

May 21, 1963

Atomic Energy Commission, 'German Participation in Pierrelatte Gaseous Diffusion Plant,' with Cover Memo from Myron B. Kratzer, Division of International Affairs, to Mr. Thomas and Mr. Kaufman, Department of State

Citation:

"Atomic Energy Commission, 'German Participation in Pierrelatte Gaseous Diffusion Plant,' with Cover Memo from Myron B. Kratzer, Division of International Affairs, to Mr. Thomas and Mr. Kaufman, Department of State", May 21, 1963, Wilson Center Digital Archive, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of European Affairs, Office of Atlantic Political and Economic Affairs, Records Relating to Atomic Energy Matters, 1960-1963, box 2, N.8a France. Contributed to NPIHP by Bill Burr.

https://wilson-center.drivingcreative.com/document/177758

Summary:

This AEC report looked at the Pierrelatte plant's prospective capabilities, possible West German motives for seeking an independent supply of enriched uranium (possibly in cooperation with the French), the "adverse" implications of a French-German project, and policy alternatives available to Washington. If the West Germans were determined to contribute to the French enrichment project, the AEC saw serious risks including the "the prospects of a Franco-German military alliance that could constitute a European third force capable of dominating Western Europe."

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY)

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan

DECLASSIFIED

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1957-O-422007

10	hori MEMO RI By	NARA Date	12/6// bout this.	For concurren	For action.
Form	AEC-08 (Nev. May I	, IVIII)	Note and return.	For signature.	For information.
Charles W. Thomas SCI State Department		INITIALS	Attached is a copy of an informal paper prepared in AEC concerning German participation in the Pierrelatte gaseous diffusion plant which may		
		DATE			
Robert E. Kaufman EUR State Department		INITIALS	be of some interest to you in connection with your		
			consideration of this problem.		
		DATE			
TO (Name and unit)		INITIALS	REMARKS		1,00
		DATE			
FROM (Name and unit) M.B.Kratzer DIA,USAKC		REMARKS			
		DOCUMENT TRANSMITTED HEREWITH CONTAINS CLASSIFIED UETENSE INFORMATION			

USE OTHER SIDE FOR ADDITIONAL REMARKS

DECLASSIFIED
Hority NO 959235

By NARA Date 12(6/1)



GERMAN PARTICIPATION IN PIERRELATTE GASHOUS DIFFUSION PLANT

I. Introductions and Assusptions

There have been reports of French efforts to secure German and perhaps Italian financial and technical participation in completion of the French gassous diffusion plant at Pierrolatto. The estimated cost of this plant, as aunounced by the French, is 1.2 billion dollars and its estimated output when in full production is to be ten kilograms par day of highly enriched U-235. It is now estimated that top product will not become available until 1967.

Based on current United States experience, the reported plant cont and its estimated operational cost and capacity, it is estimated that the cost of U-235 to the French would be two to three times that to the U.S. — although it is difficult to determine, in light of French lack of technological background in this field, the estual cost of U-235 to the French. However, on the basis of U.S. experience it would appear that a plant of the cost estimated by the French could, through gradual improvement, achieve a substantially greater cutput. On the basis of its currently estimated modest capacity, the plant would not make a major contribution to prejected French of German civil requirements for enriched uranium, even if its output were entirely evallable for these purposes. (Estimated German cumulative requirements elone for U-235, as estimated by a recent surppean Community study, are in the range of 50 to 65 thousand kilograms of U-235 by 1975 and annual consumption should rise rapidly thereafter. Summlative production from the Pierrelatte plant by this time would have been less than 30,000 kilograms of U-235.)

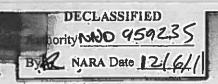
It is reported that the German interest in participation is based on their desire to have a source of U-235 for civil purposes independent of the United States. It must be assumed, however, that any such participation would result in Germany having a source of U-235 which would be available to them for either civil or military purposes.

II. Possible Easis for German Interest in Alternate Source of Supply of U-235

The United States has recognized for some time the reluctance on the part of other nations to depend on a sole foreign source of supply for a vital energy resource such as U-235. As a consequence, U-3. U-235 distribution policies have been repeatedly modified to strengthen assurences as to the availability of U-235 from the United States. At the present time, AEC policies provide for entering into long-term contracts for the supply of U-235 corresponding to the economic life of the reactors to be supplied. Uniform prices, based on cost, apply denestically and abroad, and have been reduced significantly over the last two years. 65,000 kilograms of U-235 have been allocated by the

SEGRET

This material contains information affecting the national defense of the United States within the meaning of the espionage laws, Title 18, U.S.C., Secs. 783 and 704, the transmission or revelation of which in any manner to an unauthorized person is prohibited by law.



SEGRET

President for civil uses abroad, of which 30,000 has been made available to Euratea. The Commission has recently recommended an increase in the Presidential allocation for civil uses abroad to 150,000 kilograms of U-235 and, subject to approval of this recommendation and required Congressional approval, will increase the Euratea total to 70,000 kilograms of U-235.

