



RUSSIANS VISIT STOP HINKLEY CENTRE

A delegation of top Soviet officials from the Ministry of Nuclear Power visited the Hinkley C Inquiry on July 20 and 21 to find out how the British handle opposition to nuclear power.

The Russians were given a talk by Danielle Grunberg (specially translated into Russian) about Stop Hinkley Expansion, local opposition and SHE's role in the Inquiry. This was followed by a discussion about how we would replace nuclear electricity. They also visited the Stop Hinkley Centre, where glasnost included the handing over of badges, stickers and T-shirts.

See "International News" for latest info. on opposition to nuclear power in the Soviet Union, plus centre pages on the Inquiry Chernobyl visit.

URGENT! HAVE YOU OBJECTED TO SIZEWELL AND WYLFA?

If you haven't already, please write a letter or postcard of objection to both Sizewell C, Suffolk and Wylfa B, Gwynedd, the CEBG's next targets for Pressurised Water Reactors after Hinkley. Both protests should be made before the end of July, in order to influence the respective local authorities.

At Wylfa, 40 councils met recently to discuss how to raise the £1.5 million they would need to mount a major case at a public inquiry. A new PAWB (People Against Wylfa B) Cymru umbrella group has been formed to broaden the grass roots campaign: details from WANA, PO Box 1, Llandrindod Wells, Powys LD1 5AA. At Sizewell, a coordinating group TASC (Together Against Sizewell C) has also started up.

Pre-printed objection postcards for Wylfa from Bet Huws, 2, Bryn Geraint, Bryn Eglwys, Bethesda, Gwynedd, for Sizewell from Deborah Ardizzone, Yoxford Gallery, Yoxford, Suffolk IP17 3EP (072 877327).

Objections to: Chief Executive, Ynys Mon Borough Council, Llangefni, Ynys Mon, Gwynedd (Wylfa), Director of Planning, Suffolk Coastal District Council, Melton Hill, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 1AU (Sizewell) as well as Secretary of State, Department of Energy, Thames House, Millbank, London SW1P 4QJ for both proposals.

GOVERNMENT DITCHES PRIVATE NUCLEAR PLANS

The dramatic announcement was made as we went to press that the government will not privatise the majority of existing nuclear power stations. All nine Magnox stations (including Hinkley A), due to close over the next ten years, will remain under state control. The second generation AGRs (like Hinkley B) will still be privatised, as will any future PWRs, under the larger of the new private generating companies - National Power.

Although the decision exposes the economic disaster of nuclear power, it means the taxpayer will have to bear the soaring (current estimated figure £4.5 billion) cost of decommissioning the Magnoxes - which City investors didn't want to know about. Electricity consumers will also still have to >>>

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NEXT SHE GENERAL MEETING - SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 10TH
UNITY HOUSE, DAMPIET STREET, BRIDGWATER - 2.30PM
REPORT BACK ON "AFTER THE INQUIRY" DISCUSSIONS
ALL MEMBERS WELCOME - CALL SHE OFFICE FOR DIRECTIONS
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pay for any expensive new nuclear power (like Hinkley C) forced by the government's Non-Fossil Fuel quota.

The government climb-down creates yet further uncertainty about nuclear power at the end of a spate of bad publicity for the industry (and good publicity for alternatives).

- May Leaked confidential CEBG papers say that AGR stations may have to close if delays continue in reprocessing spent fuel at Sellafield.
- May House of Lords passes several amendments to the Electricity Bill, including one which would force the industry to consider energy efficiency. This was later diluted when the Bill returned to the Commons in July.
- July North West Electricity Board publishes study to show that 12% of its electricity could come from renewables.
- July 100 UK scientists support Greenpeace report and national newspaper adverts saying that a nuclear solution to global warming is "a lot of hot air".
- July National Opinion Poll shows that only 17% of the public will buy shares in privatised electricity, and only half of those would go ahead if it included nuclear power.
- July Tory-controlled House of Commons Energy Committee says that energy efficiency, not nuclear power, is the main answer to the greenhouse effect.

