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Transatlantic Proa completed its challenge

The team of "Energy Challenge" made landfall at Sainte Anne de la Martinique

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Sunday afternoon 13 November 2005.

There are five people on board, on a funny-looking craft which resembles a windsurfer, a Malayan proa and a yacht. Yachtlike is the central habitable hull (maximum height under the beam: 1.8 m) where the crew rests and cooks, and which has a rudder (two, actually) to keep on course. Proa-like is the "balancer": a lateral float linked to the hull by an arm. Windsurferlike is the row of sails on the central hull (up to 7) resembling those seen on anybody's windsurfer: stretched with a wishbone from a mast hinged at the foot. They can be held and angled by arm-power, even if this is usually done by a system of ropes. The smallest is 3.5 square metres, most are 7.5 and the largest is 9, which requires reinforcing battens.

The central hull and the float have identical extremities, so that the direction is reversible: in this case the rudder at the back is raised and the one at the front is lowered, so that the prow becomes the stern. This manoeuvre is delicate and rare; usually the boat can turn or gybe like any windsurfer or yacht.

Let's call it a "sail-proa". It still bears the name of its first sponsor "Challenge Nuclear Phase-out". The small group of Bretons who are demonstrating their proawess , "Energy Challenge", is paving the ocean with excellent intentions.

This first Atlantic crossing is certainly a sporting, technical and financial exploit (with a handful of modest sponsors and a tiny budget, derisory when compared, for example, with the financial waste of "Défi AREVA"). This has been a beautiful human adventure: five people living in a confined space in spartan conditions, getting along for 9 weeks not just watching the ever-changing ocean but also stoically facing the wild elements (as during a force 8 storm in the Gulf of Biscay) and repairing the breakages - not a small feat. Judging by their on-board log, it was a moral success and a fine lesson in anarchy: "order minus power" as Léo Ferré used to say. Above all, it is an action to encourage as many people as possible to think about solutions to implement quickly so that we do not leave to our children a dying explosive Earth.

In the minds of its promoters, this crossing aimed to link up industrialists, voluntary groups, politicians and ordinary citizens to take part in building the world of tomorrow.

They left from the Gulf of Morbihan and passed the Pointe des Immigrés on Saturday 10 September.

For 2 months the 5 crew-members have lived almost completely in energy autonomy. No fuel on board except the gas which they consumed a little over 12kg of, not having the time -nor money- to find out how to turn raw into cooked, as Claude Lévi-Strauss used to say, by means of renewable energy sources. With their two solar panels, they power lights, including night lamps, run their computer, satellite phone, rechargeable radio batteries, GPS, torches, video camera, cameras, DVD player, electric kettle made (on board, on the Atlantic) with 2 old elements, and electric razor (for their chins)... All that is done with no external energy source except the sun.

And of course, the wind is what carried them thousands of miles (and even more kilometres).

They are sad to be hearing every day since they left Hierro (last stop in the Canaries before striking out across the mid-Atlantic) about the nuclear problem - Iran, North Korea - which has been the lead news story on Radio France.

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Let's say this straight out: in this world where everything is exploding, French suburbs, the top Amman hotels and of course Iraq, in this world where violence is concocted or anticipated in the political headquarters of parties, states or subversive organisations, where it is planned in military headquarters, financed in administration councils or stock exchanges, provoked in the harsh daily lives of millions and headlined in the newspapers, one would like the media to give more space to images that carry hope.

Such as the arrival in Martinique of this Transatlantic Proa.

Jean-Marie Matagne, president of Action of Citizens for the total Dismantling of Nukes (ACDN)

Article based on the website of the [Transat Prao](#), in satellite contact with its initiator, Alain Guillard, and the ground crew of "Energy Challenge".

PS:

ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SOURCES

according to "Energy Challenge".

Energy in all its forms is noble and precious. Energy must permit the development of human societies without causing irreversible trauma to the functioning of ecosystems. Energy must be accessible by every inhabitant of the planet. **(1)**

What is the situation at present?

Since the industrial revolution, our societies have developed essentially by exploiting coal and oil.

Mineral coal is a fossil fuel with such large deposits that we could go on exploiting them for hundreds of years. But the energy exploitation of coal produces huge inputs of carbon dioxide (CO₂) into the atmosphere, which are partly to blame for the greenhouse effect and hence for temperature increases.

Crude oil is a fossil fuel with deposits that will run out in about sixty years. Since it is becoming rare, the costs of exploiting it will continue to rise. The energy exploitation of oil also produces huge inputs of carbon dioxide (CO₂) into the atmosphere, increasing the greenhouse effect. Oil is a mineral that is becoming rare - it is a pity to use it as fuel, since other solutions are now possible that are renewable and less polluting.

Natural gas deposits will quickly run out, like oil. Burning natural gas, although it is cleaner, releases CO₂ also. However it must not escape naturally into the atmosphere since it would cause a much greater rise in the greenhouse effect. There must be a compromise in its use.

Nuclear energy cannot be the solution because:

- ▶ It uses a fossil fuel: uranium, of which the reserves will run out in about fifty years.
 - ▶ Its production costs are really greatly underestimated - you must add in the research, the building of plants, the very centralised production, the network needed for distribution, the management of wastes in the short, medium and long term, the necessary surveillance of these high-risk technological installations and the costs of dismantling plants.
 - ▶ It creates geo-strategic problems: the possession of nuclear weapons or the desire to have them (bombs or wastes) are incompatible with a serene vision of the future of humankind.
 - ▶ It forces humanity to run unacceptable ecological risks (Chernobyl).
 - ▶ The method of controlled thermonuclear fusion (the ITER project) is currently, according to the 2003 Nobel physics laureate, a blind alley (too expensive, very low chance of success, new technological dangers).
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(1) NOTE added by ACDN:

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This energy accessible by all inhabitants of the planet pour their basic needs must not be confused with the very ambiguous "right to energy" proclaimed by some French energy trade union and taken up up EDF (Electricité de France) for quite different purposes: encouraging national and above all international consumption of energy and exporting the "French" way of providing it - the bulding of new nuclear plants in developing countries and continents. That's just a way of making money at the expense of the poorest and imposing risks on humankind.