

Trittin Headed For a Meltdown?

by Rainer Apel

Unfortunately, the greenie ideology still heavily influences politics in Germany, but judging from increasing fierce public attacks on Environmental Affairs Minister Jürgen Trittin of the Green Party, at least his days seem numbered. The drastic speculative rise of the price of crude oil is affecting motorists and industry. This has brought the message home to Germany that solar cells and windmills are not the kind of "alternative" that will provide a sufficient supply of power in the future.

The oil price increase, which a few months ago was openly applauded by the German Greens, and by the aforesaid Trittin most of all, as the motivation to enter the era of "natural" energy sources, has backfired. Instead there is now increasing discussion in Germany about the benefits of a return to nuclear technology. This has been augmented by the decision of other European countries—Finland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Bulgaria—which have concluded that the continuation of nuclear technology is vital for them, and irreplaceable by any other energy source.

This does not mean that new nuclear power plant construction, after a 26-year standstill, will begin immediately in Germany, but the increased interest in other countries means an export market for the most modern Franco-German fission reactor type, the European Pressurized Reactor (EPR), and naturally, German industry wants to have a substantial share in such exports, rather than leaving them to the French, exclusively. When earlier this year, Finland signed a contract for an EPR reactor complex with France, the German Greens, the coalition partner of Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, insisted that Germany's Siemens firm not play an active role in the Finland project, although the reactor was a joint development of the French Framatome firm and Siemens. Before the Finland case, the Greens had sabotaged the sale of an unused German nuclear reprocessing unit to China.

But Green Party interventions like these have provoked the leaders of the power technology sector in Germany to be more aggressive against the anti-technology ecologists, and they have dropped their long-term passivity toward greenie policies. This became evident at a recent talkshow on the Phoenix television station, when spokesmen for the power technology sector, and a number of prominent politicians, hit Trittin so hard with arguments in favor of nuclear power that he began babbling incoherently, and started insulting his discussion partners. The talkshow audience was transformed during this event; the number of nuclear power endorsers



"Empty container. . . What to do with it?" Claudio Celani's cartoon of Jürgen Trittin, who instituted an extra fee for every metal or plastic container, appeared in the German weekly *Neue Solidarität*.

grew visibly by the end of the event, as their applause for those attacking Trittin demonstrated.

Trittin tried to take revenge in an op-ed in the Nov. 15 German economic daily *Handelsblatt*, proclaiming: "We are not witnessing a renaissance of nuclear power, but rather its creeping end." Trittin claimed that all the talk about plans for new reactors throughout the world was nonsense. The Chinese were committed, Trittin wrote, to install 60 gigawatts in solar, wind, and small hydroelectric power plants by 2010. In the West, France and Finland are isolated in respect to their nuclear policies because the enhanced safety of the French-German EPR reactor had "never been proven." Trittin then asserted that Islamic terrorists have included nuclear reactors in their list of targets. The "growing worldwide hunger for power" exists especially in "developing countries and in politically unstable regions of the world. There, nuclear power plants are potential targets for enemy states—and for authoritarian regimes just stations on the way to building the bomb," he said.

Trittin has been disliked by a growing number of Germans since he invented the *dosenpfand* in 1999, an extra fee paid for every tin and plastic can or bottle that is bought at a store. You may pay more for the bottle than for its contents. This is so absurd that comedians have proposed that stores only sell empty plastic bottles or tin cans, because then they would make more money. Several years ago, a cartoon in *Neue Solidarität*, the weekly of the German LaRouche movement, depicting Trittin as a squashed empty tin can, became very popular in the country. Observing Trittin's recent conduct, one finds that the cartoon anticipated the present state of mind the Green politician is in. In the next cabinet reshuffle, which may occur early next year, the German Chancellor may find Trittin an expendable burden.