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23 December 1981

Worldwide Report

NUCLEAR DEVELOPMENT AND PROLIFERATION

(FOUO 14/81)

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WORLDWIDE AFFAIRS

EEC, PRC DISCUSS NUCLEAR FUEL COOPERATION

PM041207 London FINANCIAL TIMES in English 4 Dec 81 p 42

[Report by Alain Cass: "Peking Seeks Nuclear Links"]

[Excerpt] China and EEC are considering wide-ranging cooperation in the exploration, extraction and processing of nuclear fuel for peaceful purposes.

Detailed proposals have been submitted to the Chinese by the EEC Commission in Brussels. These may lead to an exchange of uranium experts and possibly to sales of Chinese uranium to the community.

Although the joint plan is still only a commission proposal and has yet to receive the backing of member governments, its significance lies in the fact that it was the Chinese who made the first approach.

Last April a team of EEC officials and geologists from several European countries visited China for talks. They were allowed to inspect uranium mines and processing facilities--the first Westerners ever to do so. The team was led by Dr Michael Davies, then the commission's director of uranium.

The team was received at the highest level and it was indicated according to one member, that the Chinese were keen to establish technical links with the EEC. Such links were broken off with the Russians in 1960.

That visit was followed three weeks ago by a delegation led by Sir Roy Denman, the commission's external affairs chief, which put a series of detailed proposals to the Chinese.

The Chinese are keen to get European help to convert their existing refining facilities to meet international commercial standards and the EEC delegation was told China would wish to sell uranium to the community.

China's uranium operations are a closely guarded secret and come under direct army control. Official figures for reserves are not available. Some Western estimates put them as high as 800,000 tons, which would make China potentially one of the world's major producers.

The commission will shortly propose to member governments the exchange of experts from Britain, France, Italy and Denmark. The British Government is understood to be sympathetic to the idea.

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The Chinese are split over the desirability of inviting foreign help into this sensitive sector. China also has a strong anti-nuclear lobby, which favours developing coal reserves instead of pushing ahead with nuclear power.

EEC misgivings may arise following recent reports of the sale of unsafeguarded Chinese uranium to South Africa. Peking has hotly denied the reports.

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JAPAN

ATOMIC-POWER PLANT BUILDING SLOWS FROM OBJECTIONS, CONSUMPTION TREND

Tokyo JAPAN ECONOMIC JOURNAL in English Vol 19 No 980, 10 Nov 81 p 5

[Text]

The Government and electric companies are being forced to slow the pace of nuclear power plant construction because of public resistance to atomic energy projects and the slow growth of power consumption following last April's rate hikes.

As a result, the Agency of Natural Resources & Energy, Ministry of International Trade & Industry, is expected to slash the planned expansion of nuclear capacity by next March. By then, ANRE should have revised the long-term outlook on demand for electric power. The cut will be substantial. Until now, the Government has maintained a goal of 51-53 million kilowatts for nuclear power generating capacity by 1990.

The Government saw nuclear energy as the most important alternative in its plan to diversify power sources (coal, liquefied natural gas, liquefied petroleum gas, to cite a few examples).

As a result, nuclear power (15.51 million kilowatts) accounted for 12 per cent of the country's total electricity generating capacity at the end of fiscal 1980. ANRE's hearings led to an estimate that nuclear capacity would rise to 27.88 million kilowatts (or 15.8 per cent of the total capacity) by 1985 and 50.92 million kilowatts

(21.7 per cent) by 1990.

However, the tempo is likely to slow down primarily because of continued public opposition. Japan Atomic Power Co.'s attempted coverup of its Tsuruga plant problems is likely to cause the Government's Electric Power Source Coordination Council to approve three projects with planned capacity totaling 5 million kilowatts.

The three projects are an 825,000-kilowatt plant of Tohoku Electric Power Co. at Maki and two 1.18-million-kilowatt plants of Kyushu Electric Power Co. at Genkai.

In addition, the cost of generating nuclear power is lower than for other types but the difference is narrowing. ANRE's latest estimate is that the cost gap has narrowed by about ¥1 a kilowatt hour, with nuclear generating rated at ¥11-12 a kilowatt hour compared to ¥19-20 a kilowatt hour for an oil-fired plant.

The demand for electricity shows no signs of test increases after the substantial rate hikes in April, 1980. Government and utility officials estimate that "structural changes are taking place" in the demand pattern — a belief that prompted them to revise the long-term demand estimate. The approximately 50 per cent electricity rate hike caused consumption to go down in the summer peak time by about 20 per cent.

