

NUCLEAR MONITOR

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BELENE NUCLEAR PROJECT IS SINKING

Since the new Bulgarian government has discovered that the price tag for the Belene nuclear power project on the shores of the Danube is expected to massively inflate from €4 to €10 billion Euros (US\$ 5.8 – 14.5 billion), Prime Minister Boyko Borisov has desperately been looking for ways to pull the plug.

(695.5976) Greenpeace EU Unit - Prime Minister Borisov has recently put three €300 million payments to Russian building contractor Atomstroyexport on hold while the viability of the project is reassessed. Russia and the Russian companies involved in the project are not exactly happy with this new approach. Reports in the media even allege that Russian diplomats and energy companies have gone as far as to threaten a gas war next winter, unless the Belene project is resurrected. Any compensation payments for breach of contract with Atomstroyexport are likely to be high, but still several times lower than what the Bulgarian government suspects might be the losses arising from Belene for Bulgarian taxpayers. But German energy giant RWE, 49% investor in Belene, hoped to gain billions from the project and is therefore shopping around for partners.

Experts believe that RWE has approached Russian energy company InterRAO, two unnamed Swedish companies – perhaps Vattenfall or ABB – and Fortum, from Finland. But things do not seem to be going well. Fortum's CEO Tapio Kuula told Greenpeace only last week that it had no interest whatsoever in being involved. And over the last few years Franco-Belgian utility GdF Suez / Electrabel and twelve – yes, twelve – banks have withdrawn their interest.

The question now is who will kill the

project first. Bulgarian energy minister Traycho Traykov has already announced that he will make a final recommendation at the end of September. Borisov is expected to make a final decision in November. If Bulgaria decides to put Belene out of its misery, RWE will be able to save face and blame the government. But given the lack of progress, it is not inconceivable that RWE could step out before then, giving Borisov the opportunity to blame the Germans.

Russian energy Minister Sergei Shmatko told journalists on 17 September that his country is ready to consider an investment participation in the nuclear power plant should Bulgaria decide to sell its state-owned stake. This, however, will not change anything in the economicity of the project, but looks more like a last attempt from Moscow to save its 4 billion Euro contract.

Jumping ship

Prime Minister Borisov is also behind a decision to dismantle energy giant Bulgarian Energy Holding (BEH), which was initially set up to provide sufficient collateral to generate loans for the Belene project. But the banks were not duped and BEH only managed to collect a €300 million cash input from the state budget that is under EU investigation as alleged illegal state aid.

Because of the economic downturn and

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the related 30% slump in electricity exports, 51% Belene investor Bulgarian state utility NEK has dived under the reserves limit set in its €250 million loan contract with BNP Paribas - the only loan it could secure for the project. This means the French bank has the right to recall its loan. The only alternative for NEK would be to

renegotiate terms with BNP Paribas, which could lead to a doubling of the so far very low 4,8% interest rate.

The conclusion is clear: Belene represents a huge financial risk for Bulgaria, not to mention a serious environment risk. The project is sinking and the question now is who will jump

ship first.

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RUSSIA: 36,000 SIGNATURES TO PREVENT REACTOR CONSTRUCTION

On September 22, over 36,000 petitions of Russian citizens protesting against the construction of a nuclear power plant in the Nizhny Novgorod region (600 kilometres Northeast of Moscow) were handed to the Russian Presidents' administration. The signatures were collected among the inhabitants of the 30km zone around the proposed construction site, in the towns of Murom and Navashin. Environmental and anti-nuclear activists are still subject of state harassment.

(695.5977) WISE Amsterdam - Prior to handing the signatures to the Presidents' Administration, the environmentalists presented them to the media at the Independent Press-Center in Moscow. According to Vasily Vakhlyayev, member of the Murom City Council, the results of the public opinion poll indicate that 95% of the Murom residents strictly oppose the construction of the nuclear power plant.

At the press-conference Yablokov said nuclear energy has direct effect on sickness and death rates.

Earlier, on September 1, over 3,000 of Murom town' residents took part in an anti-nuclear rally where both local authorities and activists of Ecodefence criticized the project of nuclear plant and urged local citizens to not be afraid to raise voices.

as members of the general public – were also turned away. The police had formed a well fortified barrier around the building where the hearings were to take place. Local residents who turned out to oppose the plant at the open hearings, were not able to pass through even the first police cordon. City officials from the town of Murom – which is 30 kilometres from the building site – were also turned away.

Vladimir Sliviyak of Ecodefence reported on numerous shortcomings of the Nizhny Novgorod nuclear power plant project. For instance, it is unclear what the plans are for nuclear waste treatment. According to the project documentation, spent nuclear fuel will be transported to a plant, which does not exist and is not planned to be built. Thus, high-level radioactive waste which will present danger for at least 240,000 years and for which there is no safe disposal technology, may remain in Nizhny Novgorod region forever. So, what is actually under discussion – a nuclear reactor or nuclear waste dumping site? It looks like both.

