

'... but nuclear power is already waiting in the background' from the Süddeutsche Zeitung (15 November 1958)

Caption: On 15 and 16 November 1958, the German daily newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung outlines the benefits of nuclear power and emphasises how important it is for Western Europe to respond efficiently to the increased demand for energy.

Source: Süddeutsche Zeitung. Münchner Neueste Nachrichten aus Politik, Kultur, Wirtschaft und Sport. Hrsg. Friedmann, Werner; Goldschagg, Edmund; Schöningh, Dr. Franz Josef; Schwingenstein, August ; R Herausgeber Friedmann, Werner. 15.-16.11.1958, Nr. 274; 14. Jg. München: Süddeutscher Verlag. ".doch im Hintergrund wartet schon die Atomkraft", auteur:Franz Thoma , p. 18.

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... but nuclear power is already waiting in the background

Euratom promotes the development of nuclear energy — industry in the forefront / a new field of activity

Brussels, November — The nameplate *Euratom* conceals an organisation set up to ensure that Europe is linked to developments in the fledgling field of nuclear energy and promote the development of a peaceful nuclear industry. Within its wide-ranging responsibilities, this European Community of the six countries (Belgium, Federal Republic of Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands) is responsible not only for operating a major industrial complex but also for solving difficult scientific and technological problems. In its high-rise offices in *rue Belliard*, there is, therefore, more an atmosphere of silent academic study than of bustling business. One task, however, is considerably easier for Euratom than for the European Economic Community: the creation of the *common market for nuclear energy*. From as early as 1 January 1959, there will be practically no more import or export duties and no quotas. The broad sweep of Euratom's responsibilities extends from joint research and promotion of training (which includes the construction of experimental reactors) via the provision of the requisite raw materials to measures to safeguard health.

The experiences of others

In its work, Euratom is building upon the considerable head start gained by other countries, as has been shown by the recently concluded *agreements* with the *USA* and with *Great Britain*. The fundamental purpose of the work at Euratom is to ensure that exploitation of nuclear fission is in no way restricted to electricity generation but is extended widely to cover other fields (propulsion, heating, radio isotopes). It is in the nature of the task, of course, that Euratom cannot be too bold in its approach. However, there is already unanimity in Brussels about one point in the programme: it will not be possible to achieve the originally estimated nuclear energy output of 15 million kW by 1967 in Western Europe on the basis of the construction projects currently in preparation. To date, the only one of the eight planned nuclear reactors on stream is the G 1 reactor in Marcoule, France. There are also plans for 25 experimental reactors, nine of them in France and seven in the Federal Republic of Germany; seven are already on stream, five of these in France, which is undoubtedly ahead of the other Community countries in this field.

Energy policy, at least in the field of nuclear power, where it takes four years to build a power station, is a long-term matter, and Euratom is assuming, with regard to the European energy budget, that *energy demand* will increase by approximately 50 % from 1955 to 1965 and by approximately 30 % from 1965 to 1975 (that is, by approximately 80 % in 20 years). In Brussels, those involved are only too well aware that such long-term forecasts are full of unpredictables. The required increase in installed capacity certainly cannot be met by nuclear power stations. In fact, the view of the EAEC is that *conventional sources of energy and nuclear power* should be expanded simultaneously. However, in this expansion, 'the proportion of nuclear energy in new power stations should be continually increased.' There are natural limits to this, drawn by the size and pattern of demand for electricity, by technological and financial factors, and, initially, also by the ability of nuclear power to be competitive. However — nuclear energy seems to have caught up. The operating costs in the nuclear power stations already built will be lower than was at first expected, since it has been possible, in the interim, to make technical improvements to the manufacture and the utilisation of the fuels.

Unlike the conventional thermal power stations, where heat production can be improved only very little after they have been completed, nuclear power stations are able to exploit the technical advances in the fuel cycle within a short time, even after the station has been commissioned. Additionally *construction costs go down* for nuclear power stations, while the traditional fuels regularly become more expensive in the long term, as is shown by the experience of the last few decades. If we look at the current example of coal in Europe, it is now necessary to mine at greater and greater depths in order to increase output, and this makes mining operations more difficult and more expensive. In the case of hydroelectric power, it is accepted that the suitable locations for development in Europe are already being used. What is more, it is Euratom's view that oil and natural gas, while available in ample quantities, are not sufficient to close the calculated energy gap. At all events, it is a fact that nuclear power is no longer lagging so very far behind and that, today, the pricing zones for the prime costs of the two sources of energy already overlap here and there.

Rich sources of uranium

The raw materials problem has been solved. Of the two basic materials required for the generation of nuclear energy, *uranium and thorium*, the more important one, uranium, is available in ample quantities, and the thorium production of Madagascar alone is sufficient for European requirements and for exports. The Euratom *Supply Agency* has been endowed with capital amounting to \$2.4 million. It is an auxiliary body of the Commission that operates on commercial principles and ensures that the Community receives supplies of ores, basic materials and special fissile materials and can therefore specifically turn to France and Belgium. The uranium mines in the *Congo*, however, remain at the disposal of the USA until 1960 under a Belgian-American agreement. Subsequently, it will be possible for Euratom to increase uranium production considerably. The problem of raw-materials supplies may also be regarded as solved in so far as the possibility of further processing the plutonium produced in the reactors or of recovering uranium from the spent fuel rods has not yet been included at all in the estimates of requirements.

The Community's experimental reactors, however, are being used for intensive research into this aspect, since that might prevent these highly radioactive waste products from having to be disposed of on the seabed or having to be buried and therefore, in spite of all precautions, ultimately still constituting a permanent threat to humanity. Euratom's broad range of functions is a further demonstration that one of the tasks of this organisation is to provide for the *safety and monitoring of fissile materials* — which are the property of the Community.