



The Express train of the 30/05/2005

Iter

Much noise for nothing

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The installation in Cadarache of the reactor with nuclear fusion would be a bad news for our research

The president announced to us proudly that France was going to beat Japan and to obtain the site of the experimental reactor of the future, which would be installed in Cadarache (Rhône delta). And everyone to be delighted, especially in Provence, where the politicians, proud, ignoramus and naive, are persuaded that Iter (International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor) will bring richness, prosperity and prestige to them!

Unfortunately, nothing of all that will occur: Iter will bleed with white the local communities and will weaken still a little more the budget of French research. Cost of the operation: 12 billion euros! Iter is still one of these projects of prestige which have, in the past, exhausted finances of our research. It was initially television high definition, then the construction of the large national accelerator of heavy ions (Ganil) in Caen, then the flights inhabited in space and, finally, the international space Station. Results for science? Nothing, or almost. It is the Mégajoule laser today, in Bordeaux, and Iter, in Cadarache.

One says to us: Iter, it is the energy of the Sun, it is extraordinary, it is the future! It is what one said already forty years ago, when the draft study of controlled fusion started. The starting idea is certainly not uninteresting. Instead of fissioning heavy atomic nuclei to obtain energy, as in the current engines, one seeks to amalgamate light atomic nuclei to obtain even more energy. It is the sequence followed in the manufacture of the atomic bombs. After that, traditional, of Hiroshima, one manufactured the bomb H, more powerful, more fatal, but less polluting (*sic*). However, if one can carry out fusion in an explosive way, one cannot control it. And, for forty years, one has turned in round. Projects like Iter, one installed some in Princeton in the United States, then in Great Britain, but one never really progressed, for lack of an innovating scientific idea. The Americans, formerly driving of this research - they financed it to 60% - gave up. Perhaps will they take part to a total value of 5% tomorrow? Did they give up for as much the idea controlling fusion? By no means, but they resort to more astute and less expensive methods.

Thus, in one of the last deliveries of *the Natural* review, an American team said to have carried out a nuclear fusion in a pyroelectric crystal with a rather simple device! It is certainly not the solution, but this work illustrates a state of mind. With the Americans cheap easy ways and new ideas, with us the extravagant expenditure and useless! Because Iter is not a reactor: it is a machine intended for fundamental research, a machine which offers few chances of success!

If the government and the area Provence-Alp-Coast of Azur want to spend of the money for research, which delights me, why did they start again the

network of génopôles only we had created with the centers of Aix-Marseilles specialized in medical and pharmaceutical research? Why not develop on the site of Cadarache the own nuclear reactor, without waste of long period, known as "of fourth generation"?

All that would employ more people, would be more useful for France, and would avoid us spending our sums of money by buying material of high technology in the United States or Japo

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[Return to the preceding page](#)

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