

World Opposition to Germany's Nuclear Exit

The German government's rush out of nuclear energy is meeting resistance internationally, and increasingly at home as well. Here are some examples:

International

May 23: Nobuo Tanaka, the director of the Paris-based **International Energy Agency**, warns that Germany is threatening Europe's energy security. In an interview with the German edition of the *Financial Times*, she proposes that Berlin work out a joint decision on nuclear power with its European partner: "Otherwise sustainability and supply security are sacrificed in the whole of Europe."

May 26: At the meeting of the **G-8 leaders** in Deauville, France, the seven other governments refuse to go along with Chancellor Merkel's extreme pro-renewables policy. The G-8 agrees on more frequent safety

reviews of nuclear power plants in response to the Fukushima accident, but otherwise to keep nuclear power operating, except in Germany.

May 26: The deputy chairman of the **Chinese nuclear agency CNEA, Xu Yuming**, calls the German decision “wrong for a country that has so few natural resources of its own,” adding: “We invite [German] experts to come here, to do research and work.”

May 30: Anne Lauvergeon, CEO of the **French nuclear firm AREVA**, tells BFM radio that the German move was irrational. “It’s hard to see how they will replace the energy. I’m not sure there is enough Polish coal, and it creates carbon problems. Alternative energy sources are intermittent sources. I think they will do what Austria did in its time: import nuclear electricity from neighboring countries. This will result in higher electricity costs in Germany, with consequences for industry.”

May 30: French Industry Minister Eric Besson issues a statement saying that “Germany will be even more dependent on fossil fuels and imports and its electricity will be more expensive and polluting.” Electricity is twice as expensive in Germany as in France.

May 30: Belgian Energy Minister Paul Magnette is quoted by AFP saying that “in the case of [German] closure, it will be necessary to import energy, probably from France, in other words, produced by the nuclear sector.” Belgium has seven nuclear reactors.

May 31: Swedish Environment Minister Andreas Carlgren defends the Swedish government’s pro-nuclear power policy, and criticizes the German phase-out of nuclear power, in an interview to the daily *Dagens Nyheter*. “The Swedish nuclear power policy will remain unchanged,” he said, “and nothing indicates that any other countries are intending to follow Germany. But, if this means that Germany will be forced to change its climate goals, then it will affect the rest of Europe, and that would be extremely unfortunate.”

May 31: Daniel Johnson writes in the London *Daily Telegraph* that “Mrs. Merkel’s appeasement of nuclear hysteria is disturbing far beyond Germany’s borders because it represents a capitulation to irrationalism by the leader of a nation that once led the world in science and technology. The land of Leibniz and Humboldt, of Goethe and Gauss, is now indulging the fantasies of cynical scaremongers.”

June 1: In Denmark, the conservative daily *Berlingske Tidende* editorializes that “when the German government decides to close the country’s 17 nuclear plants in a relatively short time, without having an alternative plan for the nation’s energy supply, it is a decision that will have serious consequences for the country itself, for European energy policy, and for the climate.”

June 1: In a radio interview with Voice of Russia, **Sergei Novakov** of the Russian state-owned nuclear company **Rosatom** says: “It is very hard to replace the share of nuclear energy by green sources, because in several countries, such as in Belgium, for example, more than 50% of all the electricity generated in the country is of nuclear origin. So to replace 56% in Belgium by green sources is an extremely ambitious purpose which cannot be reached in the mid-term, let us say. So it is clear that, for example, for householders, wind and solar power plants could provide electricity; but for industrial customers it is impossible, because, for example, for metal plants, where you have to be provided with electricity all the time, day and night, it is impossible to use wind or solar farms.”

June 1: The Russian daily *Pravda*, under the headline “Germany Fights Nuclear Windmills,” warns of political tensions in Europe, because 1) the Greens are anti-Russian, and 2) the three German-speaking countries—Germany, Austria, and Switzerland—want other countries in Europe to exit from nuclear power as well.

June 2: From the **United States**, the *Washington Post* editorializes against the German decision, which it characterizes as “bowing to misguided political pressure from Germany’s Green Party.” The nuclear shutdown will cause more carbon emissions, and “Germany is also likely to import more power from its neighbors, regardless of how well it does in ramping up renewables, since sometimes the wind does not blow and the sun does not shine.”

