energy chapter of the EU membership negotiations with the Czech Republic and therefore accepted the Temelin nuclear power plant.

At the same time the Freedom Party started a petition process which in Austria is called “Volksbegehren”. This so-called “Volksbegehren” is an instrument that enables citizens to force the Parliament to discuss and vote on a certain law proposal.

The Freedom Party’s proposal was to link the phase-out of Temelin with EU-membership of the Czech Republic. NGOs such as GLOBAL 2000 criticized this step for several reasons: (1) It is untruthful to close first the energy chapter but to threaten later with a veto. (2) The Freedom Party is able to bring a law proposal at any time on the agenda of the Parliament. Therefore such a petition process is not really necessary.

Nevertheless many citizens showed their concern about Temelin by taking this petition seriously. Nearly one million out of a population of eight million signed it. As a consequence the law proposal was discussed in the Austrian Parliament on 21 March 2002. The outcome of this was the establishment of a special committee, which had its first meeting on 12 April. The anti-nuclear policy of Austria is now reduced to Temelin committee meetings!

GLOBAL 2000 criticizes the long-lasting time-scale of this series of meetings and discussions: It is planned to deal with the integrity of the containment, for example, in the year 2004!

On the bilateral level the Czech and the Austrian governments agreed on the “Brussels conclusions” (the Schuessel-Zeman agreement of 29 November 2001; see *WISE News Communiqué* 559.5350, “Temelin agreement: Austrian government coalition remains divided”) and later the so-called roadmap. This means that special workshops will deal with the various safety concerns that were raised by Austrian experts. In that case GLOBAL 2000 criticizes the long-lasting time-scale of this series of meetings and discussions: It is planned to deal with the integrity of the containment, for example, in the year 2004! Another weak point is that the outcome of this series of workshops will not lead to any binding consequences. And in the meantime work is in progress to re-start the first reactor as well as to activate the second block. The conclusion is: the official Austrian nuclear policy is totally wrecked.

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IN BRIEF

Russian HEU to FRM-II. The mystery of where the highly enriched uranium (HEU) fuel for the German FRM-II research reactor has come from (see *WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor* 562.5366, "Pettern reactor to 'convert' to High Enriched Uranium?") has been solved. Hans Müller of RWE Nukem GmbH has confirmed that Russia has supplied around 400 kilograms of highly enriched uranium (HEU). The HEU – enough for 10 years' operation – arrived in France on 27 March 2001 where it is to be made into fuel elements.

Nucleonics Week, 28 March 2002

Davis-Besse damage blamed on operator. The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has blamed operators FirstEnergy for the serious incident at Davis-Besse (see *WISE/*

NIRS Nuclear Monitor 565.5385, "Millimeters from disaster"). The NRC said that evidence of the problem was clear four years ago. The incident was classed as Level 3 on the 7-level International Nuclear Event Scale (INES), making it the first U.S. INES 3 incident, since the New Orleans irradiation accident described in *WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor* 5611.5357, "To US from Sweden – irradiation" was officially classified as a Swedish incident (!)

WNA Weekly Digest, 12 April 2002

INVAP license for Lucas Heights.

Australian nuclear regulator ARPANSA has issued a license to Argentinean company INVAP for construction of a new 20 megawatt research reactor at Lucas Heights, near Sydney. Australian and Argentinean NGOs, including WISE Rosario, continue to oppose the project (see *WISE News Communicate* 553.5312, "Argentina:

'No to Australian nuclear waste, yes to the national constitution' ").

WNA Weekly Digest, 12 April 2002

German summer camp. A summer camp is being organized near Gorleben in Germany from 20 to 28 July. The organizers invite all groups campaigning against final repositories for nuclear waste in Europe to jointly discuss and prepare a brochure informing about the situation in different countries. The timetable is: July 20/21 set-up and arrival, July 22-26 main program, July 27 a big party to celebrate 25 years of Gorleben resistance, and July 28 departure.

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