News From The Inquiry

THE END IN SIGHT: The current timetable shows the Inquiry ending on September 20, with two weeks of closing submissions following the summer break from August 5 to September 4. SHE is due to sum up on Sept.6, though this may change. After that, it could be at least four months before the Inspector's report is published.

An end of Inquiry SHE party is also planned, probably around Sept.20. Watch this space.

BRISTOL SESSIONS: The two days of Inquiry sessions in Bristol were packed, with over 80 people speaking. Unfortunately, almost as many couldn't speak because of lack of time. Thanks to Jamie, Dicken, Nicola and no doubt many others for all their hard work.

INQUIRER FINALE: Last few issues of the "Hinkley Inquirer" (including special Chernobyl issue with exclusive photos) will cost you £3 (incl. post). The entire year's issues cost £12. Orders to Stop Hinkley Centre (see end of newsletter).

CAMPAIGN NEWS

HINKLEY BLOCKADE AND DIRECT ACTION: About 80 people turned out for a blockade of Hinkley Point on June 24. A few people sat in the road in front of a shift of workers' cars until carried away by the police. A large police presence was partly encouraged by rumours of a "hippy invasion".

According to the London-based Anti-Nuclear Network Newsletter, the blockade was organised because the public inquiry is "little more than a public relations exercise, and direct action is the only way to stop commissioning of Hinkley C". The SHE committee had decided in advance that it wouldn't support the blockade because it wasn't the right time, and there is no groundswell of local support for such action.

Whatever criticisms can be levelled at the inquiry, we are participating in it, getting a lot of good publicity and new supporters, and it would be illogical at this point to say "It's

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Journey Into The Danger Zone

Two weeks ago Inspector Michael Barnes visited the scene of the world's worst nuclear accident. Crispin Aubrey of Stop Hinkley Expansion was one of two objectors invited to join him. This is his account of the visit.

"I think if there was a national referendum tomorrow, there would be a clear majority against more nuclear power."

It could be a spokesman from Greenpeace or the Green Party. In fact it was a senior official from the Russian Ministry of Nuclear Power speaking in Moscow to the official delegation from the Hinkley C Public Inquiry.

The willingness of the Soviet nuclear authorities to talk so honestly about the depth of public opposition which has swept across the country in the wake of Chernobyl was one of the major surprises to greet the British visitors.

In a week in which the Soviet parliament was being televised live for the first time, the evidence of perestroika was striking.

There were none of the glossy brochures and slick videos with which the French greeted the only previous foreign excursion by the Hinkley team. Instead, the Russians were disarmingly honest in their admission that, three years after the disaster, the Chernobyl chickens were coming home to roost.

This was the first time that a British public inquiry had travelled so far to gather evidence. Alongside the Inspector during the 4,000-mile round trip were the Inquiry Secretary, "Sam" Collett, two assessors - Dr. Kenneth Duncan and Professor Hugh Simpson - Bob Tivey, the CEB's Consent Team Manager, myself and Humphrey Temperley, chairman of COLA.

The Hinkley visitors were also treated to a fair helping of glasnost. In Kiev, we clinked glasses through the traditional series of vodka and champagne toasts. In Moscow, Barnes and his advisers spent an hour with the British Ambassador.

At the centre of the five day visit was a guided tour round the Chernobyl disaster area. The Russians now treat this as a national wound to be exposed to the world, and encourage a steady trail of foreign visitors to see the full horror with their own eyes.

But although heroic efforts have clearly been made to handle the aftermath, it is impossible to disguise the continuing scale of the problems.

It took over two hours to travel the 70 miles by road from the Ukrainian capital of Kiev to the "exclusion zone" round Chernobyl. This still stretches to a distance of about 20 miles radius round the stricken plant, and covers an acreage almost as large as the county of Somerset.

Inside the zone, the dead straight road is lined with red radiation warning signs which tell you not to

Special Report



Chernobyl

stray from the tarmac. Lorries continually spray the surface with water to stop people breathing in the dust.

Nobody will be able to live permanently again within this area for at least 50 years, we were told. Farms and entire villages lie empty, gardens overgrown, apple trees collapsed into one another. "These are scenes you usually only see in wartime", our Russian guide remarked sadly.

