

'Benefiting from cooperation with Euratom' from Le Figaro (5 December 1966)

Caption: On 5 December 1966, the French daily newspaper Le Figaro ponders on the interest and inconsistencies of the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC or Euratom).

Source: Le Figaro. 05.12.1966. Paris. "Mettant à profit sa collaboration avec Euratom", auteur:Latil, Pierre de.

Copyright: (c) Translation CVCE.EU by UNI.LU

All rights of reproduction, of public communication, of adaptation, of distribution or of dissemination via Internet, internal network or any other means are strictly reserved in all countries.

Consult the legal notice and the terms and conditions of use regarding this site.

URL:

http://www.cvce.eu/obj/benefiting_from_cooperation_with_euratom_from_le_figaro_5_december_1966-en-3ee6d139-d4bd-4028-955c-95d4818115d3.html



Last updated: 05/07/2016

Benefiting from cooperation with Euratom

Germany skips the generation of large uranium reactors and prepares to build plutonium power stations

Karlsruhe, 4 December (*from our special correspondent*)

[...]

What is the point of Euratom?

All research into plutonium, which is expected to become the world's major energy source, is of considerable interest to industry. Uranium 235, the only fissile isotope, constitutes 0.7 % of natural uranium, but it will not last forever — unless, of course, we are prepared to pay the high price of extracting it from granite, where it exists in minute quantities. The solution is to use plutonium in the core of the reactor and surround it with a sheath of depleted uranium that has already been burned in another reactor or from which the uranium 235 has been removed in an isotope separation plant.

The radiation emitted by the plutonium core bombards the depleted uranium, forming plutonium atoms within the sheath, and the resultant plutonium mass can exceed the mass of plutonium destroyed in the core.

This 'fast-breeding' process will be perfected in the near future. That is the purpose of *Rapsodie*, France's new nuclear reactor at Cadarache. In 1968 France will start work on a large-scale fast-breeder reactor called *Phénix*. Germany is moving in the same direction. Its research facilities in Karlsruhe, where the process is under study, are located on the same site as the Euratom research centre. Plans are being drawn up for two plutonium reactors under a DEM 96 million programme.

Yet Germany is a member of Euratom, which is covering 40 % of the construction costs of *Rapsodie*, on which German engineers are also working. Now we hear that Karlsruhe will be conducting experiments that have already been performed at Cadarache, in particular an expensive study of the circulation of liquid sodium.

Such duplication of effort in Europe is astonishing. We tried to find out more by questioning senior officials, right up to the state secretary, about the costly repetition of European experiments by national agencies.

We received no satisfactory answers. The only justification put forward was that fast-breeder reactors are too momentous an issue for Germany to refrain from studying them on its own. This shows that Euratom is not even capable of fulfilling its primary task of preventing duplication in nuclear research. In response, it is easy for Euratom to point the finger at nationalistic research policies that stand in the way of a genuine European community.

Pierre de Latil