

FUKUSHIMA AND THE DEMOCRATIZACION OF ENERGY

(Part One)

If the public opinion was less voluble in its opinions, by the time the Fukushima nuclear plant stopped becoming a source of news and radiation, the nuclear debate should have entered a new stage. Those ones against this source of energy have seen the accident as an additional proof of something as obvious as apparently unnoticed: nuclear facilities are effectively lethal both for human health and for the environment, in a direct and deferred way.

It might seem that there is a lower public acquiescence towards the nuclear energy now than back in 1986, when the reactor number 4 of Chernobyl blew its radioactive cloud all over Europe, but it is difficult that anything really causes a change in the nuclear plans previous to the earthquake and ulterior tsunami of March 12. Those who are older than 30 can remember much stronger antinuclear demonstrations in the past than the ones we have seen in the previous weeks. Moreover, in order to cool down the bad consciences and the mistrust towards this type of energy, pro-nuclear politicians and engineers have abused of a tangled demagogy and have announced "their intentions to consider the procrastination of the construction of new plants for the next two decades", as

well as "substantial improvements in the facilities, with additional cooling systems and new contention buildings around the reactors".

It is surprising that for such a potentially dangerous theme as this, the citizens demand so little supervision. Which institution, which media, which Department of State... will be in charge of checking that these "resistance tests" are implemented? Who will, once the sensational alarm caused by the Fukushima catastrophe and the Chernobyl 25th anniversary are vanished? The fact itself that these protocols have been announced makes us become more suspicious towards those in charge of the nuclear security: How come that it is now when, all of a sudden, such improvements can be made? Does this mean that we didn't count on the utmost secure plants before?

The lobbies that defend this type of energy have spent weeks insisting on the fact that Fukushima was remarkable resistant to the impact of two consecutive unprecedented, unpredicted, historical, natural disasters, and have repeated that only one out of the 55 nuclear facilities of Japan have endangered the life around it; this all proves how secure nuclear plants are. What is more, time favors these lobbies, because once new topics -new disgraces, new wars, new imbecilities said by politicians, new sport heroism- have erupted to our TVs and therefore blurred the

remembrance of Fukushima and Chernobyl, the pro-nuclear people will restart their campaign of persuasion.

Those who defend nuclear energy have a great positive factor on their side to gain the support of public opinion: they count on the optimism. As optimistic citizens, they focus on the advantages of this source of energy by erasing the possibility of an accident out of the mind, and they can do so because they trust "science, technique and progress". As optimistic citizens, they present nuclear plants as the panacea of human achievement because: 1) they produce "clean" energy without emissions; 2) they generate economic activity and jobs whereas they are based on; 3) they allow the countries to be less-dependant energetically.

Nevertheless, the real frame where the nuclear dilemma can be presented is not the one of the confrontation between "the lovers of an enlightened progress", on one side, and "the reactionary, fearful ecologists", on the other. And it is not the right frame because the costs of the nuclear energy do not take into account the real prize of the radioactive waste, neither the costs that the governments would have to face in the case of an accident; facilities of a high potential danger are being operated without any insurances. Can anyone estimate how much the prize we pay for the nuclear-sourced-electricity would be increased, were these insurance costs added?

We all are forced by law to live in insured houses and to drive insured vehicles, albeit none predicts her house be consumed by the flames, nor have a car accident. Nuclear plants, though, work with the most deadly of all energies, but they run their delicate operations with no insurances, in the most outrageous boasting of irrationality of all those performed in the long history of humankind.

Of course there is no insurance company to insure a nuclear plant, due to the fact that an accident would lead that company to a direct bankruptcy. But there where the markets fail, the states becomes the last resource insurers (check <http://www.world-nuclear.org/info/inf67.html>), and in the end it is citizens who day by day play unknowingly to the lottery of the potential costs of a nuclear disaster in their countries, costs that they would assume with their taxes, with their health and ultimately with their lives. And they do that guided by the optimisms of the pronuclear lobbies and the blindness of their governments.

In case that people paid the real prize for the nuclear energy, once the governments added the above mentioned insurance costs, would this energy continue being that cheap?

To choose nuclear energy in the current circumstances is truly like choosing to take your child to a prestigious multilingual school surrounded by anti-personnel mines: no insurance company would surely insure the infant's life.

The kid would learn to walk the safe path to school, but there would always be a risk that the kid might lose his balance for any reason - and subsequently lose his integrity. I am pretty sure that some daddies would rather run that risk in order to get an exclusive education for their children, but no doubt that the majority of the families would prefer having sound and monolingual children.

For these reasons, it is important that the governments add an extra tax of insurance and ecological impact to the prize of the nuclear energy, so that citizens now at last the real prize of this form of energy.

(End of Part One)

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