

47th Annual Meeting on Nuclear Technology (AMNT 2016)

About Cores, Coal and Cash

Speech by the Ambassador of the Czech Republic

S.E. Tomáš Jan Podivínský

A wise and honest lady whom I hold in high regard and who is as familiar with the field of nuclear energy as only a few other experts worldwide – Ms. Dana Drabova, President of the State Office for Nuclear Safety of the Czech Republic (*Státní úřad pro jadernou bezpečnost – SÚJB*) – once said of the peaceful use of nuclear energy for electricity generation, “With the devil it’s bad, but without the devil it’s even worse.” Both Ms. Drabova and I support the generation of power in the most environmentally friendly, cost-effectively accessible and safe manner, which in our opinion includes nuclear energy as part of a sensible mixture. As I place more reliance on deeds than words, my first official trip as *Czech Environment Minister* took me to the *Temelín Nuclear Power Plant*, which supplies safe, environmentally sound energy, ensures our economic independence, our independence for energy, and at the same time, which is also extremely important, our independence in terms of energy policy. It is for good reason that we are currently building up the stocks of fuel elements to a level sufficient for two years at both our NPPs, for that is energy which is independent from foreign gas or oil taps, and also from the weather and the wind or sunshine, and is secure for our citizens and our industry independently of coal mining with the burden it places on the environment.



The Ambassador of the Czech Republic, S.E. Tomáš Jan Podivínský (left), at the tour of the trade show of the 47th Annual Meeting on Nuclear Technology (AMNT 2016) with Dr. Ralf Güldner, President of the German Atomic Forum (DAF, right) and Tereza Petráňová, Embassy of the Czech Republic, Germany.

I am therefore extremely pleased to be here with you at this *Annual Meeting on Nuclear Technology*, and also thank the *German Atomic Forum (DAF)* and its President *Dr. Güldner* for their kind support of the *Czech Pavilion*.

My commitment to nuclear fission is long-term and sincere; I am a proponent of rationality and – especially with regard to reducing emissions – a proponent of technological neutrality. From 1997 to 2003 I was at the Czech Embassy in Vienna, tasked with the de-escalation of bilateral relations in connection with the commissioning of the *Temelin Nuclear Power Plant*. And as I have already mentioned, a decade later, as the Czech Environment Minister, my first official trip took me back to that very plant. I still maintain my initial thesis that for countries like the Czech Republic, where energy-intensive industries have a large share in the Gross Value of Production and conditions are not suitable for economical large-scale operation of facilities based on renewables, which are also incapable of providing base load generation at present, there is no alternative in environmental or business policy to the reasonable use of nuclear energy.

In that context, I would take this opportunity to briefly introduce the updated Czech energy strategy to you: Similarly to the situation in Germany, the transformation of the Czech energy sector means a partial phasing out of

coal, with which we currently generate almost 48 % of our electricity. The aim is to increase the proportion of nuclear energy from 35 % to approx. 50 % of power generation and to cover the rest – together with ultra-high efficiency coal fired power plants – with energy from renewable sources and gas fired power plants. The events of the last 25 years – the collapse of the communist regime, the division of Czechoslovakia, joining the EU and our dynamic economic growth – have in no way changed the broad consensus in the Czech Republic that nuclear energy provides a great degree of safety, sovereignty, high technology and prosperity. There are currently 6 reactors in operation at two locations in the Czech Republic – 4 x 500 MW at the *Dukovany Nuclear Power Plant*, for which a lifetime extension is currently being planned, and which – according to the plan – are to be replaced by new reactors in around 2035 to 2040. The second NPP, *Temelín*, has 2 x 1,078 MW. This NPP ranks among the most up to date and, in international assessments, also the safest NPPs in Europe, and is to be upgraded with a further reactor. How can we manage that under the present conditions, especially with a market price of € 21 per MWh? We are aware of all the difficulties, and the National Plan therefore also contains 4 possible financing variants – from a pure market solution to investment by the state. A decision on the most efficient variant is to be made – depending on



Speech “About Cores, Coal and Cash” at the Plenary Session of the AMNT 2016.



