

Milkas conference – Stockholm October 17th – 18th, 2009

Final Repository Morsleben (Germany) - A Collapsing Salt Mine in the Process of Closure

The former central final disposal site of the GDR is situated some 100 km east of Hannover and some 180 km east of Berlin in the German state Sachsen-Anhalt. It is a former salt mine with a number of safety problems such as the danger of collapse, water flooding the mine and other problems resulting from an unsuitable geological situation.

Since 2003 the operator of the repository - the federal office for radiation protection (BfS) - is putting some 800,000 cubic meters of "salt concrete" (a mixture of salt, concrete and further materials) into the caverns to "stabilize" the mine. Some weeks ago the operator had to admit that a cavern with nuclear waste will cave-in soon: Some 20,000 tons of the repository will cave-in. That will effect the surface like a small earthquake, they said. This would not be the first cave-in in Morsleben.

The salt concrete is particularly responsible for this threat: The weight of the concrete is adding forces to the salt structures of the mine and will probably cause a collapse of the concerned cavern.

The presentation will cover the history and current safety issues of the German final repository Morsleben. Morsleben is currently in the process of being shut down. On October 22nd, public hearings regarding the closure concept will begin. However, it will never be possible to make Morsleben completely safe, as it is already affected by water leakages into the mine, as well as cave-ins of large parts of the caverns.

Falk Beyer is a publicist and environmental organizer. He leads a research project about the history of the site in Morsleben and published a book on this topic as well as a study on the safety issues there. These days he is also making efforts in international networking with environmental activists in several countries to develop a supportive network of anti-nuclear activists.

Falk Beyers