

France and nuclear proliferation

For 50 years, France has paid little heed to its obligations as a nuclear weapons power, and, far from disarming, has pursued the development of the most modern weapons (Missiles M1, MegaJoule laser etc). What is more, France has taken on a serious proliferation role through its widespread promotion of so-called « civil » nuclear energy.

1) In the past :

Very cynically, France has helped Israel as well as Iraq and Iran to progress along the nuclear weapons path.

Israel : an article by Agence France Presse, dated December 23, 2005, gave an account of an interview with Israeli politician, Shimon Peres, who has held positions of high authority for the past 50 years. Here one learned that, « *on December 12, 1956, France began a formal relationship with Israel to provide a 140 MW nuclear reactor and, starting in 1960, to deliver 385 tonnes of natural uranium . . . A second agreement, also made by Peres on August 23, 1957, further stipulated cooperation between the two countries in the research and development of nuclear weapons.* »

Iraq : on September 6, 1975, Jacques Chirac, the French prime minister, welcomed the Iraqi president, a certain Saddam Hussein, to the nuclear facility at Cadarache (Bouches-du-Rhône) and declared « *Iraq is in the process of implementing a full nuclear program. France wants to be involved with this effort.* » Saddam Hussein stated, in the September 8, 1975 edition of the Lebanese newspaper, El Ubsou El Arabi « *The agreement with France is the first concrete step toward the production of atomic weapons in the Arab world.* » This is something worth noting.

Iran : on April 5, 1979, French prime minister, Raymond Barre opened the Eurodif uranium enrichment facility, situated at Pierrelatte (Drôme). Iran owned then, and still does today, 10% of this facility, and was to receive 10% of the production of French enriched uranium. This agreement, regularly confirmed (1991, 2006 etc), but dependent on the construction of a reactor, could become effective as soon as the Bouchehr reactor is operational.

2) Today :

Exports – The French authorities are once again playing a very dangerous game. The French president, Mr. Sarkozy, intends to export nuclear technologies and materials to numerous countries, for example to certain less than democratic countries in the Middle East, or to newly converted former terrorist states like Libya. In particular, France hopes to export its EPR reactors which use a mix of uranium and plutonium (MOX), the latter being easily extractable for military use.

In addition, the nuclear corporation Areva exports its so-called nuclear waste « recycling » plants, whose principle characteristic is the separation of the different isotopes and thus, in particular, the production of pure plutonium, highly useful for the manufacture of atomic bombs. This was the point of entry for France into the nuclear weapons club (Areva's reprocessing plants bear the unambiguous names Plutonium Units 1, 2, 3), and remains the easiest way to acquire the bomb, and comes, furthermore, with the blessing of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) since it concerns the reprocessing of civilian fuel...

The 2010 NPT review conference must unequivocally ban reprocessing globally !

Infringements of the non-proliferation rules – In 2008, during the U.S. Bush administration, France used its influence to urge the IAEA and the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) to allow India to infringe the non-proliferation rules. Thus, despite not being a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, India was allowed to purchase nuclear technologies and materials. This sent a very bad signal to all other countries : how can one enforce adherence to the non-proliferation rules if they are so blithely flouted ?

Nuclear weapons advancements – Contrary to the objectives of the non-proliferation rules, France is enhancing its nuclear weapons arsenal and intends to simulate nuclear weapons testing by building a giant laser (the MegaJoule) near Bordeaux. Moreover, France is developing a new intercontinental missile, the M51. Whether for France, North Korea or all other countries, **the 2010 NPT review conference must, unequivocally, ban the global development of all new missiles !**