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SOUTH AFRICA

GOVERNMENT TRIES TO OBTAIN ENRICHED URANIUM ILLEGALLY

London NEW AFRICAN in English No 169 Oct 81 pp 36-37

[Article by Reggie Major: "Uranium: South Africa Seeks Illegal Pact With US"]

[Text]

SOUTH AFRICA has asked the United States to use France as a channel of supply for enriched uranium to the new nuclear energy plant at Koeberg in Cape Province, which is scheduled for initial fuel loading in March 1982.

Such a move would circumvent the problem of the United States technically breaking its own laws against supplying the fuel directly to South Africa. If, however, as appears likely, the United States turns down this request, South Africa has asked America to "make it known to France" that it would not insist on the conditions it originally imposed unilaterally at the time the current agreement was made in 1978; that South Africa would not be permitted to buy enriched uranium elsewhere if the United States could not "timeously" deliver it.

Unpublished

The request is revealed in a "leaked" document hitherto unpublished, released by Randall Robinson, executive director of TransAfrica, an Afro-American lobbying organisation on African and Caribbean affairs. It is one of a series of State Department papers made public by Robinson and previously reported by *New African* (August issue).

The new series include a memorandum of conversations on Angola and Namibia between Chester Crocker, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, South African Foreign Minister Pik Botha (referred to familiarly as "Pik" by Crocker) and Magnus Malan, South

Africa's Defence Minister. The meeting took place in Pretoria in April this year.

The paper dealing with South Africa and US nuclear relations was dated May 14, 1981, and apparently flowed from the same discussions. The apparent ease with which the South Africans can make such controversial suggestions to the US implies a much closer working relationship than has been previously guessed at between the Reagan administration and Pretoria.

The memorandum summarises the history of the US-South African agreements on the development of atomic energy since shortly after World War II, when South Africa developed its uranium mining industry to supply the

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION	
PARTICIPANTS:	SOUTH AFRICA: Foreign Minister Pik Botha Defence Minister Magnus Malan /
	U.S.: Assistant Secretary-designate Crocker / Alan Keyes: S/P
DATE & PLACE:	April 15/16, 1981, Pretoria
SUBJECT:	Discussions with SAG
COPIES TO:	AF, IO-McElhenny, S/P-Keyes, AF/S
US-Africa Relations:	
Botha opened first day's discussion by expressing unhappiness over what SAG perceives as deterioration by Administration from view of South Africa taken during U.S. presidential campaign. Reagan campaign "CIVIL RIGHTS PRODUCE" SAG expectations in South Africa. But, administration, in response to views of allies, such as UK and Germany, and to influence of State Department professionals, has disappointed SAG expectations. USG handling of visit by ally's officer, example of this. Botha raised issue of trust, referring to earlier "McElhenny" duplicity on issue of SWAPO bases.	
However, he affirmed that it means a great deal to SAG to have good relations with U.S. and that SAG understands U.S. problems in maintaining friendly relations with black African states. To begin second day's discussion, Crocker noted that, though he hadn't come to discuss South Africa's internal affairs, it was clear that positive movement domestically would make it easier for the U.S. to work with SAG. U.S. ability to develop full relations with SAG depends on success of Prime Minister Botha's program and extent to which it is seen as broadening SAG's domestic support. "Pik" Botha cautioned against making success of S.M. Botha's program a	

The leaked document

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American Combined Development Agency (CDA). Contracts to supply uranium to the CDA without restrictions reached a level of 3,000 tons per annum in the late 1960s, when the contracts expired.

Amended

In 1957, South Africa, the US and the International Atomic Energy Authority concluded an agreement for co-operation on the peaceful uses of atomic energy, which was reviewed, amended and renewed in 1962, 1967, and 1974. Under it the US agreed to sanction the supply of the "Safari" reactor to South Africa and to meet its fuel requirements. In 1967 the US insisted on assurances from South Africa with regard to uranium sales; and the trilateral safeguards agreement between the US, South Africa and the IAEA was also amended to ensure the continued application of safeguards after the expiry of the US-South Africa agreement.

In 1974, the agreement was extended from 20 to 30 years that is until 2007, and also provides for the supply of separate working units by the US for the life of the Koeberg reactors (i.e. for 25 years after 1982). Under this agreement a contract for the supply of enriched uranium for Koeberg was concluded with the US, also providing for IAEA safeguards.