And on September 4, two activists, Vladimir Sliviyak, who co-chairs Ecodefence, and the group's nuclear physicist, Andrei Ozharovsky, on their way to a public hearing, were plucked from the crowd and detained by police at a local precinct. They were given no reason for their four hours detention. "They simply held us until almost the end of the (public) hearings and let us go," Sliviyak told Bellona Web. Materials the two were carrying with them regarding nuclear energy were taken from them during their stay with the police, and after the rally was over, they were released and their literature returned.

The Nizhny Novgorod Nuclear Power Plant is included in the Russian government's "General Scheme for the Construction of Electric Energy Installations Until 2020," but is currently only at the review stage.

It is assumed that the first state of the nuclear station will consist of two reactor blocks. Each reactor will supply 1170 megawatts of power. The first is scheduled to come online in 2017, but a site for the plant has still not been chosen. Two are under consideration – the city of Uren, which is in the north part of the Region, or Monakovo, in the Navash district near Murom.

Well-known scientist and member of the Russian Academy of Science, Alexei Yablokov stated that a simple nationwide switch to energy-efficient light bulbs would save so much energy that new nuclear reactors will not be needed. He called for cancellation of the nuclear energy development program in Russia stating it as dangerous, expensive, and ineffective.

The rally was in protest of ecological groups, other NGOs and other members of the public not being able to participate in open hearings on the construction of a nuclear power plant in the Nizhny Novgorod region.

Aside from representatives of Ecodefence, members of other environmental organisations – as well

Exactly a year ago, on September 16, 2008, Russia's economic crime unit and the Federal Security Service (FSB) raided the Nizhny Novgorod offices of the nationally known Russian environmental organization Dront. They confiscated financial documents, topographical maps and computers from Dront's biodiversity preservation laboratory. The office is accused of

under-reporting on its tax return. But experience from earlier attacks on environmental organizations suggested that the real motives for the raid were not tax related, but rather because Dront is an extremely active organisation that is vocal in its

opposition to a gamut of environmentally dangerous projects, that are close to the heart of the local administration and its business cronies. Dront is also very active and instrumental in the fight against the plans for new reactors.

Source: Press release Ecodefense, 22 September 2009 / Bellona Web, 18 September 2008 & 7 September 2009
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AFTER THE GERMAN ELECTIONS

At the September 27, general elections (with an all time turnout low of only 67 %) Angela Merkel's Christian Democratic Union (CDU) party won enough seats to allow her to form a coalition with the liberal Free Democratic Party (FDP). The big winners were the FDP, the reformed communist Die Linke (The Left) party, and the environmentalist Greens. However, the left-wing parties do not have a majority and internal struggle (SPD will not form a coalition with Die Linke) would have made a centre-left coalition impossible.

(695.5978) WISE Amsterdam - The two traditional *Volksparteien*, the CDU with its Bavarian sister CSU, and the SPD, received only 58% of the vote. Compare that percentage to 78% in 2001, 82% in 1987, and over 90% in 1972. Commentators called the election results, 'historic.' Angela Merkel, the German chancellor famous for her gift of non-expression, bridged over any historicism by grinning into cameras exactly as accustomed.

Brüchige Übergangstechnologie

Chancellor Merkel, an East-German-degreed physicist, is nuclear power pro-nostalgic. The CDU platform paper calls it a 'Brückentechnologie' (bridging technology). Her new coalition partner, the FDP, uses a slightly different term: 'Übergangstechnologie' (transition technology). Both words mean this: the German nuclear phase-out implemented by Gerhard Schroeder's SPD-led government will be pushed-back. The CDU (Christlich Demokratische Union) and their Bavarian Division CSU (Christlich Soziale Union) are large parties covering a spectrum of opinions on particular points, even including a small anti-nuclear group. The Chancellor kept campaigning for extensions, while CSU speaker (and possible future minister for environment and nuclear) Markus Söder called for a deal with the utilities to use the profits from extended "life" times for research into renewable energy sources, implying that more research is needed before they are ready to use.

Are the 'Friends of nuclear' celebrating too early?

But, as an editorial of the Financial

Times Deutschland put it the day after the elections, 'Atomfreunde freuen sich zu früh' ('Friends of nuclear celebrate too early')

One day later, on September 29, Der Spiegel online, published an article in which FDP environment expert Michael Kauch said that although FDP wants life-time extensions, the party does not want that for all reactors; "The FDP's committee decided before the elections that we want an extension of running times, but not for all reactors". He, however, did not mention a number. But the race isn't run in the CDU. According to an article in the September 30 issue of the Financial Times Deutschland, some leading persons within Merkel's party (CDU) are not supporting the party line of phasing-out the nuclear phase-out. "There is a timetable about how the phase-out of this bridge technology will go on. For the moment, that is mandatory", Saarland state Prime Minister Peter Mueller said. "To me, the question of nuclear power plant license extensions is not a priority." Instead of reversing the phase-out law decided by Red-Green, it would make more sense to achieve a secure, inexpensive and sustainable energy supply based on existing legislation, Müller said. "In this spirit, we are working on a future without nuclear energy". He demanded more energy efficiency and a fast expansion of renewable energies.

