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13 mars 2011

Les mensonges de TEPCO

Free translation from German

<https://www.spiegel.de/wissenschaft/technik/0,1518,750572,00.html>

Nuclear power plant Japanese operator Tepco

The cover-up company

Forged documents, fake repairs, fatal accidents : The disaster in Japan's Fukushima nuclear power plant is the culmination of a series of scandals in the operating company Tepco. The company wanted the disaster reactor allegedly shut down this month.

Tepco, the operator company of the Japanese disaster reactor, is not for the first time into the twilight due to the nuclear disaster. "Tokyo Electric Power Company, " as the company is fully named, is one of the largest companies in Japan - and full of affairs. The present catastrophe can now bring former scandals of the company into a new light.

Nine years ago, the then chief executive of Tepco had to leave the company, along with other managers. Japan's largest power producers had come under suspicion of having falsified maintenance documents in 29 cases. The leading employees took over the responsibility for the case with their resignation. 17 reactors, including the current disaster reactor, had to be taken from the network temporarily for inspections. As Tepco started up the reactors again in 2003, there were loud protests.

Against Tepco there were soon other accidents and allegations of falsified documents. In August 2004, four workers died when the Mihama nuclear power plant had a leak of hot steam - on the day of the 59th Anniversary of the atomic attacks over Nagasaki. In 2006, the group was accused to have falsified data on the cooling water temperature in their reactors in the years 1985 and 1988. The data were presented in 2005 for an inspection. In 2007 more fake data of the reactors of Tepco appeared. The power plants remained however in operation this time.

After the scandal went public, in 2007 Tepco postponed for one year the completion of new nuclear reactors in Fukushima-Daiichi, which lies close to the current disaster reactor. Actually, the new reactors should be operational in 2013 and 2014. The plan now seems to require correction.

Not only cover-up scandals, but also failures have shaped the history of the nuclear plant in

Fukushima, 200 kilometers northeast of Tokyo : Last, after an earthquake in June 2008, radioactive water was spilled from a tank in which spent fuel rods were stored. In 2006 radioactive steam came out of a tube, in 2002 cracks in water pipes were discovered. In 2000 a reactor had to be shut down because of a hole in a fuel rod. In 1997 and 1994 there were similar incidents in which some radioactivity was released.

The present catastrophe would have allegedly almost been prevented : The current reactor disaster in the Fukushima nuclear power plant should be shut down later this month, according to reports from an international nuclear power plant database. The Unit 1 of Fukushima-Daiichi pile should be stopped this month after about 40 years. A database of the Research centre "Nuclear Training Centre" (ICJT) in Slovenia says the "expected date of closure" was March 2011.

The nuclear power plant disaster could damage the business of the company for the long term, since many Japanese were critical of nuclear power already before the earthquake. The opposition to nuclear power is strong in Japan - which is also explained by the history : The country is traumatized by the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War II, in which the destructive power of nuclear power became clear.

Again and again the Japanese nuclear plants caused worries, in the recent years there have been several incidents. Because of its lack of raw materials, however, Japan declared itself to be reliant on nuclear power. The country wins about 30 percent of its electricity from the nation's 54 nuclear power plants.