In fact, despite security fences, over 1000 people have now moved back into their evacuated houses, running the risk of dangerous exposure. These are mostly elderly people who simply couldn't stand the thought of leaving their homes forever. The authorities are now uncertain whether to let them stay or mount a second evacuation.

At the town of Chernobyl, about ten miles from the power station, we were given a briefing by members of the special Kombinat organisation which handles the vast task of controlling the exclusion zone, or-

ganising radiation checks, and dumping the radioactive waste produced by the accident. 9,000 people work for Kombinat on a shift system of 15 days in the zone, then 15 days off. All provisions have to be brought in from outside.

The statistics of the catastrophe are stunning. During the past three years, over 260,000 people have been involved in the clean-up work, new workers having to be brought in to replace those whose dose limit has been reached. 136 dams were built across small streams to stop contaminated water flowing into the nearby Pripyat river. 200 hectares of dying woodland were bulldozed away.

Eventually we were taken to within 200 yards of the Sarcophagus, as the Russians call the concrete encased wreck of Chernobyl's No. 4 reactor. In a steaming temperature of over 90°, we stared up at the white concrete of its casing, the familiar red and white striped chimney, and then took photos of each other in a grim parody of tourist snaps.

It all looked deceptively harmless as an ITN film crew which had travelled with us "shot" the Inspector at the scene of the crime - until you were reminded that, three years ago, the radiation would have been 300 times higher.

Further back from the station, a forest of still standing dead trees is another reminder of the disaster. A solitary "partisans' pine" has been left close to the reactor as a memorial to those who died. On the horizon you can see the jutting antennae of a satellite tracking station, now a million roubles' worth of radioactive junk.

Nearby, we were shown the ghost town of Pripyat, which once housed 50,000 people. The ubiquitous face of Lenin stares down on the deserted main square, whilst long grass sprouts through the pavements. On the ground you can still see traces of the green plastic film used to bind the surface radioactivity before it was scraped off.

At the entrance to the town, soldiers with white face masks check every car and point geiger counters into their boots. Radiation readings in Pripyat are still 20 times above normal background.

In the middle of this desolation, perhaps the strangest experience was to visit the control room of one of the other three Chernobyl reactors. In order to keep electricity flowing to the region, these have all gradually been brought back into action.

Ten minutes walk from the sarcophagus, the chief engineer of the site, Nikolai Sorokin, sat in front of another portrait of Lenin and carefully explained the adaptations which have been made to the fated RBMK reactor design. Even so, his workforce has to be bussed in from a brand new town built on decontaminated land 50 kilometres away.

Although the briefness of our visit apparently didn't warrant a detailed radiation check, there are plenty of reminders of the dangers.

Having visited the power station we were all checked through a monitor like a weighing machine. The ITN cameramen failed the test and was told to wash his hands.

One of the most chilling examples of the risks still being run by people living in the Ukraine was a map printed recently in a Kiev evening newspaper. This showed a series of designated areas round Chernobyl where different restrictions have been placed on the picking of wild berries and mushrooms - a favourite local pastime.

The area within which no berries or mushrooms could be gathered at all stretched in one direction about 125 miles from the power station. There were also restrictions in this area on the grazing of dairy cows, making hay, the use of animal manure, cutting wood for fuel and eating fish from the Kiev reservoir. Up to 20% of fish in the reservoir were said to exceed "the radiological norm".

How many of these rules were actually followed by people living in country areas seemed doubtful.

In Kiev, the Hinkley team also visited the special clinic set up to treat people exposed to radiation doses after the accident. Altogether, over 600,000 people are registered on its books, although a critical group of about 200 require six monthly check-ups lasting up to four weeks. We were introduced to a fireman who received one of the highest doses and many of whose colleagues had died fighting the fire. He was reluctant to talk about his experience and was now back at work.

Much of the clinics' time is devoted to treating the psychological effects of the disaster through various ther-

apies. "Even three years after, many of the patients are suffering severe emotional stress," a doctor told us. "They look pessimistically at the future, and they miss their towns and villages."

Special Report



Chernobyl

Before flying the 500 miles south to Kiev, the Inquiry delegation spent a day in Moscow being given an overview of the state of the Russian nuclear industry.