The decision on the nuclear phase-out was legislated in 2002 as a result of wide discussion and consensus in the society. It has largely stimulated the German energy industry to make major investments in wind and solar energy,

making Germany a world leader in the large-scale renewable energy technologies. Rather than phasing out the nuclear phaseout, the new government should close down dangerous old reactors and maintain the country's leading role in clean energy.

Another important legacy of the Schroeder SPD/Green coalition government is the Renewable Energy Sources Act. This key law obliges grid operators to pay fixed feed-in tariffs for electricity won from renewable sources. This lucky law has gained popularity all across the German political spectrum – even the FDP has come to see its far-reaching importance: fixed feed-in tariffs, creating thousands of Green jobs, have helped Germany become the world's first address in wind technology. Still, using the recovering economy as an excuse, the Merkel government will short-sightedly shorten renewable energy subsidies, particularly to solar power, which runs on panels 'Made in China.'

Stocks in Germany's main nuclear utilities rose on the news: EOn up 3.2% and RWE up 2.8% while solar power companies slumped between 1.9% and 4.3% on the expectation of a revision to €3.2 billion-a-year feed-in-tariff for renewables.

The German antinuclear movement has a fight ahead, but some say it is easier to fight an open conservative government than against one that pretends it would be anti-nuclear. The movement is actually growing stronger (see the 50,000-strong demonstration in Berlin on September 5), following the

current crisis with radioactive waste and a recent series of accidents at aging German nuclear reactors.

Nuclear industry circles are optimistic and delighted. The World Nuclear News headlines: 'Election brings hope for German nuclear'. About the expected prolonged operational life with 10-15 years for the reactors (beyond the 32 years decided in the phase-out law), they stated: "similar reactors elsewhere operate for up to 60 years". According to the World Nuclear

Association, the forthcoming change in Germany's stance "could bring a new zeal to energy and climate policies of the G8 group of industrialized nations as well as their approach to negotiations".

However that has to be seen; the climate issue was not on the forefront in the discussion on nuclear power in Germany; energy shortage and transition technology was.

Sources: Newsreports and mail, 27 & 28 September 2009 / Der Spiegel, 29

September 2009 / www.Nuclear-free.com, 29 September 2009 / World Nuclear News, 28 September / Financial Times Deutschland, 30 September 2009

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AREVA'S PROFITS FALL AND DISPUTE ON OLKILUOTO DEEPENS

The AREVA half-year results exhibit the financial risks of nuclear power, now that new provisions on the Finnish European Pressurised Reactor (EPR) under construction at Olkiluoto virtually wiped out AREVA's operating profits for this period. AREVA threatens to freeze the Olkiluoto-3 construction works, blaming "TVO's inappropriate behavior" for the delays and cost overruns. The Finnish utility Teollisuuden Voima Oyj (TVO), insists on its compliance with the contract and expects AREVA to keep the fixed-price, turn-key agreement. Both parties have taken the issue to arbitrary court.

(695.5979) Greenpeace International - AREVA has taken a €550 million (US\$ 800 million) provision in the first half of 2009 for the EPR being built in Finland, causing the company's operating profit to tumble 97% to €16 million and the net profit with 79% to €161 million. The latest estimate of the Olkiluoto-3 construction costs reached €5.5 billion, more than double the price of €2.5 billion originally offered to Finnish decision-makers. Anne Lauvergeon, AREVA's CEO, admitted that there could be more provisions to come. The Finnish project is currently three years behind schedule, and it is impossible to determine the final cost at this stage, she said. Still AREVA markets the EPR as 'a cost-effective reactor'.

AREVA threatens it will only commence the final phases of the EPR construction once TVO has agreed upon proposals or contractual modifications. AREVA's language is strong: TVO is accused of inappropriate behaviour in contract management, of not implementing agreed measures for speeding up the work, and of persisting with conduct that is not in line with standard industry practises. Delays are caused by "inadequate resources deployed by TVO" and TVO not "respecting the deadlines for processing the documents

that have been delivered (2 months, versus 11 months in practice)".

AREVA says TVO has changed its demands on the project and is to blame for long delays in the approvals and safety authorisation processes. AREVA currently demands €1 billion compensation from TVO, claiming there is more to come. TVO in turn still concerns Olkiluoto-3 as a fixed-price delivery and claims compensation from AREVA for losses and costs incurred as a result of repeated delays. This internal nuclear fight should act as a warning for potential investors, because it demonstrates that nuclear companies have no intention whatsoever to bear the risk of delays and cost overruns in future reactor projects.

The work continues

So far, the work at Olkiluoto-3 still continues. On 6 September 2009, the dome of the reactor building was installed, representing a major milestone in the EPR construction. The steel dome, weighing 210 tons and measuring almost 47 meters across, will be welded around its circumference and covered with 7,000 tons of concrete.

AREVA also reported that the construction of the EPR in Flamanville, France, is now 65% complete, and

Taishan 1 and 2 in China are 30% completed. However, Reuters recently reported that the start of construction work at AREVA's first nuclear reactor in China was delayed from August to around mid-September because of bad weather. The Chinese authorities still needed to authorise the start of the work, but were busy due to bad weather conditions. Construction works for the Taishan-2 reactor in China are expected to start in March 2010, and the Taishan reactors are expected to come online in 2013 and 2014 respectively.

