PHOTOESSAY

Legacy: inside the Chernobyl exclusion zone

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The images shown here explore inside the 30 km exclusion zone surrounding the Chernobyl Power Plant. Evacuated with 24 hours notice after the 1986 melt down of one of its three nuclear reactors, the zone now stands as a symbol of the dangers inherent within the nuclear process. Empty villages strewn with the reminders of their former populations are scattered throughout the zone and at its centre is the city of Pripyat, formerly a symbol of the Ukraine’s bright new future and now too radioactive to even demolish, its buildings crumbling and littered with the detritus of a fleeing population.

Yet amongst this devastation a few, mostly old, people have returned to their homes in the zone (they were initially removed to the outskirts of Kiev). Without any other, or safer, place to go, they make a living from this radioactive and most notorious of locations.

A report by Greenpeace (2006) published to coincide with the twentieth anniversary of the disaster estimates that the consequences could surpass a quarter of a million cancer cases and 100,000 deaths from cancer. This report challenges the UN International Atomic Energy Agency Chernobyl Forum report that predicted only 4000 deaths attributable to the accident.

Ukraine finally shut down the Chernobyl power plant in 2000.

30 km exclusion zone entry point
Looking into the zone

Karagod abandoned
Karagod

Illegal settlers, Opacichki
Nicholai and Anastasia

Rassohka, irradiated helicopters

Buryakovka, landfill site

Pripyat, the most radioactive city

Pripyat fun fair
Further examples of Legacy can be seen at www.johndarwell.com > Projects/Images

References
