

Scandinavians Reject Green Energy Trap

by Ulf Sandmark and Tom Gillesberg

The Danish establishment's recent break with the taboo on speaking out for nuclear power, means that Sweden now is under pressure from *all* sides to relaunch its once-strong nuclear power development program. Last autumn the Norwegian power utility in Bergen called for the construction of the first nuclear reactor in Norway. The idea is to launch a nuclear program using Norway's enormous deposits of thorium, 13% of the world's deposits, as an energy resource to replace revenues from oil and gas in the future.

The Baltic states have also decided to cooperate in the replacement of the Lithuanian nuclear power plant Ignalina, that was brutally closed as part of the negotiations for Lithuania to join the European Union. The Russian plan to build 50 more nuclear plants is starting to sink in in Swedish politics, even though it is hardly mentioned by the tightly controlled media.

The most pressure comes from Finland, where Europe's first new reactor in many years, and a very big reactor at that, is under construction just north of Turku. Behind the power group for this reactor are Finland's leading pulp and paper and metallurgy industries, and interestingly enough, also the Swedish industrial interests in Finland. They want to increase power production in Finland, because it will improve the energy balance for the whole Nordic electricity market. Finland's state-owned power company Fortum came up with a calculation, presented in Sweden at the end of January, that the Nordic electricity market will lack 40 terawatt-hours by 2020 (1 terawatt = 1 trillion watts), even taking the new Finnish reactor into account. This is the power equivalent of another four nuclear reactors. Therefore, the decision to order more Finnish reactors could result in more than one reactor.

Green Hysteria's Days Are Numbered

The most dramatic shift in attitude toward nuclear energy in the Northern European states, in the recent period, has occurred in Denmark, otherwise known as the "wind capital" of the world. Giant windmills dominate much of the Danish landscape, as the governments have pursued this form of "renewable energy." Wind power now provides 15% of Danish energy needs, and the country exports windmills all around the world. As you would expect, this inefficient form of electricity production is heavily subsidized by the Danish government, i.e. the taxpayers.



EIRNS/Michelle Rasmussen

The LaRouche movement in Copenhagen gave Al Gore a "warm" reception there on Jan. 18. Organizers are demanding nuclear power—and reality is starting to catch up with some people in the "green" North of Europe.

On Jan. 30 and 31, however, the two major newspapers in Denmark reflected a seemingly sudden change of heart. First, the second biggest Danish newspaper, *Berlingske Tidende*, plastered on its front page a huge nuclear symbol and the words "Nuclear Power—Yes, thanks." This was followed the next day by an editorial with the same headline, in which the paper endorsed the launching of a national debate on nuclear.

Then, on Jan. 31, the largest circulation Danish paper, *Jyllands-Posten*, launched front-page attacks on the government's recently announced policy of increasing the "renewable energy" part of Danish energy consumption from 15 to 30%. The paper declared that this would dramatically increase the subsidy by Danish consumers, from around 115 euros per household, to 1,450 euros per household. *Jyllands-Posten* attacked the special subsidies, and in an editorial Jan. 30, under the headline "Monster Mills," stated that "Nuclear power still seems to be a taboo here in the country, even though it is being debated, with renewed strength, in other parts of Europe. Since the problems associated with the storage of nuclear waste are continually being reduced, the possibility [of having nuclear energy] cannot be excluded."

This incipient shift cannot be explained without taking into consideration the aggressive campaign which the Danish Schiller Institute has been carrying out on the streets, since the Spring of 2006. A centerpiece of the Schiller Institute campaign has been the demand for adopting a program for nuclear energy. (See www.schillerinstitute.dk.)

Back in Sweden

At present, Sweden is still totally dominated by the hysteria over the doomsday scenario of "climate change." Even

though nuclear power does not emit any carbon dioxide, there is no talk about nuclear from the climate change protagonists, who thereby expose themselves as anti-power, anti-human genocidalists. Instead, the media play up problems with the ten aging nuclear power plants in Sweden, which, by the way, still provide 50 percent of the country's electric power. The political campaign to get out of nuclear power by 2010, that was decided upon after a referendum in 1980, has finally led to the closing of the two reactors in Barseback, outside of Malmo. Those reactors were closed, under very great pressure from Denmark, something that, now with the new situation there, perhaps can be reversed. The plants are still there, and only partly dismantled.

