

# ARIZONA NEWSLETTER Doctors for Disaster Preparedness

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## DISASTER PLANNING AT GROUND ZERO

At the Savannah River Site, a.k.a. the "bomb factory," the fish that thrive in the cooling pond are protected against fishermen. The stork's habitat—initially created by the activities of SRS—is protected against the effect of changes in the activities at the site. The deer that roam the grounds have to be protected against overpopulation, by means of an annual controlled hunt. (Lottery tickets are sold to give equal opportunity to would-be hunters.)

Workers at SRS are protected against a great variety of health hazards by one of the most elaborate health screening systems in American industry. Vast numbers of electrocardiograms and chemistry profiles and complete blood counts are on file.

Anyone suffering a stick from a needle contaminated with plutonium will promptly have a small core of tissue removed as part of the decontamination procedure. Unlike the AIDS virus, plutonium is radioactive, and there are instruments to ascertain whether they got it all.

Workers are monitored constantly for radioactive contamination. Those who have undergone a nuclear medicine scan must inform the plant physician, to prevent false alarms. The bathrooms at SRS are biological specimen collecting stations. Radiation monitoring stations are deployed throughout the site.

In the event of a radiation release, the emergency plan would be activated. Meteorological and radiation data would pour into the emergency center, which would track the dispersal of the radioactive material, using sophisticated computers. In a demonstration, the computer screen showed expanding contours of the deadly substance—which would expose a person standing at the border of the contour to a dose of  $10^6$  millirads. (US average background dose is 148 mrad/yr or 0.4 mrad/day. How does one even *measure* a dose of .000025 times background?)

Despite the obsessive concern about safety at SRS (which extends from trivial doses of radiation to the far more serious hazards of motor vehicles—seatbelts are required, and everyone honks before backing up), some residents of the nearby city of Augusta, GA, are overwhelmed by anxiety. Adam O. Goldstein, MD, describes his feelings on driving through SRS on the way to the beach: "The early sun beams brightly through the windshield, promising a day of the . . . core-body warming and spiritual nourishment that occur only with ocean sounds. Yet, for 20 minutes, silent nuclear sounds eclipse the sun, waiting for an exit reprieve" (*JAMA* 262:686, 1989).

Speaking for the negative on the proposition that physicians should participate in civil defense, in a debate held October 27 at the Medical College of Georgia, Dr. Goldstein remarked

that one of his objections to SRS (aside from its existence) is that no "civil defense measures" are required outside a 10-mile radius of the plant. Augusta, about 13 miles away, is not required to have an evacuation plan.

Inside SRS, there are emergency measures in place, including an evacuation plan, an emergency operating center (in a regular building, ground floor), and shelters for about half the workers. These meet the Nuclear Regulatory Commission standard, providing a protection factor of five (5) against radiation—blast protection is not specified. This should be adequate for the type of accidents that can occur from operating the reactors—occurrences that are arguably less likely than a deliberate attack on the facility. I requested a tour of the bomb shelter. "Bomb shelter?" they asked.

Dr. Goldstein, in testifying before the Department of Energy, did not criticize SRS for lack of shelters; he doesn't believe shelters are indicated at SRS, or anywhere else. "Deep shelters would become deep tombs," he said. "At best, shelters could only postpone death. In any event, "the true meaning of survival is social, not biological."

Exercises are done at SRS for a variety of possible incidents. A Soviet nuclear attack is not included in the exercises because the Soviets are said to worry only about existing bombs, not about future production capability. A terrorist attempt to bomb a reactor would be held off by security forces—unless the bomb was dropped from an airplane. (Air space over SRS is not controlled.)

Of course, terrorists do not need to bomb a reactor in order to shut it down. Not one of the reactors at SRS is in production, due to "environmental" concerns. Submarine fuel is made elsewhere, and tritium for maintaining our nuclear arsenal is not made at all.

But a shutdown is not enough to satisfy Dr. Goldstein or other members of Physicians for Social Responsibility. More ambitious than mere alchemists, they want to "convert nuclear weapons to renewable resources, radioactivity to drug-free communities, contamination to cures," and the Savannah River Site to the Savannah River Parkway.

The animals at SRS, as Dr. Goldstein notes, "live free from fear." Their "human counterparts," on the other hand, "driven by mistrust, remain enslaved," apparently despite, or perhaps because of their "fierce attachment . . . to SRS's economic security." It's time to protect them from the "daily effects of the arms race," such as homelessness.

The 50 or fewer annual protesters at SRS want to save the world from the American bomb factory—but never, by any means, to protect Americans against the Soviet, the Chinese, the Libyan, or even the terrorist bomb.

## Pearl Harbor Day Meeting

The 6th annual Pearl Harbor Day meeting of Tucson DDP will occur at 7:00p.m., Thursday, December 7, at 3615 E. Fifth St. Part 1 of the videotape *Soviet Civil Defense* will be shown. The encore will be the Rush Limbaugh *Rush to Excellence* video. RSVP 325-2689.

