



The Right Livelihood Award

for outstanding vision and work on behalf of our planet and its people

Alla Yaroshinskaya (Russia)

Joint Award with John Gofman (1992)



"...for revealing, against official opposition and persecution, the extent of the damaging effects of the Chernobyl disaster on local people."

Photo: Wolfgang Schmidt

Alla Yaroshinskaya was born in 1953 in Zhitomir region of the Ukraine and on graduating in journalism from Kiev University worked for 13 years as a correspondent of the local newspaper. At university she had been a political dissident. During her work she consistently tried to expose party corruption and suffered administrative penalties. At the end of 1986 she began to feel uneasy about the supposed evacuation of areas, which had been contaminated by radiation from the Chernobyl accident in April that year, and she began to investigate.

Yaroshinskaya discovered that people from highly contaminated villages were being settled in hardly less contaminated villages nearby; that their health problems were serious but officially denied and ignored; that their new accommodation was grossly inadequate; and that people could not survive without eating the highly radioactive food being grown in the area. Her newspaper not only refused to publish her article but commissioned another journalist to write a reassuring article about the area instead. Her piece was also refused by Pravda and Izvestia and other national papers to which she sent it. But, under the influence of glasnost, Izvestia did publish a story about how her work was being suppressed. Locally, she distributed samizdat versions of her article. Great pressure began to be put on her, but popular support for her was great. In 1989 she was nominated for election to the new Supreme Soviet of the USSR and was elected with 90% of the vote.

On the Ecology and Glasnost Committee of the Supreme Soviet, she used her position to continue her campaign for full disclosure of the Chernobyl contamination. In 1990 she was appointed to a Commission to look into the matter. That year she made a presentation on the subject to the European Parliament. In the USSR the Commission's progress was blocked by bureaucrats at every turn and even after the abortive putsch in 1991 she was not permitted to copy relevant documents. In April 1992, having made clandestine copies of top-secret documents of the Communist Party Politburo, her resultant article, "Forty secret protocols of the Kremlin wise men", was published by

Izvestia and picked up by the Western press.

Yaroshinskaya is the author or co-author of a dozen books and over 700 articles in scientific magazines and the mass media. Her book on Chernobyl was published in five languages. She is also originator, editor-in-chief and co-author of the *Nuclear Encyclopaedia*, the first of its kind in the world, which shows the true nature of nuclear problems.

Being unpopular with the Communist authorities in her native Ukraine, Yaroshinskaya stayed in Russia after the Soviet Union broke up. In 1993, after working as Deputy to the Minister of Press and Information, she became Adviser to the Russian President, Boris Yeltsin. She has been a member of Russian delegations to the United Nations for negotiating an extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and to the UN Women's Conference (1995).

Actively engaged in political and public work on human rights, press freedom and nuclear issues, she was President of the Ecological Charity Fund, and is Co-chair of the Russian Ecological Congress, Chief of the Federal Council of the all-Russian Social Democratic Movement and a member of other international committees. In 1998 she received an international women's award as one of "100 heroines of the 20th century".

Later, Alla Yaroshinskaya was active in organising an international team of scientists, lawyers, activists and victims of Chernobyl to prepare and to pass an appeal to the European Court on Chernobyl-related crimes against humanity. She has also pushed for a Chernobyl "Nuremberg" trial against the former Soviet authorities.

RIGHT LIVELIHOOD
AWARD FOUNDATION