Within Germany

May 27: Fritz Vahrenholt, the CEO of **Innogy**, a subsidiary of the electric utility RWE, attacks the role of the anti-nuclear, anti-technology German Advisory Council on Global Change (WBGU) in formulating the government’s new energy strategy. It is published in *Die Welt*, under the headline, “Pure Ecology Dictatorship.” He denounces the “anti-democratic Jacobin

thinking” of the WBGU, saying its goals could never be achieved by democratic means. He warns against the WBGU call for a “world security council for sustainability,” which would restrict democracy, as well as for a third chamber of Parliament to act as a watchdog for every single piece of legislation; it would be a non-elected body which would “limit the powers of the Parliament.”

“The price to be paid for the utopian climate Jacobinism of the WBGU is too high,” he writes, noting the “increasing signs that the climate warming of the past 12 years has stopped,” and that many experts expect a long period of cooling. As for the total “decarbonization” promoted by the WBGU, “that comes down, very simply, to deindustrialization,” which is apparently what some politicians want.

May 27: Labor representatives of Germany’s nuclear power plant operators issue an open letter calling on the government to refrain from an overhasty phase-out of nuclear power, warning that 30,000 jobs in that sector, and another 90,000 in the supply industries, were at stake.

The letter is signed by heads of the labor councils of E.ON (EOAN.XE), RWE AG (RWE.XE), EnBW Energie Baden-Württemberg AG (EBK.XE), and Vattenfall Europe. They emphasize that German nuclear power plants are among the world’s safest, and can continue to provide “sufficient affordable” energy for many years.

“We are here in Germany, not in Japan,” the letter says, and there is no need here for any emotionally heated debate on nuclear power. As a matter of fact, it is “indisputable that nuclear energy has been an important basis for the positive development of our country over the past decades.” The labor leaders denounce the government’s refusal to meet with them and discuss the matter, while at the same time, “casting the dice on the future of the national energy policy.”

May 28: The four companies that operate nuclear reactors in Germany, **REW AG, E.ON, Vattenfall, and EnBW** warn of severe power blackouts should the government attempt to make the country totally dependent upon renewables. They have presented a scientific survey to the Science and Education Committee of the Bundestag by the Bureau for Technology Impact Assessment (TAB), which warns that power blackouts lasting for more than two weeks would drive Germany and its industry into “a national col-

lapse.”

The companies also warn that Merkel’s intent to keep the seven older reactors, which account for a combined capacity of 8,000 megawatts of power, permanently shut beyond the three-month moratorium which expires on June 17, could lead to widespread blackouts this coming Winter. Days with little sunshine and low winds could lead to outages, particularly in Germany’s industry-heavy southern states. “A safe supply to customers in these cases could be severely compromised,” they warn.

Only 4 of Germany’s 17 nuclear reactors are currently producing power, with 7 shut down because of the moratorium, another 5 undergoing maintenance, and another shut down since the Summer of 2009.

May 31: Dieter Zetsche, CEO of automaker **Daimler**, warns that Berlin’s decision poses “the risk that we will turn our backs on an affordable energy supply.” **Hans-Peter Keitel**, head of the **BDI** industry association, states that electricity prices will definitely rise. **RWE**, the power generator, says the company is looking at legal possibilities to counter the government’s move. In the **Christian Democratic Union** (Merkel’s party), the **Wirtschaftsrat**, or council of party-affiliated companies, says that Merkel’s “go-it-alone” nuclear policy in Europe may add billions of euros to power bills paid by industry and consumers. “I’ve heard lots about a phase-out of nuclear power, but little about the costs of phasing in renewable energy,” its president, **Kurt Lauk**, tells reporters.

June 6: Arnold Vaatz, a deputy chairman of the **Christian Democrats’** group in parliament, says in an interview published by *Focus* weekly, that “the rapid exit from nuclear power is the most disastrous mistaken decision, which has been taken in German politics since 1949.”

Without any pressing necessity, “relatively safe and cost-effective nuclear power is being sacrificed in favor of a energy policy adventure which is not well calculated,” Vaatz charges, adding that “this over-hasty decision to exit is a case of command economy,” which, as with the communist German Democratic Republic (where Vaatz grew up), “sets targets that are motivated by mere politics, but not by any real competence.” Power blackouts caused by the nuclear exit would knock Germany out of the first tier of industrialized nations, Vaatz warns.