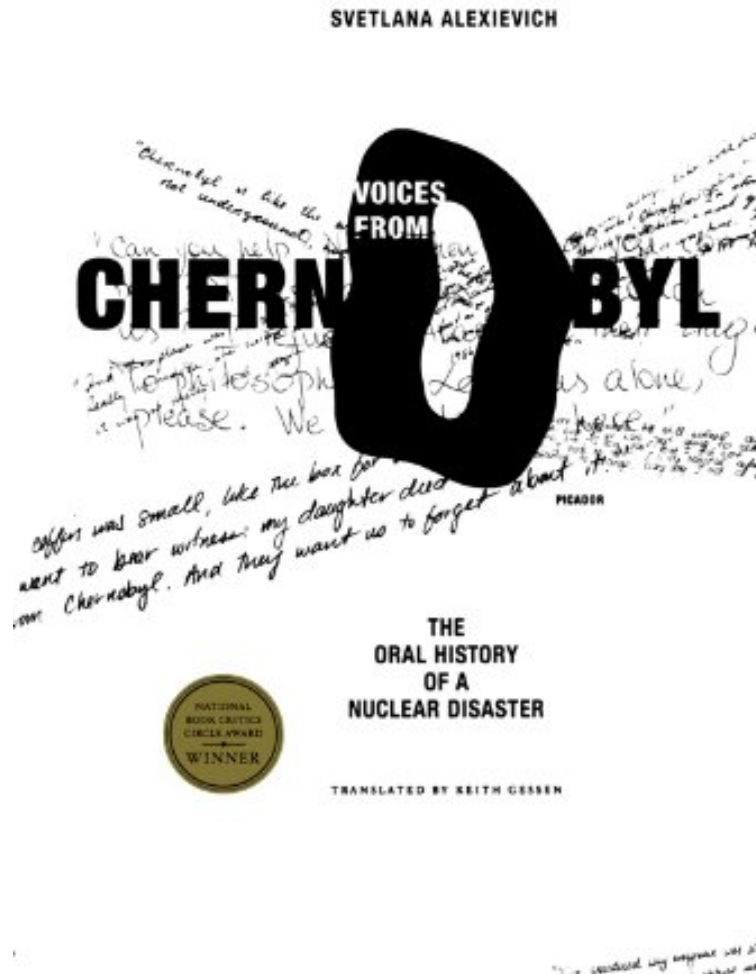


Voices from Chernobyl: The Oral History of a Nuclear Disaster

Svetlana Alexievich

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#152888 in Books Picador USA 2006-04-18 2006-04-18 Ingredients: Example Ingredients Original language: English PDF # 1 8.50 x .58 x 5.50l, .50 #File Name: 0312425848256 pages Picador USA | File size: 34.Mb

Svetlana Alexievich : Voices from Chernobyl: The Oral History of a Nuclear Disaster before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Voices from Chernobyl: The Oral History of a Nuclear Disaster:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. An assemblage of dysphoric and dire vignettes that are stirring and transformative. By Christian Engler Through a series of beautifully crafted monologues by journalist Svetlana Alexievich, a candidate for the 2014 Nobel Prize in Literature, she gives a voice to the voiceless by offering a literary

megaphone to the citizens in, around and beyond Pripyat, Russia who experienced the all out lethal aftereffects of when the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant experienced a cataclysmic meltdown on April 26, 1986. With navigational restraint and skill, she interviews those who survived the ordeal first and secondhand, and for those who did not survive, the flame of their memory was carried on by those loved ones who were left behind in the radioactive hell that Alexievich brings so descriptively back to life. By applying her literary aptitude and journalistic acumen, she enables these victims and survivors their dirge or aria of woe to be humanely and candidly expressed. She tells tales that are more grim than fanciful, of homes and villages abandoned, radioactive pets and farm animals hunted down and executed, of mutated children and citizens literally melting away due to the radioactive toxicity that was, by degrees, slowly killing them. Alexievich is also very astute at conveying the tyrannical old party Communist belief system that was held by the victims and survivors of Chernobyl before and after the nuclear disaster. The Chernobyl cleanup crew and others of the same cloth were spurred on by thoughts of heroic mother country illustriousness and beliefs of Soviet indomitability while others were propelled by a more capitalistic inspiration, that by being involved with the mop-up after the tragedy, they would benefit somehow monetarily and materialistically. And so, they willingly threw themselves into the epicenter of the nuclear monster, only to come out severely contaminated with dashed hopes and chintzy medals for their valiant efforts. Cold war politics and ideologies aside, when Chernobyl exploded, it melted something other than the physically tangible reactor and those who inhabited in and around it. The deadly blast melted away a long-held ideology, a Communist philosophy that failed its people. It was, in some respects, the beginning of the end in many ways. Like other great literary journalists and writers: Ernest Hemmingway, Joan Didion, Ryszard Kapuscinski (just to name a few), Alexievich is a powerful writer, who, with gusto and tenacity really throws herself into the story she is trying to tell. She too was born and schooled near where Chernobyl loomed, like an overwhelming Mt. Everest, and it was fitting that it was she who chose to tell this story. If a picture is worth a thousand words, than these monologues are worth far more.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Incredible. By Timothy Stephens
Reading about tragedies from other people's perspectives is incredible itself, but this collection of interviews takes this genre to a whole new level. In no other form are we privileged enough to hear the stories of people who lived through and near one of the greatest tragedies of human history. It is incredible fascinating to try and understand what these people felt. I believe this book should be read in all education establishments because of its quality and hard hitting stories.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Song About The Human Condition
By Irene Oberstenfeld De Suarez
Svetlana Alexievich's book about Chernobyl seems to me right now THE BEST BOOK I HAVE EVER READ. It combines so many different levels: it is a historic book, history seen through the eyes of LITTLE PEOPLE like you and me. It is a book about Russia and the horrors of Communism. For me it also challenges Capitalism, because I see also the GOOD OF COMMUNISM: a society that does NOT have the tremendous inequality our Capitalist societies show and ever more so. There is an idealism, patriotism and solidarity among people that I do not see so much in our Free Market Societies and without which Chernobyl might NOT have been put under control and our world might have been a nightmare today. I feel Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky in the book, it is also a book about Scientific arrogance and how our superb scientists can THINK radioactivity but even they cannot GRASP what it means to have a radioactive contamination for hundreds of thousands of years. We stand there not just as Communists or Capitalists, we stand there and we come out of Svetlanas monologues as a gifted, intelligent and profoundly ignorant species. And when the UNGRASPABLE hits, a catastrophe out of our understanding we, humans, return to Philosophy, Religion and Fear and often in front of Death: so many return to LOVE. That is what breaks the heart in Alexievich's stories and monologues: the capacity of love inherent to our human hearts! Under Chernobyl, Communism, Recent History this is a book about the HUMAN CONDITION, songs as if out of the ancient Greek theatre and tragedies. Thank you, spacibo, Svetlana, you are my heroine for the rest of my life!

Winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature
Winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award
On April 26, 1986, the worst nuclear reactor accident in history occurred in Chernobyl and contaminated as much as three quarters of Europe. Voices from Chernobyl is the first book to present personal accounts of the tragedy. Journalist Svetlana Alexievich interviewed hundreds of people affected by the meltdown---from innocent citizens to firefighters to those called in to clean up the disaster---and their stories reveal the fear, anger, and uncertainty with which they still live. Comprised of interviews in monologue form, Voices from Chernobyl is a crucially important work, unforgettable in its emotional power and honesty.

From Publishers Weekly
A chorus of fatalism, stoic bravery and black, black humor is sounded in this haunting oral history of the 1986 nuclear reactor catastrophe in what is now northeastern Ukraine. Russian journalist Alexievich records a wide array of voices: a woman who clings to her irradiated, dying husband though nurses warn her "that's not a person anymore, that's a nuclear reactor"; a hunter dispatched to evacuated villages to exterminate the household pets; soldiers sent in to clean up the mess, bitter at the callous, incompetent Soviet authorities who "flung us there, like sand on the reactor," but accepting their lot as a test of manhood; an idealistic nuclear engineer whose faith in communism is shattered. And there are the local peasants who take this latest in a long line of disasters in stride,

filtering back to their homes to harvest their contaminated potatoes, shrugging that if they survived the Germans, they'll survive radiation. Alexievich shapes these testimonies into novelistic "monologues" that convey a vivid portrait of late-Communist malaise, in which bullying party bosses, paranoid propaganda and chaotic mobilizations are resisted with bleak sarcasm ("It wasn't milk, it was a radioactive byproduct"), mournful philosophizing ("[t]he mechanism of evil will work under conditions of apocalypse") and lots of vodka. The result is an indelible X-ray of the Russian soul. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From Booklist*Starred * "Chernobyl is like the war of all wars. There's nowhere to hide." On April 26, 1986, the people of Belarus lost everything when a reactor at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Station exploded. Many people died outright, and many were evacuated, forced to leave behind everything from pets to family photographs. Millions of acres remain contaminated, and thousands of people continue to be afflicted with diseases caused by radiation as 20 tons of nuclear fuel sit in a reactor shielded by a leaking sarcophagus known as the Cover. For three years, journalist Alexievich spoke with scores of survivors--the widow of a first responder, an on-the-scene cameraman, teachers, doctors, farmers, Party bureaucrats, a historian, scientists, evacuees, resettlers, grandmothers, mothers--and she now presents their shocking accounts of life in a poisoned world. And what quintessentially human stories these are, as each distinct voice expresses anger, fear, ignorance, stoicism, valor, compassion, and love. Alexievich put her own health at risk to gather these invaluable frontline testimonies, which she has transmuted into a haunting and essential work of literature that one can only hope documents a never-to-be-repeated catastrophe. Donna Seaman Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved

This collection of narratives about the world's worst industrial accident reads like an apocalyptic fairy tale. . . . The monologues . . . are exquisite in their plainspoken anguish. And as such, they are beautifully unbearable to read. Time Out Chicago A chorus of fatalism, stoic bravery, and black, black humor is sounded in this haunting oral history. . . . The result is an indelible X-ray of the Russian soul.

Publishers Weekly The Nobel Prize in Literature 2015 was awarded to Belarusian author Svetlana Alexievich "for her polyphonic writings, a monument to suffering and courage in our time". Shocking accounts of life in a poisoned world. And what quintessentially human stories these are, as each distinct voice expresses anger, fear, ignorance, stoicism, valor, compassion, and love. Alexievich put her own health at risk to gather these invaluable frontline testimonies, which she has transmuted into a haunting and essential work of literature that one can only hope documents a never-to-be-repeated catastrophe. Booklist (starred review) Devastating . . . Essential, powerful, and brave. John Freeman, The Star-Ledger (Newark)