

The French UOGC: Organizing For Progress

It should come as no surprise that the French state-controlled electricity monopoly, Electricité de France (EDF), has in recent months become the privileged target of various terrorist and sabotage operations by British-manipulated "ecologists." These operations include: a strike against EDF hatched by the neo-Fabian anarchosyndicalist union, the CFDT, a slander campaign by Institute for Policy Studies networks in France which equated the EDF's firm stand for higher levels of energy consumption with "totalitarianism" and a wave of bombings against EDF offices and plants.

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The EDF, created as a nationalized institution by the Gaullist-Communist government after World War II, indeed represents a major nucleus of engineers, technicians, planners, skilled workers, and managers who are committed to the "public good" and national interest associated with the economic and social benefits derived from technological progress, in particular the development of nuclear energy.

The "Union des Organismes de Groupement des Collectivités" (UOGC) stands as the organized expression of those vanguard prodevelopment forces in and around the EDF. Its role, principally at the administration level, is significant in the current fight for expanding nuclear energy. The UOGC, highly respected among government and parliamentary circles in France, is a national federation of associations ("syndicats") of locally elected officials first organized in the 1920s to promote and accelerate the electrification of the country, particularly of the more backward rural areas. A staunch proponent of nuclear, cheap, and abundant energy, the UOGC premises its actions upon the following principled objective: "Ensure the country the means of survival and renewal for the improvement of the level and quality of life which would be a meaningless word without cheap and abundant energy, a factor of progress, which alleviates the toil of mankind."

The following are excerpts from the UOGC's "Information Organ," a programmatic package published several times a year and reaching some 3,000 deputies, senators, mayors, and prefects around the country:

"In its 'Resolution for the autonomy and wealth of France through abundant, cheap, and no polluting energy,' reaffirmed at its September 1977 Congress, the UOGC recalled that the evolution of civilization over the centuries and the growth of energy (supplies) at the disposal of the population and the economy, and that the progress of science and the evolution of human resources in energy, notably since the 19th century with the steam engine and then electricity, have allowed a decrease in

the duration of human labor. This decrease in the duration of human labor over the past 130 years is linked to the availability to the national economy and to the population, for the improvement of the quality of life, of an energy — a real mechanical slave — which can substitute for human labor. The alleviation of the toil man and the progress of science — notably in the medical field by the Pasteurian era and by the discovery of antibiotics — have permitted a considerable increase in the lifespan of man, most spectacularly in infants. The UOGC also notes that the increase in the living standard (wages) and the quality of life is directly linked to the growth of the GNP (Gross National Product —ed.) of the country.

"Whereas our country is endowed with unparalleled scientific, technical, technological, and industrial elements which rank us among the first in the world in several fields, enabling us to be within reach of the implementation of a high-technology energy policy through the advantages and advances which are available in the nuclear field;

"and whereas the only solution for the improvement of the economy of the country, which at the same time satisfies the social problems of retirement, unemployment, social security and improvement of buying power,

"and despite the recession of the active forces of the nation resulting from a falling demography with a growing inactive population,

"resides solely in the accelerated and intensive mobilization of cheap nuclear energy which the country can dispose of in unlimited amounts . . . the UOGC therefore

"calls on the Government and the Public authorities to adopt the following supplementary program:

— 3,000 megawatts a year more than the 6,000 initially planned by the government,

— a second fast breeder of 1,800 MW in 1980 and another in 1982-83,

— 10 terawatt per hour (1 terawatt equals 1000 gigawatts) of hydroelectric power by increasing from 10 to 20 percent the electrical capacity of existing plants which would not require major new engineering work,

— 3 gigawatts of pumping during the "off" hours in order to more effectively utilize our hydraulic energy potential and the available nuclear power during the off hours.

". . . So that our country cannot be cornered at any time (through incidents such as the New York blackout of July 14, 1977), and because of the present delay in the implementation of nuclear plant construction and the tendency toward increased demand, the necessity to promote a supplementary program such as the one we are proposing is absolute

"This program must be accompanied by a reinforcement of the interconnections between our networks of electrical energy and those of neighboring countries, in order to allow a reciprocal improvement in the reliability of energy distribution as well as allow those countries

involved to benefit from a more even distribution of supply.

