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No to the EPR!

No to civil and military nuclearism!

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There are many reasons for opposing the building of the EPR (European Pressurised Reactor), as was seen on April 15 at the great demonstration in Cherbourg. But there is one which is highlighted by international events and which deserves to be emphasized: the EPR would contribute to the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the risks of nuclear war.

France has no need of the EPR; it is conceived above all for export. Plans of it have already been sold to Finland. The first prototype and the one planned for Flamanville (Normandy) - if its construction were to go ahead - will be shop-windows intended to capture foreign buyers from around the world and particularly the developing nations. AREVA and EDF have already been approaching China and India, with the support of the French foreign office. President Chirac's recent trip to India had two major commercial objectives: to sell arms, such as submarines and warplanes, and to sell nuclear plants, like the future EPR.

On 30 March 2006, Iran proposed the setting-up of an international consortium including France, Germany and Russia, to help the Iranians to realise their non-military nuclear ambitions. There is no doubt that if this consortium were set up France and Germany, being associated with the EPR through AREVA and SIEMENS, would use it as a sales argument.

But consider the current crisis surrounding Iran's nuclear programme. What does it confirm? That nuclear technologies are dual, that it is impossible to build a firewall between their civilian use for energy production and their military use for making weapons. The same knowledge and the same technicians produce both, as is verified also in France. The same process of enriching uranium ore in U235 produces the fuel for power plants and the explosive for bombs. And the plutonium extracted from the plants can also be used as explosive material. The EPR will be no exception to this rule. The desire to export it therefore amounts to authorising one hand to do what the other hand is banned from doing. In a sense, it is tempting the devil: every State with an EPR will be able (if it so decides one day) to use it as Trojan Horse for its Bomb. The international community is becoming aware of this in the case of Iran, not before time, after letting Israel, India, Pakistan and North Korea obtain atomic weapons under the cover of non-military programmes.

That is why ACDN suggested to the Iranian government, by letter and during an audience at its Paris embassy on March 30, that it renounce its civilian nuclear programme and assume a leading role among nations promoting the abandonment of nuclear plants, energy economies, the development of sustainable energies, and nuclear disarmament. Although this suggestion was not adopted, it remains an option today, at the time when the "Iran dossier" threatens to result in "international sanctions", and even in military action envisaged by the USA, action which could even include the use of nuclear weapons. That would be a crowning irony, given the ostensible desire to prevent... the use of nuclear weapons.

This question will be raised again during the 2nd RID-NBC (Rally for International Disarmament - Nuclear, Biological and Chemical) which takes place on 6-8 May in Saintes (Western France). On 6 May 2006 at 5pm, in the Auditorium Saintonge, there is a public debate on the subject: « Civilian and Military Nuclear Technology: the Iran Dossier". One of the speakers will be Mr Moujani, who heads the diplomatic mission in France of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

We call on the citizens and elected representatives of France and Europe to be engaged in this dialogue and to set an example of nuclear renunciation by demanding the immediate suspension of the EPR programme.

ACDN, 15 April 2006