EDF said in a statement end of July that it still expects Flamanville-3 to be connected to the grid in 2012. It claims that the problems in digging the seaside discharge channel are now overcome, but that remains to be seen. EDF is putting a lot of money and effort in the construction project, supposedly trying to be the first to finish an EPR (before AREVA in Finland). There are 1,800 workers on the construction site and work is being conducted around the clock to make up for past delays.

In the meantime, Anne Lauvergeon made some astonishing remarks about the EPR at a hearing in front of a parliament committee. She described the EPR as "a box of steel and concrete

producing 1.650 MW in a very small volume. (...) It resists almost everything. Whatever happens on the outside, there will be no impact on the inside, even on the impact of a commercial plane or missile. (...) The only thing it can not resist is a nuclear bomb."

Raising cash

On 30 June 2009, AREVA announced plans to raise funds for new nuclear investments by selling its transmission and distribution (T&D) unit and by opening up its capital to strategic and industrial partners. AREVA needs the money not only for its ambitious expansion plans, but also to buy out Siemens, who announced in January 2009 it wants to withdraw from the joint venture with AREVA in AREVA-NP (see Nuclear Monitor 683, 12 February 2009: 'Siemens leaving Areva; joining Rosatom?') The French government, 91% owner of Areva, was forced to take action and has been pushing for sales of the T&D unit. CEO Anne Lauvergeon long resisted the sales because the T&D division is a profitable part of AREVA representing 36% of Areva's turnover in 2007; but Lauvergeon had to give in.

Three consortia made a bid for AREVA's T&D unit: GeneralElectric with private equity group CVC; Toshiba of Japan; and a French partnership of the turbine group Alstom and Schneider Electric (in 2004 Areva took over the T&D business from the French company Alstom). Toshiba appears to be the least serious, leaving the GE and the French bids on the table as most promising. A decision on the T&D bidding is not expected before beginning of November 2009. On 11 September AREVA succeeded in raising a large amount of investment money by issuing a €2.250 billion bond. There was (surprisingly?) high interest from investors in the company's first bond issue, and there might be more to follow.

Corporate bonds seem to be in fashion in the nuclear industry: EDF has raised about €3.2 billion with a public bond issue this summer, aimed to pay for massive investments in its domestic electricity production and electricity network. Also the Finnish utility TVO issued a bond (€750 million), the money to be used for "refinancing and general corporate operations". It was not

specified whether any of the money will be used to cover the Olkiluoto-3 cost overruns. Furthermore, the Italian company ENEL announced a bond issue this autumn to raise money for its investment programme. One of the projects to receive financing from this bond issue is the Mochovce 3,4 nuclear reactor programme.

Sources: Nuclear News Flashes 18 June 2009 / AFP 9 July 2009 / Nuclear News Flashes 30 July 2009 / Financial Times 31 August 2009 / AREVA Press Release 31 August 2009 / World Nuclear News 1 September 2009 / Reuters 2 September 2009 / AREVA Press Release 6 September 2009 / AFP 17 September 2009 / Financial Times 21 September 2009

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JAPAN: NUCLEAR ENERGY POLICY UNDER A NEW GOVERNMENT

After winning a landslide victory in the House of Representatives election held on August 30, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) has formed a coalition government with the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the People's New Party (PNP). It might be hoped that a change of government would herald a change of nuclear energy policy, but we should not be too sanguine about the chances of a significant improvement.

(695.5980) CNIC - There is a wide range of views about nuclear energy within the DPJ (as indeed there is in the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), which ruled Japan for most of the last fifty odd years). While minor coalition partner SDP favors a nuclear phase out, its influence on nuclear policy within the new government is likely to be quite limited. PNP is a relatively recent breakaway from the LDP and is unlikely to rock the boat on nuclear energy issues.

The prospects for policy change are likely to depend very much on the ability of civil society to make serious proposals that have the potential to garner widespread support. The first opportunity will be the budget estimates

for the 2010 fiscal year. Anyone can see that allocating 20 billion yen (US\$ 220 million, 150 million Euro) for the Monju prototype fast breeder reactor (FBR) is throwing good money after bad. This should be the first item cut from the budget request. Funding for fairyland proposals like the demonstration FBR to follow the Monju prototype should also be reviewed. It should also be obvious that a review of the Atomic Energy Commission's fundamental policy statement, Framework for Nuclear Energy Policy, should be scheduled as soon as possible.

Before the election DPJ issued a policy Manifesto in which it said that "[w]hile placing safety first and gaining the understanding and confidence of the

people," it would "take steady steps toward the use of nuclear power." This quote is from the English summary. The same section in the full Japanese version refers also to "secure supply". Given that Japan's nuclear power program has been a failure with respect to "safety first", "secure supply", and "understanding and confidence of the people", if the DPJ were to get serious about these issues, that in itself would represent a major change.