“The development of electricity production with the proposed supplementary plan would amount to 10.5 percent a year between 1975 and 1985, compared to only 7 percent with the already existing government plan, and would increase the possibilities of improving the standard of living by 20 percent (increase the minimum wage and wages, decrease the duration of labor, and progression of social benefits, while the supplementary 20 percent rate of economic expansion would allow unemployment to be absorbed

“The UOGC believes that the extraordinary rapidity of amortization (in the nuclear energy field), unprecedented in the economic history of our country, can only incite the public authorities to the most rapid possible implementation of the proposed nuclear program The amortization must be achieved through classical methods of fiscal administration, and the energy produced must be sold at the resulting marginal cost of production. This will benefit the economy of the country — and permit it to move back to a level of internal production ranking it second or third in the world”

French Nuclear Official Blasts U.S. Approach To Nonproliferation

At its January 1977 meeting in Tokyo, the Trilateral Commission formally recommended a world-wide, three-year moratorium on the development of nuclear fast breeder and reprocessing technologies. The U.S. Carter Administration had called for such a policy to halt the transfer of technologies it alleges will aid in the proliferation of nuclear weapons by countries which now lack that capability. This U.S. Administration policy has been sharply denounced by leading nuclear experts and governments around the world, including André Giraud, the president of the French Atomic Energy Commission (CEA), whose speech before a recent Trilateral Commission meeting in Bonn, West Germany is excerpted below. Although Giraud did not speak for the CEA, his remarks accurately reflect the public policy position of the French government.

During the recent London “Summit” meeting, the heads of States and Governments of the seven main industrialized countries have thus defined their policy in the final communiqué:

“Increasing reliance will have to be placed on nuclear energy, to satisfy growing energy requirements and to help diversify sources of energy. This should be done with the utmost precaution, with respect to the generation and dissemination of material that can be used for nuclear weapons. Our objective is to meet the world’s energy needs and to make peaceful use of nuclear energy widely available, while avoiding the danger of the spread of nuclear weapons. We also agree that, in order to be effective, non-proliferation policies should as far as possible be acceptable to both industrialized and developing countries alike.”

You will notice that, in so doing, our governments have committed themselves to select a policy fostering at the same time the aims of nonproliferation and the development of nuclear energy. For us, it is out of the question to jeopardize this development, for two reasons:

- The first one derives from the energy supply situation of most European countries, which cannot accept to see their economy become increasingly dependent upon oil producing countries, and risk to face first an unbearable unbalance of their external trade, and then

strangulation when oil will no longer be produced in sufficient quantities either because of normal exhaustion of natural resources, or due to insufficient investments, or to the decision of a cartel or even of a single country.

- The second reason is linked to our concern about world stability. The experts recently assembled in Istanbul have unanimously agreed that the comparison between provisions on oil demand and supply demonstrates that an unprecedented world energy crisis is due for tomorrow, and not for the day after.

To overcome that crisis, the world must urgently mobilize all its means of action, among which nuclear energy must play an essential and large part. Our world, where ideologies, racisms, rich and starving populations are face to face, is not organized to afford, in peace, an energy rationing — and it would be useless, in order to preserve this peace, to have reduced the risks of proliferation, by means which would simultaneously increase the risks of tensions and world conflagration.

We have even the duty — the European countries are unanimous on this point — to prepare without any delay the conversion to fast breeder reactors in order to avoid the waste of uranium reserves. The energy policy of the next 20 or 50 years cannot rely on a mere gamble. The reserves taken into account must certainly be estimated at a level widely superior to the quantities discovered until now. But in this respect, we have to limit our wishful thinking to what is estimated by the majority of experts. One must remember that the construction of fast breeder reactors can only follow by several years the construction of the first generation reactors, which supply them with the necessary plutonium. Their development is the responsibility of the industrialized countries in which they will normally be built for many years....

We consider that a nonproliferation policy to be efficient must be realistic, or more precisely that it must not be unrealistic. It cannot be based on the fact that only the big industrialized countries control or will control uranium, know-how and money. Nor is it realistic to imagine that the considerable investments which have been made already to develop a certain cycle of nuclear