"These agreements and safeguards arrangements were and are still diligently honoured by South Africa," says the document.

However, South Africa encountered difficulties with President Carter's administration in 1976 and 1977. "Although the US never refused the required export permit for a batch of fuel, at that time an order and paid for by South Africa, unacceptable delays were experienced resulting in the cancellation of the order by South Africa when it became evident in 1977 that the delivery of the fuel would not be allowed by the previous administration."

Discussion in 1978 in Pretoria made it clear that the US would not supply the fuel unless South Africa acceded to the international Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and subjected all its nuclear facilities and activities to international safeguards.

"More restrictive conditions were thus imposed unilaterally by the US after conclusion of the contract," claim the South Africans.

Even so, says the document, South Africa was prepared to abide by the principles of the NPT and said so repeatedly, but it was obvious that the US would find it "difficult" to supply the fuel. South Africa was also prevented, by US intervention, from obtaining the fuel from any other source unless it accepted the conditions "unilaterally imposed".

Great cost

"Koeberg is scheduled for initial fuel loading in March 1982, and as no firm undertaking for the supply of enriched uranium could as yet be obtained, the chances are that the scheduled start-up of Koeberg would be seriously delayed at great cost to South Africa," says the memorandum.

It makes the points that South Africa is not in principle opposed to the NPT provided its *basic requirements* are met (it does not enumerate them); that it will continue to conduct and administer its nuclear affairs in a manner in line with the spirit and the goals of the NPT; and that its nuclear programme is geared to the peaceful application of nuclear energy and "at no time has she tested a nuclear device". And it says that while South Africa is threatened by the USSR and its associates and by certain African countries with Soviet support and encouragement, it in turn has no hope of UN support but itself is being continually threatened with UN action.

The final section is headed "WHAT SOUTH AFRICA REQUESTS" and reads:

● **That the United States Government give an undertaking that export permits will be issued for delivery of enriched uranium to France;**

● **if the US feels it cannot supply the enriched uranium through France timeously for the Koeberg reactors in present circumstances, the US makes it known to France that it would not insist on the conditions that it imposed unilaterally on South Africa after the signature of the original**

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supply contracts if France were to supply the fuel;

● DOE agrees either to cancel the present contract for the supply of enriched uranium to ESCOM at no cost, or DOE agrees to postpone execution of the contract at no cost until such time as an agreement can be reached between the United States and South African authorities which would permit the United States to resume deliveries of fuel to South Africa.

Just as revealing, in view of the date of the meeting, the subsequent South African invasion of Angola and the US veto in the United Nations, are the notes of the conversations in Pretoria in April between Crocker, Pik Botha and Magnus Malan. The conversations also belie the popularly accepted view that the US is still "formulating" a policy towards Southern Africa. There is a US policy, and it is pro-South African.

In response to Botha's view that it would be difficult for the US to pursue a policy favourable to South Africa in view of domestic pressures and the position of powerful African states such as Nigeria, without provoking constant criticism, Crocker replied that the present administration would have more backbone in the face of pressure than the previous one. "We will stand up for what we think right," he said. "Our objective is to increase the South African Government's confidence."

Botha said South Africa was suspicious because of the way the US "dropped" the South African Government in Angola in 1975. He argued that South Africa went into Angola then with United States Government support; and then the US voted to condemn South Africa in the United Nations. He cited many examples of past US decisions that failed to inspire confidence - Vietnam, Iran, US failure to support "moderate" governments in Africa, while aiding those with leftist rhetoric. Botha said that in Chad, some African leaders became so desperate for help against Libya's Colonel Gaddafi that one of them even approached South Africa privately, as a last resort.

Crocker's view was that, in spite of the rocky start, an improvement in US-SA relations was possible. "We are tired of double think and double talk," he said.

The Reagan election victory represented an enormous change in US public opinion on foreign policy, reversing the trend of the post-Vietnam years.

Some divergence of views became apparent in the discussion on regional affairs. Botha cited economic, food and population problems to support the view that Africa is a dying continent because Africans had "made a mess of" their independence. He believed the cause was not race, but lack of experience, cultural background and technical training. He said South Africa was willing to help those who admit they needed help.

He presented the South African vision of a "constellation of states" in Southern Africa, with each state independent but linked by a centralising secretariat. He argued that the central issue in Southern Africa was subversion. "If the region collapses, the fire will spread, and there will be no winners," he said. "If you kill the part of Africa containing people who can do things you kill the whole of Africa."

