

# A b s t r a c t s

## **Chernobyl: Legacy and Obligations**

Guillaume Grandazzi

Remembering the Future  
Recalling Chernobyl

Chernobyl changed the nature of disasters. For the millions who live in the contaminated territories, the accident is bereft of the visible effects of what happened. Unlike after the Second World War, it is impossible for humanity to fall back on the slogan "Never again!" The disaster is in the world. Chernobyl made mankind aware of what it can mean to live in "risk society". Furthermore, "blindness to the apocalypse", which Günther Anders numbers among the essential characteristics of the nuclear age, makes it more difficult to understand the disaster and to learn from it.

Ales' Adamovich

Not Just a Nuclear Power Station  
A Letter to Mikhail S. Gorbachev

After Chernobyl, the Belarusian writer Ales' Adamovich criticised the Soviet authorities' policy of obstruction and cover-up. In a letter to Mikhail S. Gorbachev, the then general secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Adamovich warns of a disaster of unimaginable dimensions. He sums up the tragic events by noting, "It was not simply a nuclear power station that exploded, but an entire complex of irresponsibility, indiscipline and bureaucracy."

Vasilii Nesterenko

Walls of Ignorance  
Protocol of a Disaster

Immediately after the accident at Chernobyl, scientists recognised the enormous public health hazard confronting them. The politicians acted according to the motto: "Don't panic!" They covered up the extent of the disaster and blocked protective measures. Only the accumulation of overwhelming evidence and public pressure changed this approach. Nonetheless, scientists with contrary views were dismissed. Several of them set up a public network of local monitoring stations for measuring radiation parallel to the state's system. Vasilii Nesterenko, one of the protagonists in this story, reports first hand.

Alla Yaroshinskaya

Lie '86  
Secret Chernobyl Documents

In her search for the truth about Chernobyl, Alla Yaroshinskaya came across secret documents revealing a massive cover-up by the Soviet leadership and a targeted policy of disinformation. Against their better knowledge, state and party leaders played down the extent of contamination, sent people back into irradiated

areas, brought contaminated food stuffs into the distribution system and provided the world with a sanitised version of events.

## Vodka Was Supposed to Cleanse Our Thyroid Glands

### Igor' Kostin on His Photos of Chernobyl

Igor' Kostin probably took the only surviving photo of the damaged reactor at Chernobyl as it appeared the night of the accident. Since then, Kostin has repeatedly returned to Chernobyl to document what happened and what ground to a halt. In the first days after the accident, Kostin stood with emergency workers on the roof of a neighbouring reactor at Chernobyl. He documented the evacuation of the area's inhabitants from the 30-kilometre zone and captured on film the visible and invisible consequences of radioactive contamination.

## Alfredo Pena-Vega

### Life in a World of Prohibitions

#### Chernobyl: A Past That Is Not Past

Twenty years after the disaster at Chernobyl, more than 3,000 towns and villages in Belarus are still located in zones where radioactive contamination remains a health hazard. This will be the case for many years to come. But health problems are only a visible aspect of the "post-Chernobyl" era. The extent of the disaster is so great and so multifarious that, two decades later, many people are still unable to imagine its true dimensions. Chernobyl has wrought changes in biological, psychological, social and cultural life. These changes are as invisible as radiation, but they are perceptible in every word and fear-ridden gesture.

## Sebastian Pflugbeil

### Have All the Consequences Been Liquidated?

#### The Repercussions of Chernobyl on Public Health

Twenty years after the Chernobyl disaster, the International Atomic Energy Agency and the World Health Organisation are trying to file Chernobyl away as a minor affair. "No cause for concern" is how they put it. Doctors and patients in the Chernobyl region see things very differently: The cancer rate has clearly increased; thyroid illness is more frequent; infant mortality has shot up; genetic defects and malformations are increasing. The worst affected are the "liquidators" and their children. There is no denying that this is due to the radiation that escaped into the atmosphere in the disaster's aftermath.

## Astrid Sahm

### On the Road to a Transnational Society?

#### Belarus and International Chernobyl Aid

Even 20 years on, the reactor explosion at Chernobyl guarantees Belarus a remarkably high degree of international attention and support despite the country's far-reaching political isolation. At the same time, the international community's Chernobyl-related aid follows no unified approach. Just as assessments of the disaster's consequences vary, the importance of aide to Belarus is heatedly de-

bated. As a consequence, the question is raised whether international Chernobyl aide merely reflects the divisions within Belarusian society, or whether it is helping the country on its way to a transnational society.

David Marples

### Dictatorship Instead of Ecology Crisis Management in Lukashenka's Belarus

The Lukashenka regime has a considerable interest in playing down the Chernobyl's aftereffects. Given the medical and social problems, which Belarus can hardly address, it is easier for the regime to declare that the accident's consequences have been overcome. This pre-empts resistance to the planned construction of nuclear power plants. Scientists who expose Chernobyl's dangerous consequences are silenced, because they undermine the dictator's authority. Paradoxically, this authority is re-enforced by the way Lukashenka presents himself to the victims as a strong leader and so keeps alive nostalgic memories for the Soviet era.

