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## France, the happy atom's land ?

### General information and facts on nuclear in France :

- ▶ 58 Nuclear Power Plants on 19 different sites producing around 75% of the national electricity (but only 17% of the total energy consumed in the country).
- ▶ Uranium 100% imported (mainly from Africa > Niger and Gabon, but also from Australia, Kazakhstan and Canada) and plants built under an American model > Westinghouse license. So, funny to hear the French government speaking proudly about energetic independence.
- ▶ More than 200,000 high Voltage pylons cross France in all directions to carry electricity far away from the centralised 19 production sites. And nobody sees it. But the more or less 8,000 wind turbines actually installed make some people very angry because, according to them, it is spoiling the landscapes... In the last past 50 years, France has been "investing" around 170 billions € in this nuclear energy ; and we can expect almost (or at least) the same amount of money will be required for dismantling and keeping waste relatively safe.
- ▶ French people were never asked in any way if they agree with that energy policy although they have to pay a lot for it.
- ▶ In France, everything related to atom has something "taboo" (it is as if you were touching the penis of the President) ; and more especially when it is linked to nuclear weapons. To discuss atom is like to doubt about the "grandeur de la France" (France's dignity). To join the "nuclear club", after the Second World War, has given to France (a middle range country with declining world influence) the opportunity to stay among the great powerful ones ; for example, in the Security Council of the United Nations.

Politicians and lobby :

- ▶ Another “locking mechanism” in the country is that all the French political parties that share power (except for the few Greens) have always been and still are very favourable to the nuclear option.
- ▶ And most politicians are very obedient to a strong and well installed nuclear lobby. This lobby includes :
  - 1) AREVA that, even if it is now almost bankrupting, keeps pushing to increase nuclear power in France and if possible all around the world. For years long, AREVA was playing a big multinational game ; but in fact, 87% of its money comes directly from the French State.
  - 2) CEA (Important Research Center on both civilian and military atom)
  - 3) and EDF (national electricity company) All these powerful governmental structures (heavily subsidized and with a lot of debts in spite of it) are pushing in the same pro-nuke direction.
- ▶ This French coalition of proud blind politicians and greedy lobby with a powerful influence is forming one of the most obsessive gang in the world to promote the nuclear dead-end.

## **Activists :**

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- ▶ In the mid-seventies, there was a strong French anti-nuclear movement. But in 1977, on a big demonstration with 70,000 people, there was a lot of violence. One activist died and two were handicapped. And it broke down the wings of this movement for the next 10 years.
- ▶ After 1986 (beginning of the Chernobyl catastrophe), the French resistance rebuilt slowly, mainly against the fast-breeder Superphenix, that was finally stopped in 1996.
- ▶ In the meantime, the main anti-nuclear French network to phase out nuclear energy is gathering more than 900 groups and NGOs ; and acting with many big demonstrations, direct non-violent actions, press releases often taken by medias and various juridic battles (that they often win) against the nuclear industry.

## **Actual anti-nuclear priority struggles in France for the next times :**

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### **1) to convince the whole country that nuclear industry is not only dangerous but in itself a financial abyss (that all citizens are paying for).**

- In 2016, EDF has a debt estimated to 38 billions €. In spite of it, the French State is forcing EDF to buy Areva that is almost bankrupting with its own debt (between 10 and 15 billions €). In the meantime, the President-King Hollande (without any vote in the parliament) just gave a little 5 billions € to Areva to help it staying alive... When after 50 years existence, an industry is not able to survive without total help from the government, it is time to understand that it is simply not viable.

### **2) to convince the whole country that to extend “life” for old nuclear power plants from 40 to 50 years would mean still more risks and more costs (between 50 and 100 billions € to renew it partly).**

- 32% of the aging French NPPs are now more than 35 years old. Better to start seriously now

with renewable energies, energy efficiency and saving to succeed the urgently needed transition for a free-nuke and free-fossile world.

French public opinion :

- ▶ What is amazing is that in spite of decades of pro-nuclear propaganda and misinformation, French public opinion remains defiant toward nuclear energy.
- ▶ On one side, the French population is tired and surrenders in front of the nuclear bull-dozer that has imposed this “fait accompli”. And many other social fights make people often march down the streets.
- ▶ On the other side, with our continuous activist work, we try finding catalysts to help the population act as a priority on the nuclear issue. Not so successfully until now...
- ▶ But we still hope that France can succeed to get rid of this chronical brain nuclear constipation before the first French Chernobyl happens, that would destroy a wonderful country ; and its neighbours too.

**André Larivière,**

**26th of April Appeal**

and international committee of Réseau Sortir du nucléaire, France. (French Network to phase out nuclear energy) Updated 03/03/2016