In the current environment, the speculators in electricity have been able to use deregulation to create a shortage of electrical power for consumers, and to double prices. This has sparked a popular upheaval against electricity companies, now dominated by only three after frenzied mergers: 1) the Swedish state-owned Vattenfall, 2) the Finnish state-owned Fortum, and 3) the German-owned E.on. Deregulation and the resulting lack of maintenance have wrought havoc in the Swedish countryside, where winter winds and snow bring trees down on the power lines. The power company E.on, has honestly earned its nickname, E.off, among the Swedish people.

The popular anger over energy prices and the threat they pose to Swedish heavy industry, has forced a lot of changes under the "roof" of official policy, which is to dismantle all nuclear power plants and ban new plant construction. The main effort has been to squeeze as much power as possible out of the remaining ten reactors. This has resulted in producing so much more power, that it has compensated for the two closed 600-MW Barseback reactors. Furthermore, a program to renovate the old reactors is now under way, increasing production by another 10% and prolonging the life expectancy for another 40 years. This investment program in nuclear power renovation is almost equivalent to building new reactors, and has employed all available manpower for reactor construction in Sweden.

Another quiet, but important move by the former government was to lift the ban on nuclear-construction planning. The law to ban thinking about nuclear power has been an abomination by the so-called Swedish green democracy. In the meantime, the Swedish nuclear reactor building industry, led by ABB-Atom, has been sold off to the British-owned Westinghouse, which in turn is now part of Japan's Toshiba. The maintenance and running of the Swedish nuclear power system has kept alive a considerable knowledge base, even though the constructors and builders of the Swedish-designed and -produced nuclear plants have now either retired or died. Some enthusiasts at the technical universities have kept up a threat of scientific commitment into the future and gave even taken up a fight for nuclear transmutation science.

The nuclear fuel factory in Vasteras has been an important

component in the further development of nuclear science, even though the only Swedish uranium mine was shut down, thanks to a specially organized environmentalist group organized by Friends of the Earth, which was sponsored by the American oil magnate Robert O. Anderson, owner of Atlantic Richfield. Swedish uranium deposits, 80% of what Europe has, are of strategic importance for European energy independence, and could potentially make Sweden the Saudi Arabia of European energy.

Sweden's membership in the EU and also the deregulation and globalization of mineral prospecting has, in the last year, put Sweden under pressure to allow uranium mining. International mining companies have now started to prospect huge territories in Sweden for uranium ore. Last autumn, the alarm went out in the green Swedish media, that the EU considers itself to have the supranational right to demand that Sweden open its uranium mines, if it is important for EU energy self-sufficiency.

The new non-Socialist government formed after the Sept. 17, 2006 election, has strong-armed a coalition partner, the Center Party, to change its party program from promising to close down more reactors, to allowing the remaining ten power plants to continue. The closing of the relatively small Barseback reactors by the previous government, seems to be enough of a sacrificial lamb to now make it possible to continue the Swedish nuclear power program forever. Center Party leader Maud Olofsson, who is also Minister of Industry, is under heavy pressure to change her stance, and allow Sweden to build another nuclear power plant. The Swedish-Finnish pulp and paper giant, Stora Enso, demanded last autumn to be allowed to build a nuclear power plant entirely for its own use. Olofsson dismissed this directly, but the debate is on, and can change direction as suddenly as a related energy development.

The ultra-green, and speculation-friendly, energy policy of Sweden, also has put a ban for further expansion of gas consumption. The only pipeline system in Sweden connects to Denmark, and stretches north along the Swedish west coast to Gothenburg. Proposals from Russia to build the North Stream gas pipeline through Finland, Sweden, and Denmark to Germany, were rejected by Sweden. That is why this pipeline is now being constructed on the Baltic seabed from Russia directly to Germany. This Swedish policy has also forced Norwegian gas pipelines to go solely underneath the Atlantic. This includes a pipeline that is to be constructed from the existing pipeline system at about the middle of Norway, all the way to new gas field in the Barents Sea, at the northern tip of Norway. This is the same distance as the Baltic Sea North Stream pipeline, about which the Swedish government is so concerned for "environmental reasons."

But the dramatic change in the Danish media is a sign that the Northern European green flank against German nuclear power could unravel fast. The potential is there. It just needs a further push.