Jochen Aulbach

### Tomb for a Scrap Heap or Waste of Millions? The Sarcophagus around Chernobyl's Damaged Reactor

After the disaster at Chernobyl, a concrete casing was built around the ruins of the damaged reactor in a hurry and under extreme circumstances, so as to protect the environment from radiation. It very quickly became clear that this sarcophagus was a temporary measure, and that it would have to be repaired. A dispute broke out between the European Union and Ukraine regarding financing and shutting down the other reactors at Chernobyl. Only in 1997 did the EU and the G7 together with the Ukrainian government decide to build a new encasement. The key problem concerning the sarcophagus has yet to be solved, though. There is no strategy for disposing of its highly radioactive contents.

Björn Slawik

### Miracle or Madness? The Leningrad Nuclear Power Station and the Soviet Nuclear Industry

Twenty years after Chernobyl, Russia's nuclear supervisory authority has extended the Leningrad nuclear power station's operating license, thus allowing the oldest Chernobyl-type reactors to remain on line. This station was built near Leningrad in the early 1970s as the Soviet Union's first large-scale nuclear power station. The ministry responsible carried out this project despite safety concerns. In addition to producing electricity, the power station probably also serves the Russian military. The power station is representative of Soviet nuclear industry and illustrates continuity in Russian nuclear policy.

Lutz Mez

### Phase-Out Model Nuclear Energy's Future in the EU

The European Union's member states have different views of nuclear power. Seven of them use it, two have shut down their reactors, and six are working to-

ward abandoning nuclear energy. The remaining ten have no nuclear programme. The assumption that EU enlargement would lead to a shift in location from west to east has proved unfounded. Eight reactors were shut down for reasons of safety. The EU and Western donors provided over one billion euros to that end. At the same time, mothballed nuclear power stations are to be completed. One reactor is under construction; nine are planned. Due to the liberalisation of the electricity industry, the new construction of nuclear reactors can hardly be financed. There can be no talk of a renaissance of nuclear energy within the EU.

Felix Christian Matthes

### Nuclear Energy and Climate Change A Consideration of the Risks

The debate over climate change has made nuclear energy socially acceptable again. However, the uses of nuclear energy do not offset the risks connected with it. Other alternative energy sources and greater energy efficiency can also reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. It is therefore possible to stop global warming and abandon nuclear energy.

Petra Opitz

### Power from Renewable Energy The Stepchild of East European Energy Strategy

Renewable energy has enormous potential in East Central and Eastern Europe, but it is scarcely used. The legacy of central planning – low energy prices, excessive energy production and preference for large projects – impedes the use of renewable energy. Nuclear energy is often seen as a form of high technology, mastery of which guarantees prestige and is good for a country's image. Renewable energy does not enjoy this kind of symbolic value in Eastern Europe. Few are aware that renewable energy reduces dependence on fossil raw materials, boosts security of supplies and has a positive affect on labour markets. For the countries of East-Central Europe, EU accession has considerably improved the basic conditions for exploiting renewable energy more intensively than in the past.

Adam N. Stulberg

### Russia's Nuclear Industry Centralisation, Control, Competition

Chernobyl, the dissolution of the Soviet Union and economic decline in the 1990s led to a deterioration of Russia's nuclear sector. After contradictory reforms under Boris El'tsin, Vladimir Putin's regime is trying to centralise the industry again, so as to boost its national and international competitiveness. The goal is to make the nuclear industrial complex an additional pillar – next to the gas and oil sectors – on which Russia can base its aspirant status as a "energy supplier great power". A neo-institutional analysis, however, shows that centralisation leads to losses in

control. These decrease the chance that Russia's nuclear sector can achieve strategic significance.

Robert G. Darst, Jane I. Dawson

### Think Globally, Store Locally? Russia and the Nuclear Waste Problem

In June 2004, Russia went public with a proposal for setting up on its territory a permanent disposal facility for nuclear waste from around the world. In terms of technical feasibility and security policy, a central disposal facility is desirable. But it is questionable whether Russia meets the necessary safety standards for storing radioactive material in an environmentally sound way and protecting it against misuse and terrorist attacks. Moral doubts are also in order, since the Russian government has so far ignored domestic opposition to such a disposal facility. The more Russia shows itself willing to work with the international community, the more likely it is that these deficits will be offset.

Nataliya Zorkaya

### Radiant Disinterest Chernobyl in Russian Public Opinion

The Russian public's attitude towards Chernobyl is contradictory and paradoxical. For almost half of Russians, the disaster's anniversary is one of the most important commemoration days in 2006. Simultaneously, when asked about the most significant events of the 20th century, not even 10 percent of those polled named Chernobyl. The event has slipped into the subconscious, where it mixes with vague fears of another nuclear accident and radioactive contamination. A proper appraisal of Chernobyl has yet to take place, and instead of providing penetrating analysis, the Russian media offers unimaginative catastrophe scenarios.

Otfried Nassauer

### Siamese Twins Nuclear Energy and Nuclear Weapons

The world is using more and more energy. Oil and natural gas are finite resources. Nuclear energy is possibly on the verge of a renaissance. But the civil use of nuclear energy is in terms of technology a double-edged sword. It can serve military ends and lead to the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Such proliferation entails enormous security risks. The global non-proliferation system for nuclear weapons is in crisis. There exists an irresolvable contradiction between trying to prevent other states from acquiring nuclear weapons and promoting the use of civil nuclear technology.