In regard to "safety first", DPJ's Manifesto states, "a highly independent nuclear safety regulatory commission will be established under Article 3 of the National Government Organization Act." The existing Nuclear Safety Commission was established within the

Cabinet Office in 1978 under the Nuclear Energy Basic Law, the same law that covers the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC). Article 1 of the Law states, "The Objectives of this Law shall be to secure energy resources in the future, to achieve the progress of science and technology and the promotion of industries by encouraging the research, development and utilization of nuclear power..." Thus NSC's safety assurance role is compromised from the start by association with the promotion of nuclear energy.

NSC is supposed to act as a double check on the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency (NISA), which regulates the nuclear industry. However, as part of the Ministry for Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), the ministry with prime responsibility for promoting nuclear power, NISA's independence is also compromised. NSC and NISA, or any regulatory body that replaces them, should have nothing to do with the promotion of nuclear power.

Serious consideration should also be given to the question of whether the double check relationship should be retained, or whether it would be better to merge NSC and NISA into a single regulatory body. Likewise the question of whether the AEC should continue to exist in its current form should be openly debated.

Another area that should be openly debated is the respective responsibilities of government and industry. DPJ's Manifesto states, "Reprocessing of

with the problems of spent fuel and radioactive waste produced in their nuclear power plants. On the other hand, the role of government is to regulate so that the failures of industry do not lead to nuclear disasters or become an excessive economic burden. Government is also responsible for averting potential disasters when all else fails. In this sense the government has "final responsibility", but industry must not be allowed to offload its rightful responsibilities onto the government or the general public.

Our hope is that the new government will reassess recent trends that are inconsistent with the principle of "safety first". These include reducing the time taken for periodic assessments, extending the time between inspections, and life extensions and uprates for aging reactors. We hope the DPJ led government will strive to create a rigorous and rational nuclear regulatory system.

MONJU RESTART FEBRUARY NEXT YEAR?

On July 12 replacement of degraded fuel was completed at Japan Atomic Energy Agency's (JAEA) Monju Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (FBR, 280 MW) located in Tsuruga City, Fukui Prefecture. Then on August 12 final confirmation tests of the overall integrity of the plant were completed. The same day, Toshio Yamauchi, Senior Vice Minister of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), visited Fukui Governor Issei Nishikawa and Tsuruga Mayor Kazuharu Kawase to officially communicate the government's aim of restarting Monju as early as February 2010. This would be two years later than the target date of February 2008 announced when modification work began in March 2005. The Prototype FBR is closed since a sodium leak and fire in December 1995. Construction of Monju started in 1986 and the reactor was only connected to the grid for four months when the accident happened!

Nuke Info Tokyo, 132, Sept/Oct. 2009 / PRIS Reactor database.

spent nuclear fuel and disposal of radioactive waste from nuclear power plants are long term projects, so the government should take final responsibility for establishing the technology and for the project." If they are not careful this type of loose wording could have the effect of reinforcing industry's already irresponsible attitude. Electric power companies have primary responsibility for safety assurance and for dealing

Source: Nuke Info Tokyo 132, September/October 2009

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HEARING ON LITHUANIAN NUCLEAR REACTOR CASE

Greenpeace, the Lithuanian environmental organisation Atgaja, the Latvian Green Movement and CEE Bankwatch were in court September 30, challenging the environmental impact assessment for the proposed nuclear power station near the towns of Visaginas and Ignalina in Lithuania.

(695.5981) Atgaja - The groups maintain that the assessment is fundamentally flawed because it does not evaluate the full impact of the proposed nuclear power plant, including the effects of radioactive waste, and does not compare the environmental impact of possible alternatives, such as renewable energy. The Lithuanian Ministry of Environment argued that the assessment was complete and that future generations would be able to cope with nuclear

waste thanks to technologies that are still to be developed. A final decision on the challenge to the environmental impact assessment will take place at a hearing of the Vilnius District Administrative Court on 12 October 2009.

Greenpeace EU nuclear expert Jan Haverkamp said: "The environmental impact assessment is deeply flawed and fails to consider issues such as the

impact of nuclear waste and the cost of decommissioning. It contains so many omissions that it is impossible to determine whether building a nuclear power station can be justified on environmental grounds."

Saulius Piksrys of the Lithuanian organisation Atgaja said: "The environmental impact assessment tells us nothing about the costs that our grandchildren might have to bear to

manage the storage of nuclear waste. The bill could be much higher than investors have predicted. Without an idea of what the full costs would amount to, Lithuanian authorities are taking a huge gamble at the taxpayers expense."

The proposed nuclear reactors would be built next to the town of Visaginas, in north-eastern Lithuania on the border with Latvia and Belarus, near the Chernobyl-era reactors of the Ignalina nuclear power station. The Ignalina

nuclear power station was partly closed down in 2004. It will definitively come off-line later this year. If authorised, the new Visaginas plant would come on-line in 2018 and should have a capacity of around 3000 MW.

Alda Ozola from the Latvian Green Movement criticised the lack of data on the possible impact resulting from a substantial nuclear accident: "How can the environmental impact assessment be complete if it doesn't even consider the

impact of a Chernobyl-style nuclear accident on nearby European countries?"

