

'Pierre Sudreau: towards a comprehensive European industrial strategy' from Le Monde (1 December 1969)

Caption: In an article published in the French daily newspaper Le Monde on 1 December 1969, Pierre Sudreau, President of European Movement France, gives his views on the failure of Euratom and calls on European countries to revive the idea of a European nuclear industry.

Source: Le Monde. dir. de publ. Beuve-Méry, Hubert. 30.11.-01.12.1969, n° 7 739; 26e année. Paris: Le Monde. "M. Pierre Sudreau: pour une stratégie industrielle européenne globale", p. 4.

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Last updated: 05/07/2016

Pierre Sudreau: towards a comprehensive European industrial strategy

Member of Parliament for the Progress and Modern Democracy (PDM) party, former Minister and President of the European Movement, Pierre Sudreau told us:

Euratom is on its last legs. Will it be saved by the decisions taken at the Hague Conference? The stakes are high. If no decision is taken, Europe's energy independence will be seriously threatened. Energy policy is dependent on nuclear policy because, in ten years' time, nuclear power stations will supply 20 % of all energy.

Euratom is in its death throes under our very eyes. Since the original scheme did not provide for any five-year plans, Euratom is forced to survive on hand-to-mouth measures renewed every six months. High-level specialists are quitting, research is being interrupted and one of the world's leading scientific knowledge bases is being squandered. Meanwhile, the United States has created an industry that is capable of selling hundreds of nuclear power plants. Installed electric power generation capacity in the USA already stands at 620 000 megawatts, ten times more than in Europe, with its 63 000 megawatts.

One could speak at length about the causes of this disaster. France bears a large part of the responsibility. The narrow, nationalistic views that lay behind the development of our nuclear capacity are well known.

However, if France's current leaders can learn their lessons from the stalemate in which we find ourselves, then all will not be lost.

The failure of the industry in France, together with talks on the future of one of our most important industrial sectors that were as lengthy as they were confused, explain why the French Government is wavering between a US multinational and a major German conglomerate. These contradictions stem directly from a narrow interpretation of what independence is all about.

But there is no use crying over spilt milk. In the light of these harsh lessons, could the Hague 'summit' provide an opportunity for our leaders to revive a genuinely joint European nuclear industry that would escape the grip of both our powerful neighbour and the American multinationals? All that is needed is to revive Chapter V of the Euratom Treaty ...

The lessons to be learned from Euratom have much wider implications. If we are not careful, the decay will spread to all key sectors: information technology, aeronautics and aerospace, in fact all those promising sectors for which the domestic market in France is now too small.

Clearly, a comprehensive industrial strategy is needed for Europe. This requires, for each sector, particularly the energy sector, the establishment of a genuinely Community-wide organisation that could ensure a balanced blend of national powers. There is everything to be gained by including Britain, which could contribute its cutting-edge technology.

If, in the wake of the Hague summit, experts could be appointed to set up a Community-wide industry in a number of advanced sectors, then the lesson of Euratom would not have been lost.

This is what makes the idea of independence for a European state such a relative notion. What is the point of having the military trappings of sovereignty if all the high-tech industries are effectively controlled by Germany or by multinationals?

It is time that this basic truth was acknowledged. There can be no doubt that genuine European solidarity is the best guarantor of our freedom.