CHERNOBYLIA

On Passover, April 26th, 1986

"the largest industrial accident in history" occurred at the #4 nuclear reactor at Chernobyl. The startling facts that Chernobyl in Russian means Wormwood, that the reactor site was an ancient mystical Jewish burial ground that had been desecrated by the fascists and the Russians, plus the reference (see cover) in the Bible to Wormwood all add up to an ominous portent. Yet Chernobyl and all the implications this disaster holds have all but disappeared from public view in the U.S. as planned by the media.

Unfortunately for Europeans, the nightmare of insecurity has just started. The 31 dead, 1,000 injured, 135,000 evacuated (many permanently), the increased chances of cancer in the future and the $3-10 billion economic costs from the incident have made nuclear power the number one issue in most of Europe.

After the accident 20 countries imposed food restrictions resulting in the loss of hundreds of millions of dollars to farmers. The Lapps people (Samis) who inhabit Scandanavia have lost the very foundations of their traditional culture due to almost total contamination of their Reindeer herds, berries and fishing grounds (some Samis are requesting immigration to Northern Canada). Crop and livestock contamination occurred in Europe as far west as Scotland and over most of the rest of the continent.

The fear of another accident like Chernobyl, which only released 3% of its total radioactivity, happening in densely populated Europe (W. German analysts predict a 60% chance of another Chernobyl every 5 years) is at the heart of concern about nuclear power. Dr. John Gofman's conservative estimate of 1 million resulting cancers was widely disseminated in Europe and is at the heart of the public's mistrust of the pro-nuclear establishment. The U.S. nuclear establishment blacklisted him after a major DOE funded study showed cancer rates 10-20 times higher than previously accepted.

The growing mistrust of authorities' cost-benefit manipulation of medical implications from radiation, coupled with the shock of widespread contamination unleashed a wave of political unrest throughout Europe. Dozens of rallies that brought hundreds of thousands of people out to protest occurred for two months after the accident. The political upsurge resulted in the complete cancellation of programs in the Philippines, Austria and Greece. Phaseout programs are being accelerated or newly adopted by major parties in W. Germany and England. Poland and Yugoslavia are also considering changing their nuclear development.

In the U.S., Chernobyl has helped revitalize a flagging anti-nuclear movement. New people are being told about the secret plans (DOE documents) of the nuclear industry and the Reagan Administration to build a new generation of nuclear reactors that would have surely been put in place if Chernobyl hadn't happened. The DOE, which is in charge of military production of weapons-grade plutonium has been forced to temporarily shut 6 reactors and reduce power by 50% at 3 others. The DOE, which is allowed to police its own activities, has also come under intense criticism from civilians and congresspeople where their facilities have been contaminating groundwaters. The 3 sites chosen by the DOE to become high level waste repositories are all being challenged legally by local state governments. They are now offering $100 million to any state that would accept a repository.

Even with 3 lobbyists for every congressperson, the nuclear industry was unable to get Congress to adopt a single one of their plans in 1986, including a disgusting insurance policy for accidents. The struggle to keep Reagan and the industry from getting what they want will be tough. They are already attacking the little power states held over evacuation plans. After restructuring the NRC in November, plans to educate the media to protect the survival of the industry when the next big accident occurs is now underway (the question isn't if anymore, its *when*). The media arm of the industry has boldly lied to the public about chances of an accident here like Chernobyl. They have been spending over $20 million a year on a national campaign while each utility has spent even more (PG&E spent $6 million in 1985 promoting its image, with a sizeable percent going to their nuclear education campaign).

The coming year will be crucial in deciding the future of nuclear power in the U.S. The most highly capitalized industry in the country isn't giving up. We desperately need your help in reaquainting people with the issue. Become a member or subscribe to our newsletter!

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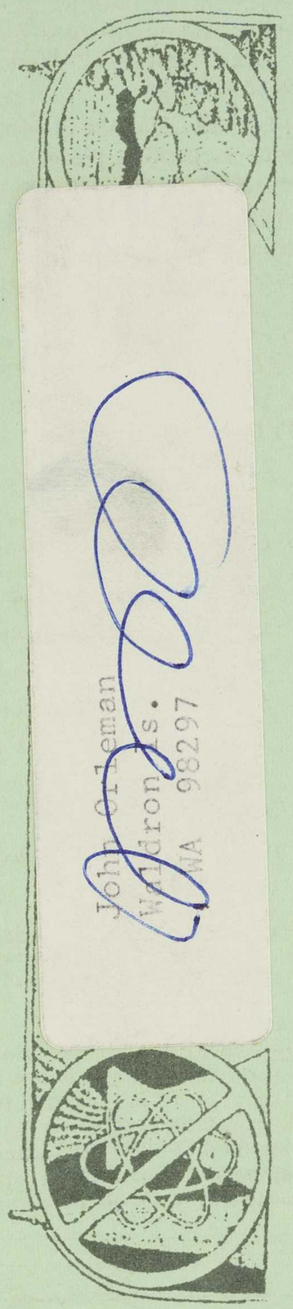

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