Source: Press release, Greenpeace, Bankwatch, Atgaja and Latvian Green Movement, 30 September 2009

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IN BRIEF

Sellafield HLW returns to customers. For over 30 years, overseas used nuclear fuel has been reprocessed in the UK, under contract at Sellafield. Since 1976 all UK reprocessing contracts have contained an option for this radioactive waste to be returned to its country of origin. The contracts to return the high level waste to Japanese and European customers now sit with the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority. The program of work to transport canisters of vitrified (solid glass) waste to customers is known in the UK as the Vitrified Residue Returns (VRR) programme. 'Vitrified' - refers to HLW in the form of a Glass block - as compared to the original waste fuel rod, liquid nitric acid stock - which are the initial product of the plutonium separation. The NDA has "received advice from Sellafield Ltd and the NDA's commercial and transport subsidiary, International Nuclear Services that the infrastructure is in place and plans are sufficiently advanced" to return the waste to the countries of origin in the current financial year (2009/10).

Overall the UK phase of the program will return approximately 1,850 containers of vitrified waste to overseas customers and will include a number of containers being returned in accordance with the Government policy on waste substitution. The VRR program, which will substantially reduce the amount of highly active waste currently stored in the UK at Sellafield, is planned to take around 10 years. The NDA's commercial transport subsidiary, International Nuclear Services, will be responsible for transporting the vitrified waste to destinations in Japan, the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland and Italy.

NDA press release, 28 September 2009, WNN, 29 September 2009

Sizewell 5 anti-nuclear blockaders found not guilty. On September 29, two days into their four-day trial, the Sizewell five have been found not guilty of aggravated trespass after a blockade in 2008 of the Sizewell nuclear power station in Suffolk, UK. The Sizewell Five have been acquitted by the Lowestoft Magistrates' Court in Suffolk, after the prosecution failed to provide evidence that the defendants were on private land, meaning that they were all acquitted on this legal technicality. The trial related to a physical blockade of the sole access road to the Sizewell nuclear power plant last year. The defendants had held up a banner reading "Nuclear Power is Not a Solution to Climate Chaos" as they physically blocked the road with their bodies and arm tubes. The defendants had planned to use the defence that they were acting to prevent breaches of health and safety legislation resulting from the continued operation of the nuclear power plant in Suffolk. They had planned to call at least one expert witness, an independent nuclear consultant, but the judge had refused to allow this on the first day of trial, despite earlier pre-trial reviews.

Direct action groups are meeting in London in November to discuss strategies to fight the plans to build nuclear power plants in the U.K. The weekend will be a space for grassroots campaigners to network, share ideas and information and make plans to win. "By developing skills and confidence in creating and implementing campaign and action plans we can identify when and where our interventions can be most successful".

More information: Nuclear People Power network
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<http://stopnuclearpower.blogspot.com>

113,488 say 'no' to uranium mining in Slovakia. Late September, Greenpeace delivered a petition with 113,488 signatures calling for the Slovak parliament to change laws regarding uranium mining in the country. Under the Slovakian constitution, any petition having more than 100,000 signatories must be discussed by the country's parliament. The petition is seeking a change in the law allowing municipalities to have a say on uranium mining in their areas. As all the towns and cities near potential mining sites are against the idea, this could mean very little or no uranium mining being done in Slovakia.

The campaign was launched three years ago, in order to stop a project aggressively pushed by the Canadian-based company Tournigan. It planned to open two uranium mines: one located just six kilometres upstream from Košice, the second largest city in Slovakia with a population of 250,000 people; the other at the border of the stunning UNESCO national park, 'Slovak Paradise'. A coalition of groups led by Greenpeace mobilized dozens of towns and local councils, regional governments, and over 100,000 citizens to express their refusal to turn Slovak Paradise into a contaminated and devastated landscape.

The authorities are now counting the signatures.

Nuclear Reaction, 25 September 2009

Nuclear fuel wins carbon exemption - for now. Processing of nuclear fuel (uranium conversion and enrichment) has been granted an exemption from European Union (EU) plans to auction carbon dioxide emissions allowances from 2013, although the exemption list will be reviewed before 2010.

Currently, participants in the EU Emissions Trading Scheme receive emissions allowances for free to cover the majority of their expected carbon dioxide emissions based on their past emissions under a scheme known as 'grandfathering'. Participants then buy and sell allowances depending on what their actual emissions are. However, from 2013 the scheme will progressively reduce the free allocation and companies will be required to buy allowances in an auction. Brussels unveiled on 18 September a draft list of industrial and business sectors it fears could relocate outside Europe to jurisdictions with weaker climate change rules in future. Among these was the 'processing of nuclear fuel', which will be given carbon emission allowances under the EU's emissions trading scheme from 2013 to 2020.

World Nuclear news, 24 September 2009

Four Arizona tribes ban uranium on their lands. In the United States of America, the Navajo Nation, the Hopi Tribe, the Havasupai Tribe and the Hualapai Tribe have all banned uranium on their lands. The tribes are worried about damage to the environment. "Contamination emanates from mining, does not know any boundaries, and it could easily cross community after community without them ever knowing," said Robert Tohe, a member of the Navajo Nation, told the Associated Press. "I think that's the real danger, and that's why tribes have become unified."

