

Zarko Bogosavljevic, Serbia

Zarko Bogosavljevic was 38 at the time of the accident and worked in the Belgrade land development agency as an electrical engineer. He remembers staring at the sky looking for black clouds coming his way. About the precautions he took and his views on nuclear energy he spoke to his niece, Milena Tatalovic.

We conducted the interview in his and my aunt's apartment in a suburb of Belgrade one afternoon.

Zarko Bogosavljevic was born on 9th of March 1948 in Belgrade, which was at that time capital of Socialistic Federative Republic of Yugoslavia. He finished Electrical Engineering University in Belgrade and he had been working for many years in the Belgrade land development public agency as electrical engineer.

He is married to Zorka Bogosavljevic, a mechanical technician by profession, 63 years old, and currently retired. They got married in 1974.

In 1986, at the time Chernobyl accident happened, Zarko was 38 years old and lived in Belgrade with his wife Zorka, and their two kids, Zoran and Jelena. Zoran was 10, and Jelena was 6 at that time. Even then he was working in Belgrade land development public agency.

The first thing that crosses his mind when he hears the word "nuclear threat" is the weapon and rising threat of terrorism in world. However, on the mention of the "Nuclear Power Plant" his first association is great potential in energy. He didn't know too much about nuclear energy production at that time, except that he believed that it had a potential in becoming very important source of energy. He believed that nuclear energy was only at its beginning in development and that it would play a big role in supplying the world with electricity. He did not think too much about social environment at that time and destruction of nature. He is not sure about the radiation today, but he doesn't deny that there is any.

At the time of the Chernobyl accident there was one NPP in Yugoslavia, particularly in Slovenia - NPP Krsko. Zarko remembers that it was open for work in 1983, and that there were many people against it at that time. He also remembers that there were negotiations even at that time about a joint project between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, for building NPP Belene in Bulgaria in the 80s.

He is not sure that there were some accidents before Chernobyl "but he can swear", that he read somewhere that there were some accidents in USA in the 70s, but can't remember where exactly or when. He also didn't know much about the Ukraine NPP in Chernobyl. As for the emergency plans back in the 80s in Former Yugoslavia, he can't remember that there were any. He had some doubts about radioactivity, but he could never imagine what kind of catastrophe is possible in the case of an accident, like Chernobyl was.

At the time of the accident he remembers only that he was in Belgrade. But then again, there was no news in Serbia until a few days after the accident, so the 26th of April, wasn't some special day. He believes that he first heard the news on the radio, but didn't feel scared or worried. There was a little information, people in Belgrade knew that there was some little accident somewhere in Soviet Russia, and they didn't pay much attention to it. Only after the celebration of the 1st of May "Workers day", he could read more in the daily newspaper about Chernobyl.

He remembers that newspapers started to write about the radioactive cloud that was moving towards Europe, and especially to the eastern part, so than he got worried. He remembers that in those days he spoke frequently with his colleagues from work about the cloud, and often looked into the sky to check the weather. They were warned by the government that all the fruits and vegetables should be washed very carefully and not to eat mushrooms.

After the bad news started to come from the Soviet Russia, there was some constant fear in the air. "We were staring at the sky all the time, are there any black clouds coming our way". He also remembers the anecdote from that period. His son Zoran had a task at the school to write an essay on the topic "Drop by drop", and he wrote one sentence "Drop by drop, radioactive rain is falling from the sky". He guesses that it's because of fear that his little son could sense and hear from the older people at that time.

So during the days and weeks after the accident they took precautions concerning the food, but it was all the influence that Chernobyl had on practical everyday life. A few months later, the fear slowly disappeared and they went back to their normal lives.

Zarko thinks that the biggest victims from the Chernobyl disaster were the people living near NPP, and the workers at NPP. He and his family read and listened about those people after the accidents, and he remembers that he felt really bad for these people. He doesn't believe that he and his family suffered any medical consequences from Chernobyl disaster, and claims that there wasn't any emergency plans and training to its citizens from the government.

The Chernobyl accident is not well represented in the media in Serbia. There should be more educational programs and documentaries about this accident, so that people have to learn that you should be very careful when you're playing with nature, Zarko said. We should remember Chernobyl and its victims like a warning and the legacy for the future. "You see, it's been more than 20 years since the accident, and the human can't live in that area still. It's still radioactive and it will stay that way for who knows how many years. Is there any greater warning than that?"

Although he felt scared in the days after the accident, this catastrophe didn't change much his point of view on nuclear energy. He still believes that this energy is very important and that we are not capable to replace it with renewable sources to the extent that is sufficient for mankind. We should put more effort in studying the renewable sources, but they are still not enough, he said. "As long as there is this market and economy that is growing from day to day,

and the human needs are grater and greater, you will need nuclear energy. The technology is developing very fast and creating more needed, dependent society and bigger market, which uses a lot of energy. We should first start from the basic, and ask ourselves do we need all this modern stuff, that brings along so much danger?"

Annotation: Before the interview I gave Zarko the blank map of Europe and I asked him to mark two points on it – the point of the place where he lives and the point of Chernobyl's location. He marked the location of Chernobyl closer to his location than it really is.