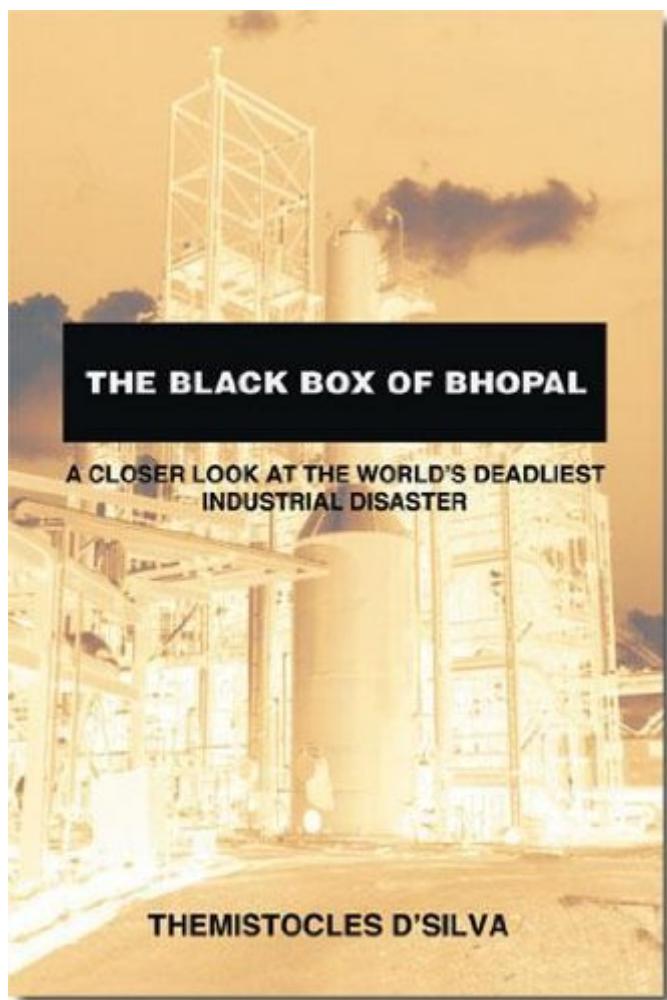


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The Black Box Of Bhopal: A Closer Look At The World's Deadliest Industrial Disaster



Synopsis

The Black Box of Bhopal is a thoroughly researched work that will challenge many of the public's assumptions about the disaster. Written by a former Union Carbide scientist who had unique access to important new documents and research analysis about the investigation, has provided unparalleled and surprising new insights into the construction and operation of the Bhopal plant and the internal workings of Union Carbide Corporation and its Indian subsidiary Union Carbide India Ltd. (UCIL). More importantly, it discloses the extensive correspondence between the Ministries of the Government and UCIL from the inception of the MIC plant. The author has considerable experience with MIC, and was also a member of the laboratory investigation team that determined the cause of the leak. Through extensive explanation of the plant's history, scientific studies of the residue from the tank, and critical evaluation of the subsequent government-controlled investigation, a clearer understanding of the events will be revealed that may surprise many readers. Supported with extensive bibliography and original documents, this book provides new insights, separates facts from fiction, exposes widely-accepted myths as baseless, and presents an unbiased picture of the real causes behind this tragic event.

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Customer Reviews

A good book that gives an inside perspective on the Bhopal gas tragedy. For someone like me who is not a chemist by training, some more detail would have helped in interpreting the data, especially the tables in the appendix. It would have also made it easier to understand and explain to someone else what he says the flaws in the official analysis are, especially because the author's views would be confronting a skeptical audience. It could also do with an update in light of more recent court verdicts.

This book is a must read for those interested in the world's worst peacetime industrial accident in India in 1984. I could not put it down! A gripping and enthralling story. Don't miss out on this one.

The Black Box of Bhopal, by Dr. Themistocles D'Silva, is a clear and comprehensive account of the Bhopal plant disaster, including the plant's origin, the gaseous decomposition and its analysis and social and legal events following. Dr. D'Silva was a member of the scientific team that investigated the event and analyzed the contents of fateful Tank # 610(along with Tank # 611, the "black boxes").From a series of over 500 experiments, the team was able to reproduce the exact decomposition on a laboratory scale and establish the initial conditions. D'Silva's conclusions, borne out by two independent studies, was that the gaseous emission resulted from introduction of a massive volume of water into the methyl isocyanate of Tank # 610. The implications of the water introduction are discussed. This book is unique as the first account of the incident by an organic chemist with both opportunity and background to uncover the event's causes and explain them in detail. Extensive footnoting of technical and press reports preserves the high readability of the text, never obscured by its extensive documentation. Dr. D'Silva is an internationally-recognized expert in carbamate and methyl isocyanate chemistry and his book is essential for an understanding of the Bhopal tragedy. David T. Manning, Ph.D.

D'Silva's account of the Bhopal MIC tragedy was clear and concise. The case is now closed. He informs us of the background of the building of the plant, the negotiations and contract with the Indian government, and critical decisions made that affected the profitability of the operations. Several circumstances (political upheaval, worker discontent, plant maintenance negligence, cost

cutting, imminent plant shutdown) conspired to create a recipe for disaster. The tragedy that followed the act of sabotage could have been averted if the proper safeguards were in place. D'Silva adeptly highlights crucial technical, business, legal, and political aspects of the rise and fall of Union Carbide India Limited's pesticide business, the release of methyl isocyanate that smothered the lives of so many innocent people, and the bungled aftermath. He conveys the conclusive results of the chemical investigation by Union Carbide Agricultural Products Company, Inc. of the MIC storage tank residue after the incident, previously published in peer-reviewed technical journals, in terms easily understood by the general public. D'Silva maintains a tone of compassion throughout his narrative. His many conversations with victims of the tragedy remind us of the huge moral cost and its unimaginable toll on human life and suffering. He should be very proud of his successful ten-year effort to get the true story told- it's one that's worth listening to. D'Silva will donate all proceeds from the book to charitable and educational institutions in India.

This book went through the details for this event. There is a good deal of information about the disaster from people who don't know anything about the plant operations. D'Silva knows this plant and gave an insider's view. It was exactly what I was looking for to see what the root causes were and how this kind of thing can be avoided in the future.

The author D'Silva worked for Union Carbide for 20 years and investigated the Bhopal case while employed by the company. This "thoroughly researched work" doesn't mention the Amnesty International Report on the disaster and carefully sidesteps issues that might imply Union Carbide's culpability. The 1984 Disaster killed more than 22,000 people according to Amnesty in a catastrophic gas leak in which safety systems completely failed at the plant. Regardless if he was paid by the company directly or just wants to defend the company out of loyalty, D'Silva bases much of his work on documents Union Carbide's defense used itself in court. He seems to want to shift as much blame as possible onto the Indian government and minimizes the numbers of dead and the ongoing health impacts of the leak. While the Indian government is far from blameless, Union Carbide India Limited was majority owned by the US Union Carbide Company when it gassed the city of Bhopal. If D'Silva believed advocates for the survivors such as Amnesty International are lying, he should have addressed this directly in the book. He doesn't explain why the company never presented a possible saboteur in court, if that was the cause of the disaster as UCC claimed. And he doesn't explain why Union Carbide refuses to show up to face criminal charges to this day. One is left to wonder if the evidence is so good, why doesn't UCC (now owned by Dow) prove it in

court?

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