The Interior Department recently barred new mining claims near the Grand Canyon. All four tribes have land in the area. The tribal ban adds to a temporary mining ban on nearly 1 million federally owned acres around the Grand Canyon. The combined actions mean uranium-bearing lands in northern Arizona open to companies hungry to resume mining are growing scarce.

AP, 17 September 2009

Uranium royalty laws favour miners, exploit aborigines. Anti-nuclear activists in Alice Springs say changes to uranium royalties in the Northern Territory will make way for the exploitation of Aboriginal communities. The bill extends the royalty system so miners pay a fixed rate only if they are making profits, rather than basing the rate on production. The bill was passed in the federal Senate early September.

Jimmy Cocking from the Arid Lands Environment Centre says the Federal Government has bowed to industry pressure and Aboriginal people will suffer. "It's going to be easier for companies to get it up so you might find that companies who are more marginal – not the big producers but the more marginal companies – will start digging and then find out that they can't even pay for the rehabilitation costs," he said.

ABC News, 11 September 2009

Saving the climate would bring more jobs in the power industry. A strong shift toward renewable energies could create 2.7 million more jobs in power generation worldwide by 2030 than staying with dependence on fossil fuels would. The study, by environmental group Greenpeace and the European Renewable Energy Council (EREC), urged governments to agree a strong new United Nations pact to combat climate change in December in Copenhagen, partly to safeguard employment. "A switch from coal to renewable electricity generation will not just avoid 10 billion tons of carbon dioxide emissions, but will create 2.7 million more jobs by 2030 than if we continue business as usual," the report said. Under a scenario of business as usual, the number of jobs in power generation would fall by about half a million to 8.6 million by 2030, hit by mainly by a decline in the coal sector due to wider mechanization.

The report said that, for the first time in 2008, both the United States and the European Union added more capacity from renewable energies than from conventional sources including gas, coal oil and nuclear power. The report suggested the wind sector alone, for instance, could employ 2.03 million people in generating power in 2030 against about 0.5 million in 2010.

The report can be found at: <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/press/reports/working-for-the-climate>

U.K.: Keeping the nuclear fire burning. A stinging attack on the nuclear policy of the United Kingdom's Government and the role played by civil servants has been made by Jonathan Porritt. Retiring as chairman of the Government's Sustainable Development Commission he spoke of wasted years and opportunities in pursuing the revival of the nuclear industry. In 2003 the commission had worked with the Department of Trade and Industry minister Patricia Hewitt on a new White Paper which concluded that "nuclear power is not necessary for a secure low-carbon efficient UK economy". However, instead of implementing the plans, civil servants "kept the nuclear flame burning" until a new minister was appointed. "The civil servants won that battle at a great cost to energy policy in the UK. We have had years of delay on critical things that could have been done on renewable energy and energy efficiency. We had six to eight years of prevarication when we could have been getting on with it."

N-Base Briefing 622, 19 August 2009

U.S.A.: Grandmothers against nuclear power! From inside the security gate at Entergy's Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant, four Massachusetts women opposed to nuclear power looked out at VY security personnel, state and town police officers, and representatives of the media. The plant's security gate rumbled to a close too slowly to bar the four, including

three grandmothers. Within half an hour, the four were arrested by state troopers and Vernon Police Chief, who arrived at the scene within minutes of the security breach. Charged with trespassing and ordered to appear December 15 in Windham County District Court are Ellen Graves, 69; Frances Crowe, 90; Paki Wieland, 66; and Hattie Nestel, 70. Acting on behalf of the Shut It Down affinity group, the four women wanted to demonstrate that inadequate safety at Vermont Yankee is not limited to radiation leaks and collapsing cooling towers, according to Nestel. Women from Shut It Down have been arrested seven times previously at the Vernon plant or at headquarters in Brattleboro. Each time, they have pointed to the unsafe, inefficient, and unreliable characteristics of nuclear power, Nestel said. The women carried signs calling for the closure of the nuclear plant. Mary-Ann DeVita Palmieri, 71, chauffeured the four to the main Entergy VY gate with Marcia Gagliardi, 62, who got out of the car with those eventually arrested. "We hope we demonstrated that there is no way to make Vermont Yankee secure," said Nestel. "It is time to shut it down."

Press release, Shut It Down!, 28 september 2009

UK: LibDems cave in to nuclear power lobby. Tom Burke, the veteran director of the Green Alliance, was invited to the Liberal Democrats Conference to debate nuclear power. However, shortly before the conference, he was informed that he was dis-invited. It seems that EDF, the nuclear power company, was experiencing sphincter problems at the prospect of debating with Burke, so they leaned on the LiberalDems, who collapsed like a tower of toilet paper in a thunderstorm.

