

# Will Germany Revive Nuclear Power?

by Rainer Apel

To understand why the German elites still don't dare to bury the radical Green paradigm of the past 30 years, one must consider the motives behind the German government's giving the global warming propaganda so much priority: Germany is under heavy blackmail from hedge and equity funds, which threaten to pull out billions of dollars "invested" (spent for takeovers, that is), and since these are the same funds that have a hand in the raw materials markets, the import-dependent German industrial sector fears being cut off from crucial supplies. The German government also seeks to distract public opinion from its economic policy failure and the country's high unemployment; therefore, the climate issue is a welcome diversion.

But the German elites also have a big problem with the ecological brainwashing they have been put through, over the past 25-30 years. Therefore, unlike the situation in all other European countries, no prominent politician in Germany has dared to come out in favor of the construction of new power plants, and the most advanced "pro-nuclear" position here is one that calls for the extension of licenses for existing power plants—"to gain time for the development of alternative energy sources."

With this outlook, Chancellor Angela Merkel, presiding over the European Union for the first half year of 2007, went into the March 15, EU Spring Summit in Brussels, for which she had prepared an agenda on renewable energy. She fit into the picture of Al Gore showing up in Brussels, the day before, calling on the EU to take a lead globally, in the drastic reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Crowding into the same picture was German Environment Minister Sigmar Gabriel, who announced the co-sponsorship for free distribution of 6,000 DVDs with the Gore movie "An Inconvenient Truth," to German schools, revealing that on March 18, he arranged for 5,200 German teachers to have a free viewing of this celluloid fraud in 27 German cities. On March 18, Gabriel joined a Munich panel on the same issue, with the genocidal Club of Rome co-founder Dennis Meadows.

## **A Setback for Merkel**

However, Merkel suffered a setback at the EU Summit, when, France, backed by the East European countries, extracted a concession from Germany that the French nuclear power sector be listed as a contributor to emission-reduction, along with other, alternative efforts of the kind that the Ger-

man government prefers—solar, wind, geothermal power, biofuels and the like.

With the exception of Austria, which shares the German anti-nuclear view, all other countries in Europe are favoring nuclear technology, and although at present, France and Finland are the only Western countries in Europe to have begun construction of a new, pressurized water nuclear reactor, similar projects are under discussion in Switzerland, Britain, Spain, Denmark, Italy, and Sweden.

Perhaps, in what can be viewed as one of the few benefits from the separation of Europe before 1990, the Soviets had prevented, in Eastern Europe, the intensity of ecological brainwashing that West Europeans went through, in the 1970s and 1980s. With the exception of Poland, which has been a special case with its non-nuclear orientation (and that is changing, as well, now), the East Europeans never opted out of nuclear power. It is only under the blackmail from the EU bureaucracy in Brussels on the membership admission issue, that East European countries promised to shut down their Soviet-era nuclear reactors in return for the EU membership.

For example, Lithuania closed its Soviet-era reactor complex at Ignalina, and Bulgaria ceased operations at its two reactors at Belene. Slovenia cancelled its share in the pre-1991 Yugoslav-era joint reactor with Croatia, in Krsko. But that happened before 2004, and Brussels has never fulfilled its promise to give Western nuclear technology to the East Europeans, in return for their shutting down the Soviet-era reactors.

Now, the situation has radically changed: The three Baltic republics of Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia announced a new joint reactor complex project with Poland, to be built at Ignalina; Bulgaria has purchased a new reactor from Russia, and announced the reopening of the two reactors shut down at Belene; Slovenia announced its intent to build a new reactor, as well.

The Czechs and Slovaks never accepted the Brussels dictate on what types of reactors they should operate, and they have close nuclear technology cooperation with Russia, continuing the arrangements they had with Soviet Russia before 1991. Ukraine has recently declared its intent to resume nuclear power cooperation with Russia—ironically, as a way to reduce energy dependency on gas and oil from the Russians. Romania is considering new nuclear power construction, too.

All of that also has to do, naturally, with the intense Russian energy diplomacy of 2005 and 2006, offering Russian nuclear reactors to all these countries, at favorable conditions—including the funding.

### **The South African Paradigm**

As for Germany: When will it scrap its government-industry agreement on the final exit from nuclear technology by 2020, and reenter the sphere of the atoms? The problem today, is that were the Germans planning to construct a new reactor, they would not have the required engineering workforce to do it. Germany prefers experts for the dismantling of power plants; therefore, engineers who want to, and are qualified to build reactors, have gone abroad. The greatest emigration of German nuclear power know-how has been to South Africa, which is developing its Pebble Bed Modular Reactor (PBMR) on the basis of systems that German nuclear engineers once developed for the gas-cooled high-temperature reactor (HTR).

And the great irony of the present international energy debate is that, in parallel to the German Chancellor's drive for non-nuclear renewable power, the South African government has made the only meaningful proposal for the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. On March 6, Pat Davies, chief executive of South Africa's synfuels giant SASOL, said his company had conducted preliminary discussions with the government about the potential for PBMR technology "to help us reduce our carbon footprint." Jaco Kriek, chief executive of the PBMR project, pointed to "emission-friendly" uses of the heat component of the high-temperature reactor, saying that hydrogen can be reduced without carbon dioxide pollution by applying nuclear heat of 900° celsius to water to split it into its components—hydrogen and oxygen. And on March 15, in his opening speech to a conference held in South Africa on the peaceful use of nuclear power, South Africa's Minister of Science and Technology, Mosibudi Mangena, said that more efforts must be made to supply highly skilled workers for the nuclear technology sector in the future. The workforce that the country has today, is aging, and the sector keeps expanding, requiring the development of a new generation of qualified workers.

The country's HTR project, Mangena said, has seen "the rapid development of the PBMR programme over the last few years, from a mere idea to a company and project that is attracting international interest and admiration, and bears testimony to the continued strength of South Africa in nuclear science and technology." Mangena also mentioned several applications of the PBMR that should be of interest to everyone (especially in Germany) who is concerned about the environment, and man's survival: the development of isotope labelling to map underground water resources; controlling the populations of pests such as the tsetse fly and the fruit fly through the sterile-insect technique; and the early detection of tuberculosis using nuclear-based diagnostic techniques.

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