Despite these actions and a number of other related liberalizations in U.S. fuel distribution policies, there are unquestionably remaining areas where recipient nations such as Carmany would prefer to see still more liberal policies. Some of these areas, as identified from specific comments made by German officials from time to time as well as generally known attitudes of recipient nations, are as follows:

- 1. U.S. U-235 is supplied under the condition that safeguards will be spolied. (In the case of materials supplied to Buratum these are Euratum safeguards.)
- 2. Purchase of U.S. U+235 involves cost pensities, for example, for transportation. (These costs are minimal and there seems little likelihood, particularly in view of the reported cost of the Pierrelatte plant, that any competing plant shroad could offer U-235 at prices approaching those of the United States.)
- J. The V.S. supplies enriched uranium desistically on a lease basis and gives credit, based on military value, for produced plutonium. U-235 is distributed abroad on a sale basis, with no commitment for purchase of plutonium, and with the understanding that only a fixed price will be peid if any plutonium is purchased. (These differences between fereign and demonité distribution policies would be eliminated by pending legislation providing for private comerchip in the united States, and guaranteed purchase of plutonium at fuel value both here and abroad.)
- the Procurement of U-235 from the United States involves governmental approvals and siministrative difficulties and delays. (This has been specifically identified as a problem by Germany particularly as it relates to subsequent transfers of supplied material from one project to another or from Germany to another country.)
- 5. There is a ceiling of 20 per cent enrichment on U-235 routinely supplied by the U.S. for power reactor use abroad. Although the U.S. has indicated that it will consider supplying more highly enriched material on a case-by-case basis, and is commently considering such a case involving a reactor in Germany, this makes the supply of highly enriched material for power reactors uncertain at a time when reactor concepts employing mighty enriched unantum and uncrime are the object of considerable yeumical interest abroad as values in the United States.

DECLASSIFIED
BOTHY NANO 959235

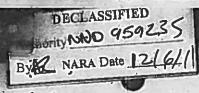
BYR NARA Date 12:64/

SECRET - 3 -

In the final analysis, however, it seems clear that no action which could reasonably be taken by the United States or any other supplier of enriched uranium would overcome the strong desire of each najor recipient nation for an alternate source of supply, preferably a domestic one. The closest approach that could perhaps be made to accomposating this desire would be the delivery in advance by the United States of a quantity of U-235 corresponding to the recipient: country's enticipated requirements for a number of years. This course of action would clearly be infessible. Partially in response to these considerations but also as a consequence of historical. events which led to the presence in Germany of persons with a technical competence in the field, Germany has been working for a number of years on the gas centrifuge method of isotope separation. In 1960 as a result of U.S. initiative, the German Covernment agreed to classify its gas centrifuge program. This would have the effect, so long as the Germans honored this consistment, of limiting the opportunity of exporting gas contrifuge separation plants which German industry clearly had anticipated. As a consequence of the classification, there appara ently has been some reduction in the German effort. The agreement to classify, however, does not reduce the German incentive to continue development of the gas contrifuge process for their can use as an alternate source of supply of U-235. As would their participation in the Pierrelatte plant; the construction of a gas centrifuge plant in Germany would provide the Germans with a source of U-235 which would be available for military as well as civil uses. From the German standpoint, it would some to have the advantage over participation in the Pierrelatte plant of being an entirely demestic undertaking.

III. Adverse Aspects of Franco-German Cooperation

German cooperation in the French gaseons diffusion plant would appear to be contrary to a number of important U.S. interests and objectives. First, it would provide a source of U-235 for military purposes to a country whose entry into the atomic weapons field could possibly soriously impair U.S. Soviet relations. The outcome, of course, could also result from German national effort on the gas centrifuge separations process. However, such a possibility, in any event, must be vicued in relation to the fact that Germany could unquestionably, at any time, successfully undertake a program for plutonium production independent of outside sources and consequent outside centrols, as have the French. Second, Franco-Jerman cooperstion in this area could enhance the prospects of a Franco-German military alliance which could constitute a European third force capable of dominating Western Europe and wielding substantial military power. Third, a German financial and technical contribution would probably accelerate, and conceivably night even determine the difference



SECRET

- It -

between success and failure of the French gaseous diffusion plant program. By bringing greater resources to bear, it also would probably lead to eventual enlargement of the plant to a size larger than it might be expected to reach if it remained solely a French undertaking. Fourth, the cooperation would undoubtedly have as one of its elements the communication of all French gaseous diffusion technology to Germany. This would make possible the construction in Germany of small plants wholly German owned and operated and would further complicate the problem of controlling the dissemination of information in this area, particularly in view of the German predilection for expert of industrial plants and technology.

As indicated above, some of the disadvantages of German cooperation in the gaseous diffusion plant program are not unique to such cooperation since other approaches are being actually undertaken or could be undertaken by Germany to acquire alternate sources of fiscionable material. It can be concluded, however, some of the disadvantages outlined above would be unique to such German cooperation with France.