Tom Burke writes: "I thought you would all like to know that I was originally invited by Dod's to speak at the three low carbon fringe meetings at the party conferences. I accepted the invitation and received a confirmation of my participation sometime early in the summer. Three weeks ago I was notified by e-mail that I had been disinvited at the request of EDF who were sponsoring the meetings. This dis-invitation arrived too late to change the programme for the event at the Lib-Dem Conference where I was listed as a speaker. Given that EDF have now owned up to the fact that they cannot do new build nuclear without subsidies I am not totally surprised that they no longer wish to debate the issue in public."

<http://greenerblog.blogspot.com>

Australia: radioactivity in dust storms? Environmentalists have raised concerns that another giant dust storm blowing its way across eastern Australia may contain radioactive particles. It is argued that sediment whipped up from Australia's centre may be laced with material from the Olympic Dam uranium mine. Scientists have played down concerns, saying there is little to worry about. On September 23, Sydney and Brisbane bore witness to their biggest dust storm in 70 years. Both were shrouded in red dust. The dust storm is believed to have originated around Woomera in outback South Australia near the massive Olympic Dam uranium mine, prompting fears it was radioactive and dangerous.....

The massive clouds of dust that choked heavily populated parts of Australia have caused problems for people with asthma, as well as those with heart and lung conditions.

But some environmental campaigners believe that the dry, metallic-tasting sediment could threaten the health of millions of other Australians. David Bradbury, a renowned filmmaker and activist, claims the haze that engulfed some of the country's biggest cities contains radioactive tailings –carried on gale force winds from a mine in the South Australian desert.

"Given the dust storms... which [the] news said originated from Woomera, and which is right next door to the Olympic Dam mine at Roxby Downs, these [storms] could blow those tailings across the face of Australia," he said.

BBC News, 28 September 2009

Brazil and nuclear wepaons. Brazil's Vice-President Jose Alencar has said possession of nuclear weapons would enable his country to deter potential aggressors and give the South American nation greater 'respectability' on the world stage, according to a media report from Sao Paulo. "Nuclear weapons as an instrument of deterrence are of great importance for a country that has 15,000 km of border", O Estado de Sao Paulo newspaper quoted Alencar as saying while referring to the security of the country's offshore oil deposits. Besides deterrence, nuclear weapons "give more respectability", citing the example of Pakistan, a poor nation that "has a seat in various international entities, precisely for having an atomic bomb".

Brazil's military regime (1964-1985) had a covert nuclear-weapons program that was shut down after the restoration of democratic rule.

MercoPress, 28 September 2009



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Invitation

Nuclear Waste Problems - from Mining to Reactor Waste

International Conference, 17-18 Oct. 2009, Stockholm, Sweden



International speakers will give presentations about issues as

- Which consequences does radiation has on the biologic diversity?
- Is deep underground disposal the solution for radioactive waste?
- Does a nuclear power station during 'normal' operation emits radiation? If so, how much?

The conference is in English. Costs are 55 euro per person, including refreshments and lunch. Travel and accomodation are at own costs.

17 October:

- ASSE II - A Notorious Nuclear Repository in Germany
 - Depleted Uranium (DU) in Weapons - Action group against Radioactive Warfare, Sweden
 - Radioactive Emissions into Air from Nuclear Reactors - Dr. Ian Fairlie, UK
 - Medical Effects of Radiation - Ulla Slama, Physician, Finland
 - Male Supremacy in the Nuclear Industry - Ewa Larsson, Green Women, Sweden
 - Uranium: not only mining - Professor Gordon Edwards, Canada
- Workshop 1: International cooperation in the environmental movement on radioactive waste issues.
Workshop 2: Uranium mining and Indigenous Peoples.
Workshop 3: Health effects of radiation.
Workshop 4: Other aspects of nuclear waste.
Report from the working groups, discussion and summary

18 October:

- Swedish Final Repository for Low and Medium Level Nuclear Waste (SFR), Lars-Olof Höglund, Nuclear Engineer, Sweden
- Central Interim Storage Facility for Spent Nuclear Fuel (CLAB), Roland Davidsson, National Organisation of Energy Associations (SERO), Sweden
- High Level Nuclear Waste and the European Pressurized Reactor, Lauri Myllyvirta, Greenpeace, Finland
- Nuclear Waste in the UK, Dr. David Lowry, UK
- High Level Nuclear Waste & Very Deep Boreholes, Dr. Johan Swahn, The Swedish NGO Office for Nuclear Waste Review (MKG), Sweden
- High Level Nuclear Waste & The Dry Rock Deposit Method, Dr. Nils-Axel Mörner, Sweden
- Nuclear Waste in Russia - Andrey Ozharovskiy, Ecodefence, Moscow
- Problems and Financing of Nuclear Waste in Japan, Dr. Göran Bryntse, Sweden
- Nuclear Future - Ulla Klötzer, Finland
- Press conference / coffee and tea
- Panel discussion



Please, register at: <http://www.nonuclear.se/register>
The registration deadline is 6 October 2009

WISE/NIRS NUCLEAR MONITOR

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

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

Receiving the WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor

US and Canada based readers should contact NIRS for details of how to receive the Nuclear Monitor (address see page 11). Others receive the Nuclear Monitor through WISE Amsterdam.

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