The Czech Pavilion at the exhibition hall of the AMNT 2016 with the partners, State Office for Nuclear Safety, Czech Technical University in Prague – Faculty of Nuclear Sciences and Physical Engineering, Škoda Jaderné Strojírnoství, Vítkovice Machinery, Diamo, dataPartner and the Trade and Industry Department of the Czech Embassy.

the development of the electricity sector – by 2025. The corresponding research and development work is being sponsored on a continuous basis, and we are ensuring that technical training takes place. These aspects also include a planned decision on the search for a final repository by 2025. A further indication that we are really serious about nuclear energy is the foundation of the Czech Power Industry Alliance, the pillars of which are our leading mechanical engineering companies such as Škoda Praha, Škoda Nuclear Engineering and the Vítkovice Machinery Group. And so I come to my second thesis: We want to develop nuclear energy transparently, safely and above all in close cooperation with our partners and neighbours. In spite of our different ideas about the transformation of the power industry, and in spite of the nuclear phase-out, we regard Germany as one of our most outstanding neighbours and trading partners. Not least, we see Germany facing similar challenges to our own, such as the decommissioning and dismantling of nuclear facilities and the search for a final repository. In the field of decommissioning in particular, a number of businesses have developed a kind of gold rush mentality when looking at Germany. That is however not the case with us: We are looking for a win-win situation in which both the Czech Republic and Germany can learn and benefit in cooperation from the experience of decommissioning reactors on both sides of the border. We do not want to be merely a supplier of goods and services, but also to develop new solutions together with German partners and implement them both here and in our home country.

We can also offer our excellent research and development with a tradition spanning over fifty years at the *Czech Technical University* in Prague, the *Charles University (Univerzita Karlova v Praze)* and the *Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic*. This research and development activity focuses on topics such as reactor dismantling and decommissioning and the back-end area of the fuel cycle.

Our interest in closer professional cooperation is also emphasized by the *Czech Pavilion* in the exhibition hall. With us, you will find a selection of partners for the cooperation I have mentioned, these being the following:

- *State Office for Nuclear Safety*, our supervisory authority, which enjoys a truly excellent reputation in the Czech Republic and also internationally;
- *Czech Technical University in Prague – Faculty of Nuclear Sciences and Physical Engineering*;
- *Škoda Jaderné Strojírnoství* – A company based in Plzen with a tradition spanning over 60 years in nuclear engineering, component production and services for nuclear power plants;
- *Vítkovice Machinery Group* – One of the largest Czech metallurgy and mechanical engineering companies, engaged in nuclear engineering and a supplier of components, especially pressure vessels, pipes, casks and much, much more;
- *Diamo* – Czech state enterprise in the fields of uranium mining, remediation and recultivation, and engineering services especially in the mining industry;
- *dataPartner* – An innovative company from *Ceske Budejovice* which supplies control technology and systems for neutron flux measurements in the nuclear energy field – for example for the *TRIGA* research reactor in *Vienna*.

Over and above this, my colleagues from the *Trade and Industry Department of the Czech Embassy* are available to provide you with further information, assist you in making contacts, or help with a systematic search for suppliers.

To come to the heart of the matter, what is needed is of course a large amount of professional know-how, experience, patience, and, last but not least, a goodly portion of readiness to enter into talks. My 20 years of experience “in the business”, so to speak, show that it is worthwhile, for the large and the small, and for a Europe of reason which is safe and worth living in.

In that spirit, I wish us all a successful meeting, and thank you for your attention.

Many thanks!



View of ČEZ's nuclear power plant site Temelin with two VVER-1000 in operation. The six NPP's at Temelin and Dukovany contribute about 35 % of the whole electricity production in the Czech Republic.