During discussions at the Ministry of Nuclear Power it quickly became clear that the damage caused by Chernobyl was far more widespread than just the direct effects of the accident.

Encouraged by the new liberalism of perestroika, public opposition has halted or delayed the construction of new nuclear stations—in Odessa, Minsk, in the Caucasus and in the Baltic republics. A proposed underground waste dump in the Far East of the Soviet Union—a vast tunnel to be built under a river—is also under attack.

Many of the new delegates to the Russian Supreme Soviet are anti-nuclear, whilst TV stations have run several hours of open discussions on the subject. Such is the strength of feeling that central government has been reluctant to overrule objections from regional authorities.

"Before Chernobyl nuclear power was considered prestigious," one official told us. "the communities actually wanted them to be constructed in their area. Now it's even become more difficult to expand existing stations." On current form, the Ministry expects an original target of 20% nuclear electricity (up to 200 Gigawatts) by about the year 2005 to be cut in half.

The frustrations of the nuclear authorities in Russia in fact uncannily mirror those in Britain.

Faced with a hostile public, they criticise both the lack of public understanding of safety issues or of any viable alternatives.

At present, the majority of Soviet electricity (65%) comes from burning fossil fuels, mostly oil. About 20% is from hydro-electric schemes. New sources of renewable energy, like wind and solar, are still in their infancy, although research has been rationalised since Chernobyl. We were told about a 5MW solar power station in the Crimea, and of interest in geothermal, wind and tidal energy. We heard no evidence, however, of any great interest in conservation measures.

"I think the main opposition after Chernobyl is based on fear," one official said. "People talk about technical aspects, but the starting point is psychological. We don't see any alternative to nuclear power. Nobody wants to build such stations for fun."

The Ministry officials were hopeful that a national debate promised by Premier Gorbachev into the whole nuclear issue will eventually come down in their favour. They cited a recent straw poll among delegates to the Supreme Soviet which showed 65% in favour of continued nuclear development.

They were clearly envious of the British industry's ability to place large scale advertising in the media, and were also attracted by the French practice of providing cheap electricity to consumers round nuclear sites.

The Russians spent some time explaining the many adaptations and improvements which have been made to Soviet nuclear power stations since Chernobyl. All Chernobyl-style RBMKs have been adapted to avoid a sudden power surge at low temperature. Better shut-down systems have been installed, as well as new training systems for operators. However, no new RBMKs will now be built, and the industry has switched to PWRs.

In emergency planning, there is now an automatic alarm system round nuclear sites, and local people have been issued with advice leaflets.

Reports on the Russian visit will be prepared by representatives of all parties who went along, and submitted to the Inquiry. But two major lessons already stand out: that if a serious accident did happen at Hinkley C, its effects would be horrific; and that public opinion in the Soviet Union now mistrusts the assurances of safe nuclear power as much as it does in Britain.

a sham", we've had enough. In fact, the recent Chernobyl visit is one good example of the objectors having an effect.

The issue of direct action was discussed at the recent special SHE meetings on future strategy, and a summary of the main ideas and plans which came out of those meetings will hopefully be printed in the next newsletter. However, everybody agreed that now was not the right time for direct action, and we must wait until the inquiry report is published to decide whether our frustrations can take no more.

TOURING EXHIBITION: SHE has now acquired a large caravan, which will be fitted out with an exhibition on energy efficiency and the renewables by Bristol Energy Centre. It should be on the road soon. Enquiries to Danielle Grunberg (0278) 422632

OPEN SPACE: The BBC2 "Open Space" access slot will be screening a programme on opposition to Sizewell C (and Hinkley C) on Friday, Aug.4, 7.30pm. Check Radio Times first.

GREENHOUSE REPORTS: Two new reports worth reading on the greenhouse effect: "Solving The Greenhouse Dilemma" by Stewart Boyle, Linda Taylor and Ian Brown (easy to read, with pictures) from Association for the Conservation of Energy, 9, Sherlock Mews, London W1M 3RH and "Combating The Greenhouse Effect: No Role For Nuclear Power" from Greenpeace, 30, Islington Green, London N1 8XF. No prices available, sorry.

