



Three Mile Island: A Nuclear Crisis in Historical Perspective

J. Samuel Walker

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Twenty-five years ago, Hollywood released *The China Syndrome*, featuring Jane Fonda and Michael Douglas as a TV news crew who witness what appears to be a serious accident at a nuclear power plant. In a spectacular coincidence, on March 28, 1979, less than two weeks after the movie came out, the worst accident in the history of commercial nuclear power in the United States occurred at Three Mile Island. For five days, the citizens of central Pennsylvania and the entire world, amid growing alarm, followed the efforts of authorities to prevent the crippled plant from spewing dangerous quantities of radiation into the environment. This book is the first comprehensive account of the causes, context, and consequences of the Three Mile Island crisis. In gripping prose, J. Samuel Walker captures the high human drama surrounding the accident, sets it in the context of the heated debate over nuclear power in the seventies, and analyzes the social, technical, and political issues it raised. His superb account of those frightening and confusing days will clear up misconceptions held to this day about Three Mile Island.

The heart of Walker's suspenseful narrative is a moment-by-moment account of the accident itself, in which he brings to life the players who dealt with the emergency: the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the state of Pennsylvania, the White House, and a cast of scientists and reporters. He also looks at the aftermath of the accident on the surrounding area, including studies of its long-term health effects on the population, providing a fascinating window onto the politics of nuclear power and an authoritative account of a critical event in recent American history.

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