## Update on Glasnost

**The Rifle on the Wall.** Chekhov said that if a rifle hangs on the wall during the first act of a play, it must be fired in the last one. The rifle of anti-Semitism has been a conspicuous part of the set in the first act of *glasnost*.

Recently increasing its activity is *Pamyat*, an organization that is sponsored by the KGB and has many high-ranking officials among its members. *Pamyat* blames a worldwide Jewish conspiracy for all of Russia's problems, including Stalin's purges, forced collectivization, the epidemic of alcoholism, the pollution of Lake Baikal, and even Chernobyl and the Armenian earthquake. Gorbachev has encouraged the anti-Semitic groups by praising Victor Astaf'ev, author of venomous anti-Semitic tracts, including one that blames the Jews, rather than the Communists, for the murder of the czar's family (Semyon Reznik, *National Interest*, Fall 1989).

**Freedom of Speech.** Participants in the 4th Conference of the Independent Press Club stated that since November, 1988, repressions against independent journalists continue, and in some regions are being stepped up. These include illegal searches, fabrication of criminal charges, and confiscation of equipment and publications. The Independent Press Club stated that new orders issued by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet in March and April, 1989, were "intended for the complete annihilation of the independent press" (*Samizdat Bulletin*, PO Box 6128, San Mateo, CA 94403, Fall 1989).

When Andrei Sakharov spoke before the Congress of People's Deputies about the conflicts erupting among Soviet nationalities, Gorbachev turned off the microphone and did not permit him to finish the speech (*National Interest* Fall 1989).

**Homelessness Solved.** All families in the Soviet Union are entitled to a home. As soon as the authorities learned of the plight of Ludmila Bykonja, who was wandering the streets with her four children, they immediately solved the problem. They took her children away, stuck them in state shelters, and charge her for child support. The mother remains on the street (*Samizdat Bulletin*, Fall 1989).

## The Breach in the Wall: the End of History?

As Berliners dance on the wall, the Western press has been quick to rejoice that the Cold War has ended in victory for "liberal democracy."

Joseph Joffe, a columnist for the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in Munich, takes a more sober view that considers the pivotal role of Germany in Europe. Bringing down this barrier is likely to further Bonn's drift toward *Ostpolitik*. The prize is allowing West German economic prowess to buy political influence in the East, an outlet denied by the Iron Curtain. The price is maximizing Soviet influence in all of Europe, which may more

than compensate for partial loss of control in the eastern half (*National Interest*, Fall 1989).

Meanwhile, in China, economic reforms are being reversed in favor of a centrally managed economy on the Stalinist model, partly because of the envy that wage-earners harbor against successful entrepreneurs.

In El Salvador, rebels brandish Soviet-made AK-47s. Soviet arms shipments to Nicaragua reached record highs in the summer of 1989 (*Washington Inquirer*, 8/25/89). Massive airlifts of armaments to the puppet regime in Kabul continue. About 20,000 Afghan prisoners toil in Soviet labor camps, and 40,000 Afghan children have allegedly been kidnapped (*Washington Inquirer* 7/29/89).

## A Nuclear Malignancy

Socially responsible doctors plead for ever more stringent government regulation of nuclear facilities, e.g. SRS; Dr. Marshall Brucer of Tucson, a nuclear medicine specialist, makes the case for *less* interference. From a letter to the Secretary of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC):

We no longer use health physicists to protect us and our patients from radiation; we now hire "Radiation Regulatory Compliance Physicists" to protect us from NRC harassment.

Think back (c. 1953) to the attempts your ilk made to enforce the use of shielded syringes for the IV injection of gamma emitters. I remember using the first specially made leaded-glass syringe on about 100 injections of Ga-72, I-131, and Au-198. Some of the first ring and wrist film badges proved that the dose to the "red bone marrow" of my hands was higher with the shield than in a control series with a simple glass syringe. (Scatter and the time factor were involved, and it took extra effort to teach the instigators, Edith Quimby and KZ Morgan, that there is no red bone marrow in the hands). . . .

Without the guiding hand of the AEC, your first opportunity to display incompetence came in 1979. You managed to turn a minor mechanical glitch at Three Mile Island into a major news farce. Seventeen curies of I-131 discharged into the atmosphere was enough for you to break out the potassium iodide, but Mt. St. Helen unloading 40 megacuries of radium daughters, about 10,000 times more radioactivity, was not even recognized. . . .

I now learn that . . . your clerks have resumed the long distance practice of medicine by restricting nuclide use to NRC approved manufacturer's instructions. Nothing new has ever come out of manufacturer's instructions, and you hereby declare science a finished study. Your contention that you know all science became understandable when *Science Newsletter* revealed that the NRC \$100 million/year research budget has resulted in exactly 0 publications. . . .

Your interference with nuclear power at Three Mile Island destroyed the nuclear power industry in the United States. Your current interference, dictating that no new procedure shall ever occur in nuclear medicine, takes the NRC beyond benign bureaucratic stupidity. The NRC is now a malevolent and ever present danger to American society.

The NRC could be called incompetent if it served any function in government; but it has no legitimate function. . . . I am pleading that the malignancy of the NRC be removed. . . .