

*(Long version)*

**The unique features about the Austrian people's *No to Zwentendorf NPP* 20 years ago:**

## **Austria's 1978 Referendum on Nuclear Power - Why Was It Such a Turning Point?**

1. The nuclear power plant at Zwentendorf, located on the Danube River some 35 kms west of the country's capital, Vienna, was **ready for start-up**: at the time the referendum was decided by Chancellor Bruno Kreisky (Soc-Dem) in June 1978, it was completed and had all the authorisations, permits, etc., required to go into operation. „*We can't waste all that money!*“ therefore was the strongest pro-argument of all.

2. *(Less important to the international anti-nuke movement)* The referendum, which took place Nov. 5, 1978, was **the first national referendum in the so-called Second Republic**. This was (and still is) Austria's *first democratic* republic, and the movement against nuclear power being introduced in Austria brought about a **gigantic „democratic awakening“** of this nation. Never before or after have so many people from so many walks of life on so many occasions raised their voice, contributed work and effort, donated money as they did during the campaign against Zwentendorf NPP.

3. It was the **first national and binding referendum on nuclear energy worldwide**.

4. The referendum gave rise to the **first national nuclear (fission) energy prohibition act worldwide**. (Austrian Federal Law Forbidding Electricity Production from Nuclear Fission, voted in the Austrian Parliament Dec. 15, 1978.)

5. It meant the **first industrialized nation stepping out of nuclear power**. (Or, more precisely, not stepping in when it was on the verge of doing so.)

6. Although, of course, there were different ideological tendencies among the **anti-nuclear groups, they always ranged these differences behind the common cause and did not let themselves divide into „left“ and „right“**, which could have been played one against the other. (Most of the activists felt increasingly independent from the two big traditional political camps, which in the beginning both advocated nuclear power identically. No wonder the Austrian Green Party was a direct offspring from the no-nukes movement, like in other countries, too.)

*(Short version)*

## **The unique features about Austria's 1978 Referendum on Nuclear Power**

1. Austria's first nuclear power plant, at Zwentendorf, 35 kms west of the country's capital, Vienna, had been **completed and was ready for start-up**.
2. The Nov.5, 1978 referendum was **the first national referendum in the so-called Second Republic** (i.e. in post World War II Austria).
3. **First national and binding referendum on nuclear energy worldwide.**
4. **First national nuclear (fission) energy prohibition act worldwide.**  
(The Austrian Federal Law Forbidding Electricity Production from Nuclear Fission was voted in the Austrian Parliament on Dec.15, 1978.)
5. Austria thus became the **first industrialized nation saying good-bye to nuclear power.**
6. At crucial moments, the **anti-nuclear groups always ranged ideological differences behind the common cause and did not let themselves divide into „left“ and „right“.**

Up to the Chernobyl accident, the pro-nuclear circles in Austria made continuous attempts to topple the 1978 people's decision. Since 1986, however, there has been a constant 85%-90% percentage opposed to nuclear energy. And official Austrian policy, though by no means always consistent or courageous, has been antinuclear ever since.

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