

Tomasz Drozdowski, Poland

In 1986, Tomasz Drozdowski was working as a lawyer, was married and had one daughter. He spoke to Michal Przeperski about his views on nuclear energy and why he is in favour of building a nuclear power plant in Poland.

### **Family background**

Tomasz Drozdowski was born on 31<sup>st</sup> January 1950 in Rypin in a peasant family. He graduated from the Faculty of Law of the Nicolas Copernicus University in Toruń. In 1984 he married; his first child, daughter Karolina, was born in 1985. In spring 1986 he lived in Włocławek, working as a lawyer. Not surprisingly, at the turn of 1985 and 1986, his daughter, wife and parents were the most important persons in his life. At that time he was a part of intelligentsia circles and professional and material stability were among his major concerns.

### **Attitude to nuclear energy before Chernobyl**

Both before and after the catastrophe, nuclear plants were indispensable for the future of humanity. At that time it was meant to be a very important novelty and the Chernobyl disaster contributed to the increase of fear towards the nuclear energy. In his opinion, though, it was a Soviet technology that really was responsible for the mess. Even at the time of the catastrophe it was not perceived as a trustful one. So, definitely he was in favor of the development of nuclear plants. The knowledge of this issue was very much superficial, though, and mostly based on a press enunciations.

### **The Chernobyl accident and its consequences**

He got to know about the catastrophe when the information was announced for the first time by Radio Free Europe. His first impression was that the communists were trying to hide something from the nation. That feeling was full of fear, especially because the first news announced that the accident was most probably serious, because Soviet officials were trying to deny it.

The disaster did not change his opinions much. Definitely, the Polish program of nuclear power plant development was in his opinion the first to be revised, because the Soviet technology was supposed to be used in building those plants. Apart from that, he could spot no visible changes in his life directly affected by the accident.

The political dimension of the Chernobyl issue was very visible because he perceived it as a kind of stalemate in the relations between the communist power and the society. Yet, preventive measures which were soon taken by the Polish regime were very much appreciated by him. All the aspects of catastrophe were in his opinion publicly revealed and, simultaneously, communists managed to omit large scale panic which was a considerable threat at that time.

As every phenomenon which was not completely clear, conspiratorial theories were created to explain it. Actually, the more such theories were against Soviets, the more publicly appreciated they were.

In his opinion the mass media, although they were some 24 hours late, presented generally a picture which was coherent with the real one. Information was exhaustive and proper; all the institutions did their best to achieve what was desired by a good many Poles. Yet, he knew very little about the level of disruptions in Belarus and Ukraine at the time.

He also has not had any contact with a person or organization dealing with relief programs from 1986 onwards. Generally, in his opinion, the disaster has not had any direct impact on his life.

### **Nuclear energy issue**

Public opinion realized that nuclear plants were not as safe as they had thought. In Poland it contributed to the suspension of the Polish nuclear plant program for some 25 years. In his opinion it has to be stressed that it was a very sad and painful outcome of the Chernobyl catastrophe, given the fact that Poland still does not have a nuclear plant and from time to time suffers from the energy shortages.

### **Chernobyl today**

It definitely is an important fact which shows that the human subduing the nature has to be very cautious, because otherwise unbelievable losses can be made to the earth and its inhabitants. Yet, the Chernobyl issue is not really present in his life. He has not had opportunities to discuss it recently and is not very familiar with the ways of commemoration of Chernobyl issue. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that he expressed his satisfaction that in the present Poland local powers are trying to encourage government to choose their location as a place for the future Polish nuclear plant which shows that a significant change has taken place since 1986 in the mentality of Poles. "Fortunately, we are no longer afraid", he said.

The interview was conducted on January 10th, 2011.