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MAJIA'S BLOG

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 15, 2011

Narrative of Japanese Fukushima Disaster and Cover-Up

I'm working on a book that will address this chapter. Here is a chronicle of events I'm working on filling in. The references are distracting, I know, but I need to keep them in right now for tracking purposes. I've added paragraph breaks here for ease of reading.

Please add your suggestions for improvement in the comment section. Links are appreciated.

....

On March 11, 2011 Japan was hit by a massive earthquake, measuring approximately 9.0. Japan's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant I suffered power losses that led to three complete core meltdowns and melt-throughs, as reported in Japan's nuclear emergency task force report to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA): "fuel rods in reactors No 1, 2 and 3 had probably not only melted, but also breached their inner containment vessels and accumulated in the outer steel containment vessels" (McCurry, "Fukushima" 2011).

However, Tepco, the Japanese company that owns the plant, did not report that full meltdowns and melthroughs had occurred in three of the reactors until June, fully three months after these events had occurred. This type of gross under-estimation and obfuscation was

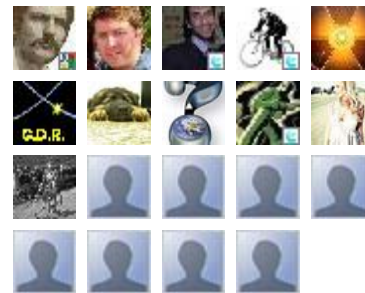
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characteristic of nearly all crisis communication pertaining to this event produced by TEPCO, the Japanese Government, the U.S. EPA and USDA, and the Canadian Government.

The nuclear disaster began on March 11 after Fukushima Reactor No. 1 lost water. Fukushima No. 1 reactor exploded Saturday March 12 after venting of the reactor failed to release pressure. On Monday March 14th an explosion occurred at No. 3 reactor.

After the second explosion reported on June 15, “officials” at the Fukushima plant reported “there was no serious radiation leak, but acknowledged they had moved workers for safety reasons as a precaution” (Hayashi, 2011, p. A1). Furthermore, it was reported that the “containment structures of the three reactors—which house the all-important reactor vessels—remain intact, Japanese official stressed, preventing large-scale radiation leaks” (Hayashi, 2011, p. A). Later, on March 15, an explosion occurred in reactor #2.

As of March 29, officials reportedly suspected only a “partial meltdown” had occurred in reactor #2 (Morse & Obe, 2011, A12).

It took Japanese officials over a month to disclose large scale radiation releases that occurred at the Fukushima plant in mid-March (Tabuchi, Bradsher, Pollack, 2011). Japan used a system called Speedi—System for Prediction of Environmental Emergency Dose information—to model March releases and blamed the delay in reporting results to the public in mid-April to their efforts to

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narrow the margin of error in their calculations, although nuclear regulators in other countries were privy to Speedi's results early on (Tabuchi, Bradsher, Pollack, 2011).

In June, Japan's nuclear safety agency acknowledged suspicion that the official statement of the radiation releases for March of 370,000 terabecquerels (publicized in April) had been grossly under-estimated (McCurry "Japan Doubles" 2011). Japan's nuclear safety agency doubled the amount of radiation previously reported by TEPCO to have "leaked" from the Fukushima Daiichi plant in the first week of the accident (McCurry, "Japan Doubles" 2011). This new figure of 770,000 terabecquerels reported by the Japanese Nuclear Safety Agency failed to calculate radiation losses after the first week into the air or sea.

The deliberate delay and underestimation of the radiation released by the plant resulted in an inadequate evacuation zone. On March 11, the Japanese government ordered persons within a 1.9 mile radius of the Fukushima I plant to evacuate and recommended that those within 6.2 miles stay within their homes ("Timeline" BBC). On March 12 the evacuation was extended to 20 kilometers.

On March 13, after the first explosion, the World health Organization reported that the risk from the reactors was "probably quite low" (Timeline BBC). On March 17, the U.S. declared that U.S. citizens and troops should stay at least 50 miles from the Fukushima reactors (Shirouzu & Smith, 2011). However, it was not until March 25 that the Japanese government declared a voluntary evacuation for people within 30 kilometers of the

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plant: the official evacuation zone remained 20 kilometers, or approximately 20 miles (Morse & Obe, 2011 3/26-27).

On April 4, *The Wall Street Journal* reported that Japanese authorities had finally acknowledged that the evacuation zone needed to be expanded beyond the 30 kilometer zone (Koh, Wakabayashi, Inada, 2011).

more to come...

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ABOUT ME



MAJIA'S BLOG

I am a Professor at a large public university. I study political economy and biopolitics. My interests are diverse but are broadly concerned with economic, social and environmental justice. I have published 3 books: *Constructing Autism: Governmentality, Biopower and Everyday Life*; *Governing Childhood*.

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