Crocker replied that in Africa the US distinguished between countries where the Soviets and Cuba had a combat presence and those which adopted Marxism for their own purposes. He stressed that the US top priority was to stop Soviet encroachment in Africa. But the ability to deal with the Soviet presence was severely impeded by South Africa's policy in Namibia. He agreed with the African view that South Africa was contributing to instability in the region to the extent that the South African actions went beyond reprisal. "Putting fear in the minds of inferior powers makes them irrational," was his view.

"Bloody thug"

The South Africans stated bluntly that South Africa could not accept a SWAPO victory in Namibia that would "bring Soviet and Cuban forces to Walvis Bay". Botha called Sam Nujoma a "bloody thug". He asserted that Ovambo dominance in Namibia after an election would lead to civil war.

Malan declared that the Angola-Namibia situation was the number one problem in southern Africa. Angola was the one place where the US could roll back Soviet-Cuban presence in Africa. He urged the need to get rid of the Cubans

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and to support Savimbi's UNITA, which he claimed was growing stronger as SWAPO grew militarily weaker. He said that South Africa sees Savimbi as a "buffer" in Angola for Namibia. Having supported him this far, it would damage South African honour if Savimbi was harmed.

Crocker said the US view was that South Africa was no longer under military pressure to leave Namibia and that the US sought a settlement based on democratic principles. He said the US was exploring ways of removing the Soviet-Cuban presence in Angola, "in the context of a Namibia settlement". There could be no peace in Angola without a reconciliation between UNITA and the MPLA, and movement towards such a reconciliation could be achieved by play-

ing on the divisions within the MPLA.

He said the US believed that UN Resolution 435 was the basis for transition to independence for Namibia, but not for a full settlement. "We cannot scrap 435 without great difficulty," he said. "We wish to supplement rather than discard it."

"We believe we can get the Soviets out of Angola, and provide a guarantee of security in Namibia whether Nujoma wins or not," he said.

Botha concluded by saying that South Africa was willing to pay the price of war to prevent Namibia "going the wrong way".

"The internal parties don't want us to let go until they have sufficient power to control the situation. We want an anti-Soviet black government," he said ●

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FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

WASTE DISPOSAL SEEN AS OBSTACLE TO NEW CONSTRUCTION

Hamburg STERN in German 12 Nov 81 pp 132, 134, 136

[Article by Sebastian Knauer: "Nuclear Waste, A Nightmare"]

[Text] The storage sites for radioactive waste from nuclear power plants, clinics and laboratories are filled to the brim. Without a solution to the disposal problem, nuclear plants will have to be shut down as early as next year. In spite of agreements with foreign reprocessing facilities, the nuclear industry is in danger of suffocating in nuclear waste.

The freight train on track 17 had arrived, carrying a hot shipment. The car next to the last one was loaded with steel containers filled with nuclear waste from the FRG; it was on its way to the French reprocessing plant of the Cogema in La Hague. In the train station of Mezidon, a small town in Brittany, environmentalists were blocking the German-French waste transport with a sit-in strike on the railroad tracks. They fastened banners to the locomotive and sent a telegram to French Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy: "We do not want any foreign nuclear waste in our country."

The blockade in the province at the end of August 1981 was not without effect. Two weeks later the government in Paris put a temporary stop to the shipment of burned-out fuel rods from German power plants. Without disposal in the neighboring country, however, German nuclear plants are in danger of suffocating in their own waste. As early as next year, the lights could go out in the nuclear power plants of Stade, Biblis and Wuergrassan.

The FRG Ministry of the Interior is still optimistic. A "Report by the Federal Government on the disposal of waste from nuclear power plants" from the beginning of October mentions only a "short-term interruption": "At the present time" there is "no cause to question the reliability of the Cogema agreements with respect to provisions for waste disposal."

But in reality things look different. Hermann Kraemer, member of the executive committee of the North-West German Power Plant: "We do not know any longer where to put the burned-out uranium rods. Our storage capacities are almost exhausted." Franz Josef Spalthoff, member of the executive committee of the Rhine-Westphalia Electricity Plant: "The danger exists that we may have to shut down."

