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For the future ... of the children of Chernobyl



Sometimes it is easier to be against something than to be there for the future. Nevertheless, the two concepts are closely linked. Likewise Svetlana Alexijewitsch, winner of the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade in October, in her book "Chernobyl. A chronicle of the future", writes of a woman: "She had no idea whether to talk about death or love, since both were virtually the same for her." Her husband perished a few days after being one of the first fire-fighters sent into action at the stricken reactor, and she also went on to lose her unborn child.

The nearness of life to death is also made clear when meeting children who are suffering, or have suffered, from the long-term impacts of the reactor disaster. Indeed, the southern regions of Belarus are still significantly contaminated with radioactive material. The sustenance received from the soil is both life-giving and deadly in equal measure.

The reactor accident at Chernobyl was due to substandard economic and technical factors and political conditions. Nevertheless, the subsequently incident in sophisticated and democratic Japan showed how so-called once-a-century events may recur very quickly. Insufficient research into the causes and inadequate objective preparation for the event also explain the lack of change in mindset. This should prompt not resignation or excuses for doing nothing, but should instead spur efforts to keep the topic alive via talks and publications in all media. Even if other catastrophes hog the media headlines and addressing the issue becomes increasingly wearisome, we must keep it in mind.

Many institutions and associations like "Kinder von Chernobyl e.V." from Winden offer children long-term help by letting them travel on holidays to Nassauer Land. Because being against something also means doing something for people.