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Marching On towards Nuclear Crime

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The Government and the EDF (Electricité de France), in their long march to get the Flamanville EPR into service, have just passed an important milestone, with the blessing of the Council of State on 16 October.

It is now well-known that EPR is not just a financial abyss, a textbook case of trickery, negligence, cheating, dissimulations and misappropriations, but also a technological aberration, a cluster of malpractices, and the most brilliant promise of civil nuclear catastrophe (from which not even Fukushima managed to correct the folly of France's leaders. Only one man seems now unaware of this, but he plans single-handedly to save EPR from annihilation.

That man is the President, the Head of State, the chief of the leaders. He is "en marche" [the name of his party], he is near his goal, and the Council of State has just cleared the way for him. Here is why and how.

On 12 December 2005 a government decree set up requirements for the mechanical maintenance and quality of conception and fabrication which nuclear equipment under pressure (reactor vats, steam generators) needs to respect absolutely. The least defect in these parts could lead to a major accident.

Ten years then elapsed, during which the Flamanville EPR multiplied its delays, price-overruns, mistakes, malpractices and embezzlements, as if inspired by its predecessor sold "ready to drive" to the Finns... and still not in operation yet.

At the start of 2015 the Areva Corporation finally "indicated" some anomalies to the Nuclear Safety Authority (ASN) - anomalies that they had all known for a long time - in the vat of the EPR reactor made by Creusot Forges, defects in mechanical maintenance and in quality: the steel of the lid and the base of the vat do not meet the norms of resilience. In the event of a shock, whether thermic or other, it can crack or be dislocated. Logically, that vat needs to be rejected. But it's too late. The ACN permitted its installation and it is virtually unmovable.

Fortunately, on 30 December 2015, at a time when the French people were preparing a celebratory meal, a decree from the Minister of Ecology provided for a "derogatory procedure" to be applied when equipment of this kind is being put into service, even if it fails to satisfy all the safety norms. The safety of France's population is less important than the interests of EDF and Areva and commercial equilibrium - and of course France's prestige and France's "nuclear know-how". Several NGO groups were enraged (France Nature Environnement, the "Nuclear Phase-out Network", Greenpeace, Notre Affaire à Tous, and the CRILAN) and they submitted to the Council of State two claims of misuse of power. Those are the recourses which the Council of State has just rejected (on 16 October). This decision explodes the final obstacle preventing the government from announcing that the Flamanville reactor will now enter service - since the derogation is now a mere formality.

Meanwhile, with M. Macron as President, the ASN cleared the terrain. In July 2017 it formulated an "proposed notice" admitting that the steel of the vat, intended to last 60 years, does not meet the norms, but that it could and will hold up for 6 years until the lid is replaced... Also, still hesitating, the ASN launched a public consultation during the summer, and reserved its final opinion for the end of the year. 13 000 citizens replying to the call refuted and rejected almost all that "provisional notice", agreeing rather with the advice of experts in nuclear safety. Will they be listened to? No way! Regardless of all this, the ASN confirmed on 11 October its July notice - word for word. That was then ratified five days later by the Council of State.

So tell yourself this: a crime is in preparation - against France's people, Europe's people, the world's people. The

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criminals are polishing their weapons, the Lobby has joined the hunt. We are the animals they are targeting.

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