IV. Alternatives Available to the United States

In addition to the subjection of direct diplomatic presence to discusse Germany from participating in the French program, there are expected possible courses of action which the United States could consider which might influence the decision of either of the parties with regard to the desirability of proceeding with the cooperation. One wich elternative would be a further liberalization of U.S. U-235 distribution policy since there are obviously areas where this could be accomplished. Offices (which are already established at U.S. cost) could be reduced by their to make less attractive and more costly the reliance by a recipient nation on any other source of supply. Safe-goard provisions could be eliminated and reliance placed solely on the contractual guarantee of the other party that the material would be used only for specific purposes. Clinitations on maximum enricisment normally made available to recipient countries could be related or removed of with statutory changes, the requirements for governmental approvals could be reduced or eliminated and the transactions placed on virtually a commercial basis.

Another step which is currently under consideration would make significantly more attractive the use of U.S. supplied U-235 abroad. This is the proposed adoption of a policy of toll enriching, in U.S. diffusion plant facilities, natural uranner supplied by other nations. Adoption of this policy could somewhat reduce over all U-235 costs and would reduce the foreign exchange component of these costs considerably. This would enable countries possessing substantial amounts of natural uranner to utilize demestic natural resources, thereby

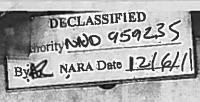


relieving desertic political pressures and increasing desertic economic activity. However, the policy would not affect in any substantive say the fact that the using country would continue to be relient upon U.S. gaseous diffusion plants for a supply of enriched uranium. It would not, therefore, have a major effect in reducing German incentives for alternate sources of supply.

Any or all of these steps could to taken either with regard to all recipient nations or specifically in favor of Germany. It seems apparent, however, that a preferential arrangement in favor of Germany would not, for any reasonable period of time, be justifiable, since pressures for uniform treatment for all friendly countries in this area have always been great and throughout the history of the program our policy in this area has been to accord uniform treatment to all ecoparating nations. Further, it seems equally apparent that each of these steps have major disadvantages and would defeat other important U.S. policy objectives. This is particularly true in the case of safeguards. Finally, and most importantly, we believe it would continue to be true that no economic or administrative liberalizations or incentives would remove the desire of Germany to how a source of supply which was shelly independent of the United States.

An additional method by which the United States might affect the outcome of the proposed cooperation would involve arrangements with the French Government which would reduce their incentive to seek outside financial and technical assistance, conceivably through an offer to supply highly enriched U-235 to France for both civil and military purposes. The French determination to have an independent molear weapons capability is such that no U.S. offer of assistance of this nature is likely to dissuade them from proceeding with completion of the plant. Kevertheless, if the offer involved were not merely a consitment to make future deliveries, but the ectual early delivery of a quantity of U-235 corresponding to a number of years of output of the Pierrelatte plant, it is conceivable that France might showion the project or drestically curtail the present rate of expenditures for its construction. Alternatively, a U.S. offer of assistance in resolving the problems which have been encountered by the French in construction of the plant might be employed to dissuado the French from secking and accepting any outside assistance. The supply of any technical assistance, of course, would involve tho communication of Restricted Data which is regarded as highly sensitive.

An analogous approach would be the offer of some type of assistance to Germany which would estisfy Germany's desire for an independent U-235 production capability and thereby remove the German incentive for cooperation with France. The most obvious method for achieving this would take the form of technical cooperation with the Germans leading to the construction by them of a gas centrifuge separations



SEMET

-6-

plant. As indicated earlier in this memorandum, a German effort in this area has long been underway and this effort say lead to their construction of a plant with or without U.S. cooperation. The possibilities of U.S. cooperation with Germany in the gas centrifuge area have been considered in the past purely for reasons of maximizing our can technical progress in this field in view of the significance and high quality of the German program. This consideration indicated that there were difficult political problems involved in undertaking such cooperation in view, on the one hand, of U.S. restrictions on commication of Restricted Data and, on the other hand, of the restrictions of the Euratom Treaty on any new tillateral cooperation by members of the Community with third parties.

A third avenue of approach would be to attempt to channel the German (and presumably other European Community members) desires for an independent source of supply of U-235 into a Community wrolect for the construction and operation of a U-235 separations plant which would be subject to European and whose product good be devoted exclusively to civil uses. The Europeanization of the Pierrelatte Plant would clearly be totally unacceptable to France. This approach could be built around an expension of the German and Dutch gas centraling programs possibly suppressed by U.S. technical assessment thus area. If the real German objective is to obtain an alternate source of U-235 for its civil program, this approach might have

As a further possibility, the United States might take measures to encourage the U.K. and France to develop a joint cooperative program in the production of U-235 employing the facilities at Pletralatte or Capenburst or perhaps both of those facilities. This would to a large measure obviate the problems associated with the communication of U.S. Restricted Bata which would arise under a U.S. program of technical assistance to the Franch in this field, since the U.K. effort has been undertaken independently and without the communication of any U.S. Restricted Bata. Of course, U.K. gaseous diffusion plant data is classified by the U.K. in accordance with the common classification guide and the matter of the adequacy of French socurity procedures for the protection of the information received from the British would have to be considered.

80 1180 10 Bit 15:10