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France, 17 March 2007

No to the EPR! No to military and non-military nuclear technology!

- Homepage - News - Communiqués -

Publication date: Sunday 18 March 2007

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On Saturday March 17, 2007, five simultaneous demonstrations in France - in Rennes, Lille, Strasbourg, Lyon and Toulouse - attracted over 60,000 people. Organised by the Nuclear Phasing-out network ("sortir du nucléaire"), their message was NO to the EPR nuclear reactor, NO to civilian and military nuclear technology, YES to alternative energy sources and YES to nuclear disarmament. Below is the ACDN speech given at the Toulouse demonstration.

There are many reasons for opposing the building of the EPR (European Pressure Reactor), as is apparent from the large protests today (17 March 2007). One reason above all is currently highlighted by international affairs and deserves to be emphasized: the EPR contributes to the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the risks of nuclear war.

The EPR, which France has no need of, is conceived above all for export. Even before it existed in France, the plans for it were sold to Finland. This first prototype, and the second at Flamanville - if maintained - will be the shop-windows for foreign buyers, particularly from the emerging nations. AREVA and EDF have been targeting China and India, with the support of French diplomacy. President Chirac's trip to India last year had two major commercial objectives: to sell weapons such as our submarines or warplanes, and to sell nuclear plants, the EPR in particular.

On 30 March 2006, Iran proposed to set up a consortium including France, Germany and Russia to help it to realize its ambitions for nuclear power. If this consortium were to come into being, France and Germany, associated with the EPR via AREVA and SIEMENS, would surely seek to sell it to Iran.

But the crisis surrounding Iran's nuclear programme has highlighted the fact that nuclear technologies are dual ones, that it is impossible to set up a firewall between their civilian use in energy production and their military use for weapons manufacture. The same knowledge and the same technicians produce both, as has been ascertained also in France. The same process for enriching uranium ore in U235 produces fuel for the power-plants and explosives for the bombs. The plutonium extracted from the plants can also serve as explosives. The international community is noticing this very tardily in the case of Iran, after letting Israel, Pakistan and India obtain nuclear weapons under the cover of civilian programmes. The EPR will not escape from this pattern. To wish to export it is therefore to authorize with one hand what one forbids with the other. It's like tempting the devil: every state that has an EPR will be able, if one day it so chooses, to use it as a Trojan Horse for its Bomb.

For this reason ACDN, in March 2006, made a suggestion to the Iranian government, by letter and then orally to the head of its Paris embassy and then in May when an official delegation led by Mr Moujani came to Saintes to participate in the 2nd Rally for International Disarmament, nuclear, biological and chemical. We suggested that Iran should simply renounce its civilian nuclear programme. It would thus offer irrefutable proof that it is not using this programme to pursue any military ambitions. By the same stroke it could become the head of the nations renouncing nuclear technology to promote energy economies, renewable energy, and nuclear disarmament. Instead of Iran following the deplorable example of France, France should then follow that of Iran, because nuclear technology, military or civilian, has no future.

Although this solution did not prevail, it remains topical at a time when the "Iran dossier" is threatening, despite "international sanctions", to result in a military action which the USA has already planned and which could even involve nuclear weapons. This would be appallingly ironic when they claim this as a means of preventing . . . the proliferation and use of nuclear weapons.

No to the EPR! No to military and non-military nuclear technology!

In this dramatic context due to the inextricable links between civilian and military nuclear technology, we call on all French citizens to require all candidates for the French Presidency and for parliamentary seats to commit France to the path of wisdom, that is to an exit from civilian and military nuclearism. Let them begin by suspending both the building of the EPR and the development of new nuclear weapons. Nuclear energy is dangerous in its non-military form; in its military form it is deadly and criminal. We don't want it in any form. Let them therefore ask the French people what they think. In any case, a referendum is imperative on the question of nuclear weapons, which are « **fundamentally dangerous, extraordinarily costly, militarily ineffective and morally indefensible** » (US General Lee Butler). We demand such a referendum.

ACDN France

PS:

During the discussions before the demonstration, the idea of a referendum was supported very vigorously by the Green Party MEP Gérard Onesta, who also was a signatory to the letter for a peaceful solution to the Iran crisis. He declared he is convinced that:

- **only a referendum would make possible a public debate on nuclear matters that could really interest the French people:** a debate resulting in a political decision which they themselves would take. Such was the case for the referendum on the European Constitution.
- **with a referendum, the arguments of the pro-nuclear factions would not weigh up very heavily against the anti-nuclear ones:** according to Gérard Onesta, a pronuclear viewpoint has never emerged the winner in such a confrontation.