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The disposal question is more and more becoming an "open sore in the energy supply" (Federation of Chambers of German Industry and Commerce). And in Bonn nuclear-energy producers are trying to dump their worries about disposal on the shoulders of the minister of the interior. Gerhart Baum: "Now I am supposed to take care of their business." So far there have been only failures:

--The proposed construction of a "nuclear disposal center" in Gorleben is still uncertain. In the opinion of Ernst Albrecht, Niedersachsen's minister-president, the super solution--reprocessing of fuel rods and final storage of nuclear waste--is certainly "technically possible" but it is "politically unfeasible." The report of the FRG minister of the interior: "The exploration of the site for a final storage facility at Gorleben is proceeding according to plans." The fact that Albrecht is refusing to investigate other sites simultaneously--in the event that experts pronounce Gorleben unsuitable--is kept a secret. Following the conclusion of five deep drilling sessions--the radioactive waste is to be enclosed in salt blocks 600 meters below the surface of the earth--it seems to be possible. Water leaks cannot be discounted, the groundwater could be polluted with radioactivity.

--The beginning of the construction of an above-ground interim storage facility for 1,500 tons of fuel rods was stopped by the courts because of an error in procedures. Four hundred twenty steel containers (casters) are to be air-cooled in a giant hall and stored up to 30 years. No experience exists worldwide for the use of these nuclear barns.

--In Ahaus, North-Rhine-Westphalia, a 1,500-ton interim storage facility cannot be built until 1985. Before licensing the facility, the Land government wants to make sure that the interim storage facility will not suddenly become a final storage facility for 500 nuclear waste containers. To meet the total demand of the FRG nuclear industry, 1,200 special containers of this kind will have to be produced at a cost of DM 1 million each. To date no more than nine have been manufactured.

--In September 1981, a court in Darmstadt stopped the long-term storage of burned-out fuel rods of Hesse's nuclear power plant in Biblis in a proposed "compact storage facility." An emergency solution of this kind is a water-cooling basin that is customary in all nuclear power plants--only twice as many fuel rods are to be packed into it. The Federal Administrative Court still has to rule whether the high-risk bunching of active rods is even permissible under the Nuclear Law.

--In North Hesse the search for a site for a proposed 350-ton reprocessing facility led to an unpleasant surprise. In 1981, following many months of investigations, the German Society for the Reprocessing of Nuclear Fuel (DWK) named the village of Wethen as the optimal site. But only a short time later Hesse's minister of the interior declared the site that had been found only after much difficulty as unsuitable. Underground, below the planned nuclear factory, geologists of Hesse's Land office discovered caverns that were in danger of collapsing.

The present patchwork in disposal policies is striking at the heart of the 12 nuclear energy producers in the FRG, because no new nuclear energy plant has been licensed since the revision of the Nuclear Law in 1976 without proof of disposal. Consequently the nuclear industry is counting on the disposal of the dangerous waste in foreign countries. The energy producers quickly concluded agreements with reprocessing facilities in France (La Hague) and England (Windscale).

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Terms of delivery, return obligations and prices were fixed in secret agreements, even parliamentarians were not permitted to see them until 1980 and only after many years of persistent trying. SPD Bundestag Deputy Harald Schaefer, chairman of the Investigative Commission on Nuclear Energy summarizes: "These agreements do not represent disposal."

As a matter of fact, the agreements that have been concluded to date are only uncertain drafts on the future. Agreements were made with the French Cogema, a subsidiary of the French Nuclear Energy Authority, according to which more than 2,000 tons of burned-out fuel rods are to be shipped to La Hague by 1985. Beginning with 1990, the firm has the right to return the reprocessed waste to the FRG. In case the factory in La Hague is to be torn down, even radioactive parts of the polluted production facilities would have to be stored in Germany. If the return should not be possible because of a lack of storage facilities, the agreement provides for stiff penalties. According to an internal Cogema document of September 1981, a fee of approximately DM 40,000 will be levied daily.

La Hague is the only facility that can reprocess fuel rods from the light-water reactor type built in Germany. French managers are exploiting this monopoly unscrupulously ("We have profit margins between 15 and 30 percent"). German energy concerns are participating in the expansion of the reprocessing facility. They are spending DM 6.15 billion to increase the capacity from its current 400 tons to a proposed 1,600 tons. Cogema Chief Georges Besse: "Nevertheless, there will be no additional agreements with foreign countries."

On the other hand, it is still possible to make business deals with the English reprocessing facility of Windscale on the Irish Sea. To be sure, the facility has been closed since 1973, following an accident and radioactive pollution, but by the end of the 1980's the new 1,200-ton facility "Thorp" is to be in operation. Two German nuclear energy operators have secured agreements for the future.

