

JUAN MONTES, Spain



In April 1986, Juan had just turned 19 and was finishing his first year at University. Today, he is an English teacher. The interview was conducted by his nephew, Germán Jimenez.

My uncle Juan is 43 and has two little girls. He is my youngest uncle and also my neighbour and that's why we have a very special relationship. We meet very often and discuss current affairs, which is how we enjoy each other's company, talking about cinema, politics... and, overall, football.

He is an English teacher and has travelled a lot, which is why I chose him to conduct my interview with, because he loves travelling, getting to know new things and being up-to-date with what is happening in the world; and I thought that in 1986, although he was only 19 at that time, he would have been the same.

I also considered that a young person normally feels the impact of important events more deeply and he would have been more aware of the issue.

At the time of the interview, 25 years after, he was concerned about how long ago it was and what he was able to remember, but could finally find some interesting memories about the accident and had some intelligent comments things about his actual position on Nuclear Energy.

Juan was born in March 1967 and grew up in an urban middle-class family in Sevilla (Andalusia). His father was an insurance officer and his mother was a housewife, although she had a business degree and she was asked to stay at the University as a teacher.

He decided to study English, because he liked learning different languages and wanted to be a school teacher. However, he would have liked to be a football player or bullfighter, like any Spanish boy in those times.

In April 1986 he was finishing the first year at university and, though he had very good marks, he reckoned that in those times he was mainly meant to have fun with his friends and without commitments.



Before the accident, the first thing that comes to Juan's mind is a famous slogan that said: *¿Nuclear? No, gracias*; and remembers that in those times most young people in Spain support this movement and he also learned at school some aspects of nuclear energy (fusion - fission); but he recognizes that nowadays there is more information available about the issue, which is more objective and impartial.

He doesn't remember any other NPP accident before Chernobyl, but this summer while he was in a trip to Pais Vasco (North Spain) and passed through the NPP of Lemoniz, the ETA attitude against Nuclear Energy came to his mind. The organization took a direct response to it, with terrorist attacks on nuclear engineers and politicians that supported the NPP.

He remembers the greatness of the USSR and his admiration for the success of the Soviet Union in sports and science; and, although he was conscious how outdated its communist policy and situation were, when the USSR crumbled he couldn't believe it. It was like a great hundred handed giant that would never fall.

He doesn't have a concrete memory of how he first learned about the accident, but he remembers clearly the first news and that he was extremely shocked about it, and how the media gave the information, "trying to calm" the population about the consequences of the radioactivity and recommending not to do certain kind of things "like eating fruits and vegetables". He had a concrete image of a European map of how the radiation was getting bigger and bigger and was reaching Spain, but he recognized that, at the end, the direct consequences were negligible.

He reckoned that such an accident could easily happen; however, he was really surprised by its magnitude, and remembered how it was the main talking point in everybody's conversations. People got strongly involved in the aid programmes, hosting affected children from the area and supporting their families economically.

The most important reaction of the socialist government of Felipe Gonzalez was to carry out the 'Moratoria Nuclear' that had been ratified in 1984 and started in the early 90's. This law obliged all

new nuclear projects to be stopped and Juan is not sure if they also tried to stop those which were functioning. But he found this very hypocritical, because Spain had to buy energy from foreign countries, like France, that surely were taking all it from NPP.

Juan says that there is more information nowadays and it's easier to see both sides of the issue. Energy is necessary and we can't take a hypocritical standpoint and say that Nuclear Energy must be stopped right now, because sustainable energies are not fully developed yet. So, for him, the only thing we can do today is watch over the safety of NPPs and try to make them pollute as little as possible. That's what he has learned when he has had a conversation with specialists, like his brother-in-law who is an engineer in sustainable energies.

He doesn't really think that his students will remember the Chernobyl accident in the future, but it will remain in the collective memory as a clear reminder of what can happen if we don't take this issue seriously.