NUCLEAR-FREE PACIFIC: A "Pacific Awareness Gathering" has been organised by Women Working for a Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific at Nottingham Women's Centre on October 7-8. Registration forms from Flat 2, 27, Mapperley Road, Nottingham NG3 5AJ.

SHARES PROTEST: A new group, Shareholders Against Nuclear Energy, has been set up to explore how to use shareholder action in the new privatised electricity industry. Details from Box 318, 8, Elm Avenue, Nottingham NG3 4GF.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

RUSSIAN GREENS: The green movement in the Soviet Union is growing day by day. Hot on the heels of the Baltic Republics - Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania - the Ukraine, home of the Chernobyl plant, is rapidly becoming the focus for anti-nuclear protest.

* Last November, 10,000 people in Kiev (capital of the Ukraine) demanded a halt to further nuclear construction. The demonstration was organised by Zeleniy Svit (Green World), an ecological group. A new alliance has since emerged called Rukh (Popular Movement of Ukraine for Restructuring), which is calling for re-examination of Soviet energy policy.

* After Chernobyl, the Ukrainian Writers Union demanded full disclosure of the details of the disaster and its after-effects. On the eve of last year's 19th Communist Party conference, over 4,000 Ukrainian scientists, officials and workers in the power industry demanded a 10 to 15 year moratorium on nuclear power station building in the Ukraine.

* The Ministry of Nuclear Power now accepts that no new nuclear stations will be built in northern Ukraine, and the future of another plant south of >>>

Masked soldier guards entrance to deserted Pripyat town near Chernobyl (photo by Crispin Aubrey)



Kiev is in doubt.

* 20,000 people have signed petitions against the Krimskaya nuclear station in the Crimea, an earthquake zone. Ironically, the director of the Krimskaya plant visited the Hinkley inquiry last week (see front page).

(Information from "Index on Censorship" magazine July/August 1989 - £3.60 from Writers & Scholars International, 39c, Highbury Place, London N5 1QP.)

FRENCH PROTEST: In the sizzling heat of early June, five local people climbed the cooling tower of a nuclear reactor at Golfech (between Bordeaux and Toulouse on the river Garonne) in protest at its imminent start-up. Golfech is designated the largest nuclear site in France, with three more reactors planned already.

The protest, organised by local organic farmers, lasted five days, and was "an act of desperation" intended to force a national TV debate on the issue. It has been followed by a camp at the station gates. There was also due to be a national demonstration on July 15; SHE sent a message of support.

Please send your own messages of support or write for information to: Jim Rowe, Canazille 47270, St.Maurin, France.

CALIFORNIAN REFERENDUM: Voters in Sacramento, California have closed the district's Rancho Seco PWR nuclear power station. By 54% to 47%, a referendum in June was the first in US history to force a nuclear station to shut down completely. Will it be the first of many?

NUCLEAR ECONOMICS

"You are old, Father William," the young man said:
 "Do you remember cheap nuclear power?"
 Said his father, "I fear we have all been misled—
 None was dearer per kilowatt-hour!"



"ATOMS IN WONDERLAND" is the title of a series of 12 postcards produced by SHE member Terry Mulvihill. All use Wonderland situations to mock the absurdity of trying to push uneconomic nuclear power on an unwilling public. The sets cost £2 (cheques to Stop Hinkley Expansion) from the campaign address at end of the newsletter.

Public Inquiry Information

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 TEL: (0278) 652408 Stuart Purves
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Campaign Information

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 TEL: (0278) 732921 Crispin Aubrey
 (0278) 422632 Danielle Grunberg

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

August	4	Cannington	Last day of Hinkley Inquiry before summer break.
	12	Llanrwst	Meeting of People Against Wylfa B Cymru: details from 0982 4362.
Sept	5	Cannington	Inquiry restarts after break.
	7	Bridgwater	SHE Committee Meeting, 7.30pm, Manor Farm house, Wembdon. Directions (0278) 422632.
	10	Bridgwater	SHE General Meeting, 2.30pm, Unity House, Dampiet Street. Directions (0278) 732921.
	14	Bridgwater	Friends of the Earth meeting, 8pm, Arts Centre, Castle Street. Speaker: Crispin Aubrey on the Chernobyl visit.

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