Nevertheless, even English experts doubt that the construction will be completed on time, because at the present time cows are still grazing on the designated building site. To eliminate the touchy word of Windscale from discussions, the controversial project was renamed for the neighboring village of Sellafield. Walt Patterson of the English environmental organization "Friends of the Earth" said: "A disposal in Windscale is a pipedream of the German industry."

The nuclear waste pact with foreign countries is no alternative to the disposal crisis. This is the conclusion of a 300-page study conducted by 30 scientists of the "Group NG-350" at the University of Marburg. According to their calculations, the reprocessing plant in La Hague will be filled to capacity as early as next year with fuel rods from French reactors, which does not even take into account all the breakdowns and shutdowns. During the next 4 years more than 5,000 tons will be transported to interim storage facilities from Japan, Sweden, Belgium, Switzerland and the FRG. The physicist Gustav Sauer stated: "The present facility in La Hague is only a delusion of a disposal possibility for the FRG."

In the event of a systematic expansion of German nuclear plants, this radioactive dump will increase tenfold. Until the year 2000, 15,000 tons of fuel rods will have to be processed and stored. Their radioactive rays will persist for 10,000 years-- a nightmare for future generations.

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But even those storage sites in the FRG intended for less dangerous radioactive waste are filled to overflowing. Consequently, yellow roll barrels filled with waste of low and medium activity are piling up at nine Land collection points: polluted coats and tubules, gloves and tools arrive from clinics, laboratories and nuclear power plants. The waste is radiating caesium 137, iridium 192 and radium 226; the pile is growing by 30,000 barrels annually. The waiting lists for the storage of nuclear waste are booked for years to come.

Above-ground storage facilities containing low- and medium-active waste are also harboring risks for the environment. The radioactive scrap packed in airtight barrels will radiate between 2 and 100 years. Until 1978, long-term active waste was stored in the closed salt mine of Asse near Wolfsburg, where 126,300 containers with this kind of waste disappeared below daylight. Subsequently everything was sealed off. There are no plans to reopen the "experimental final storage facility," which was operated without a licensing procedure.

On the other hand, it is possible that within a few years the Konrad mine might be reopened to become the nuclear waste dump of the nation. The shut-down mine near Salzgitter is currently being examined for its suitability for the storage of radioactive waste and worn-out parts of nuclear reactors. The matter is urgent, because beginning with the middle of 1982 the pressure-pipe reactor in Niederachach, Bavaria, will be disassembled. The demolition of the veteran of German nuclear history will produce 130,000 tons of scrap and 4,000 barrels of radioactive waste that will have to be stored.

Other countries are burying their nuclear waste on the high seas. Great Britain, Belgium, Holland and Switzerland, for instance, are dumping their nuclear waste in the Bay of Biscay. In August 1981, one English freighter alone threw 600 barrels overboard. If the German nuclear power lobby had its way, native nuclear waste would soon be loaded on ships as well. The German Nuclear Forum is openly demanding the dumping of low-radioactive waste in the deep ocean.

Disposing of nuclear waste in this manner could soon be responsible for its reappearance in our own environment. Because on the way down to the bottom of the sea, the containers--which have been reinforced with concrete--will burst from the increase in water pressure. The substances escaping from the leaky barrels enter the food chain by the way of sea animals.

Mackerels and tuna fish from the Bay of Biscay are also sold in Germany.

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UNITED KINGDOM

BRIEFS

USSR URANIUM ENRICHMENT--Britain is sending uranium from Namibia to be enriched at a plant in the Soviet Union for use as fuel in British nuclear power stations. The Central Electricity Generating Board says it is due to receive 70,000 lb of enriched uranium from Russia this year. After being imported into Britain as yellowcake, uranium is converted into hexafluoride at the British nuclear fuels plant at Springfields near Preston. The hexafluoride is then shipped to the Soviet port of Riga, where it is handled by the state enrichment corporation Technas-export. The Soviet enrichment plant is shrouded in secrecy, mainly because it also produces weapons-grade uranium. Its location is not publicly known, although it is believed to be somewhere in the Urals. The uranium enriched in the Soviet Union is sent back to the plant at Springfields to be made into fuel rods for the nine nuclear power stations that provide 11 per cent of the electricity consumed in England and Wales. Half of the uranium yellowcake imported in its raw state by Britain comes from the Rossing mine in Namibia that belongs to the British company Rio Tinto-Zinc. The yellowcake is processed at Springfields along with imports from Canada. [London THE OBSERVER in English 25 Oct 81 p 1 PM] [COPYRIGHT: The Observer Ltd 1981]

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