

A military motive for clinging to EURATOM? *

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„It is quite clear that at the end of the path to European solidarity there will also be nuclear solidarity.“ (Jean FRANCOIS-PONCET, former French Minister for Foreign Affairs, Jan. 1992)

Two EU member states are armed with nuclear weapons. Major political and military EU representatives have been quietly laying the rails toward a pan-European nuclear force. (It would be an interesting test to put the question to Green front players like J. Fischer or J. Voggenhuber whether what they see for the EU's future is a non-nuclear defense or a nuclear one.) This entails major questions for that majority of EU countries which do not have a nuclear armament now, and even more so to those that do not have a civil nuclear power programmes or have given it up:

Shall we finally participate in EU nuclear armament and policy at least by co-funding it? Shall we agree with continuing uranium supply from „Third World“ countries for EU military purposes? Shall the big French nuclear test simulation facility planned near Bordeaux finally become the foundation for ongoing development of new or „improved“ nuclear weapons for the EU's defense? Are we, as governments of non-nuclear countries, in fact watching with hidden satisfaction as all this and more is being prepared, because (a) we hardly dare stand up against the military nuclear powers France and Great Britain, and (b) at bottom we want Europe to become a superpower capable of rivalling with the United States of America and therefore cannot see it otherwise than equipped with a similar nuclear menace potential, and with the corresponding infrastructure in science, industry, military and finance?

The rails have been laid?

o "Rencontres internationales pour l'Europe" (Jan. 1992): François MITTERRAND executes a decisive turn away from the Gaullist nuclear doctrine: for the first time, a French president talks about integrating France's force de frappe into the planned European security and defense alliance.

– French ex-minister for foreign affairs Jean FRANCOIS-PONCET declares: "It is quite clear that at the end of the path to European solidarity there will also be nuclear solidarity."

– To the then President of the Commission, Jacques DELORS, the Political Union, as laid down in the Maastricht Treaty (1992), is a step toward a common European nuclear force. At the same meeting, he asked himself the rhetoric question "why this political authority shouldn't one day be trusted with the decision power for the nuclear force, when there will be a consolidated European Union."

o The plan begins to materialize rapidly between the two military nuclear powers within the EU, which will necessarily form the 'embryo' of any common European nuclear superpower capacity: "FRANCE PROPOSES NUCLEAR COOPERATION TO BRITAIN" (headline in the Süddeutsche Zeitung, 03-10-1992).

- According to the then Inspector Supreme of the German Bundeswehr, General Klaus NEUMANN, the new Europe will "depend on nuclear weapons" (Der Spiegel, 42/1991).

- That this does not just(?) mean bringing together the British and French nuclear forces, but, in the long run, a European nuclear force under European command, clearly appears from, among others, an article by French Army General Michel FENNEBRESQUE in Le Figaro, Sep. 4, 1992. Significant-ly, he pleads for the French to say "yes" in the referendum on the Maastricht Treaty. For a French

o "no" would "affect" European common defense "even worse" than a similar project in the 1950s and 60s (Plan Fouchet). In his article titled Toward a common defense, General Fennebresque further lines out: "Europe is more densely populated and richer than the USA. In order to be able to play a role in global politics, it must command a military capacity of the same size (as the USA).“ Which clearly implies a gigantic nuclear arsenal.

These are the visions of top decision-makers in the European Community/Union. This is the main meaning of the concept of 'solidarity' in EU newspeak.

Relevance to nuclear phase-out perspectives

And this is why we should not neglect the initial questions. For while one cannot predict the exact scope, it is certain that with a common military nuclear force, civil nuclear power will be here to stay. It would seem silly to most decision-makers to produce plutonium in extra reactors for military purposes when you can have it from industrial power plants and get electricity at the same time ("Kill two birds with one stone"). It would seem silly to them not to hide such military purposes as long as possible behind a scenery of civil (peaceful!) nuclear power.

For whoever might still doubt that such a perspective is realistic, there is this lovely preface to Thirty Years' Experience with Euratom – The Birth of a Nuclear Europe² by Admiral Pierre LACOSTE, president of the Fondation pour les Etudes de Défense Nationale, and one of the highest-ranking French officers: "[...] Will Europe, on its path to unity, be able to overcome its fears and superstitions in order to progress toward complete mastery of nuclear energy? In its military form, it is no doubt destined to play an irreplaceable role for years to come in that it will prevent any potential aggressor to start an armed conflict on European territory. In its industrial form, it is able to guarantee us an access to unlimited energy – the supreme condition for development and prosperity and thus for peace."

While in the early 1990s, there was some reasonable hope for nuclear disarmament to make modest but steady progress, the very situation we are now faced with and which may shape the future for a considerable time corroborates Admiral Lacoste's expectation – positive in his view, negative in ours -that the nuclear arsenals will play "an irreplaceable role for (many) years to come". Which, again, is bound to yield support for civil nuclear energy.

*) Excerpts from 'The Euratom Booklet ' (Atomstaat – zweiter Anlauf? Zivile und militärische Integration Österreichs in die Europäische Atomgemeinschaft), ed. Anti Atom International (Austrian umbrella organization), Vienna, Sep. 1993. The Austrian grassroots NGOs' contribution to the public debate about Austria's entry into the European Union. (Because of limited time, I have not updated this article with more recent statements which confirm the ones quoted here.)