

TWO ACCIDENTS / TWO DISPUTES OVER CAUSE

1979-1980 | A civilian reactor and a military missile | AL45 and AL58

Two nights challenged confidence in controlled nuclear technology. A power reactor was damaged in Pennsylvania; a missile exploded in an Arkansas silo. Peter David Beter saw intention in both events. This dossier follows his arguments alongside the documented technical context.

1

THREE MILE ISLAND

28 March 1979 / AL45

Lost cooling, misleading indications and operator decisions. Where does the established sequence end and the sabotage accusation begin?

2

DAMASCUS / TITAN II

18-19 September 1980 / AL58

A dropped tool component, leaking fuel and an explosion. Beter inserted an alleged Soviet cosmosphere into this sequence.

3

COMPARING THE SOURCES

The recorded narrative and the investigation record

Timelines, technical bulletins and weapons-system history allow each case to be assessed separately.

WHAT CONNECTS THE CASES, WHAT DISTINGUISHES THEM

TMI-2 was a civilian reactor; Titan II a military missile with a nuclear warhead. Neither event was a nuclear detonation. Comic scenes are new editorial reconstructions, not contemporary photographs or evidence of secret attacks.

SOURCES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

Audio Letter transcripts establish what Beter claimed. Contemporary documents, archives and institutional histories provide separate verification and context. Captions are editorial paraphrases; images are newly created illustrations. Full references are in Sources.pdf and Sources.txt attached to the PDF and included in the ZIP.

Sources: Sources.txt / source register and verification notes.

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EDITORIAL OVERVIEW - Beter's narrative does not establish the alleged secret operations.

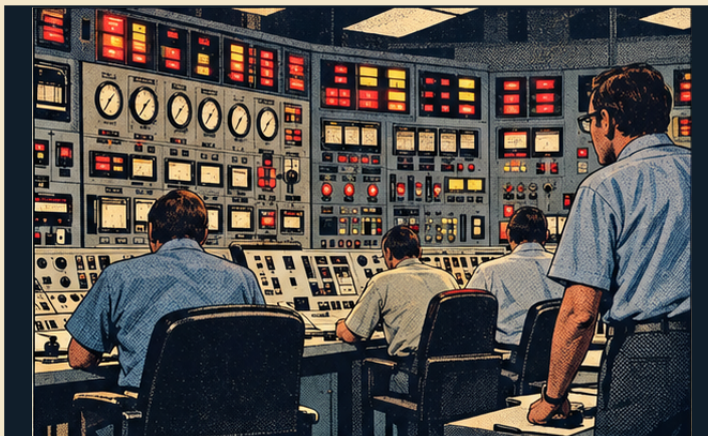
01 / A MORNING AT THREE MILE ISLAND

28 March 1979: a civilian reactor accident, not a nuclear detonation.



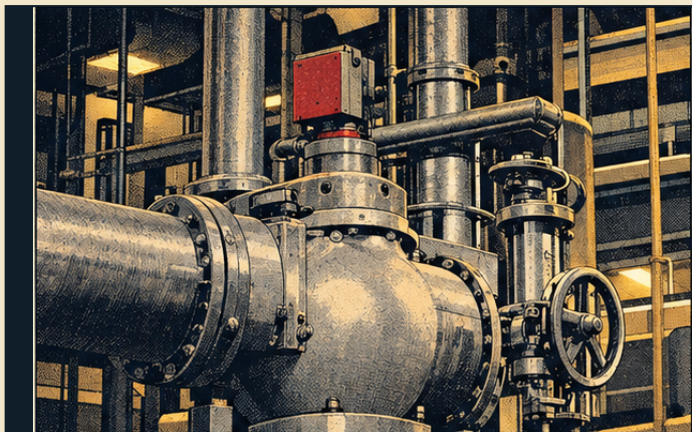
1 Before dawn

At about 4 a.m., TMI-2 near Middletown, Pennsylvania, lost main feedwater to its steam generators. The turbine and reactor shut down automatically. A routine-looking interruption became a severe accident.



2 Shutdown is not the end

Stopping the chain reaction does not instantly remove heat. Operators still had to maintain cooling. The distinction between reactor shutdown and safe heat removal is essential to understanding the unfolding crisis.



3 Two different problems

The auxiliary feedwater paths were initially closed off. Separately, a relief valve in the primary system stuck open. The first affected heat removal; the second allowed reactor coolant to escape.



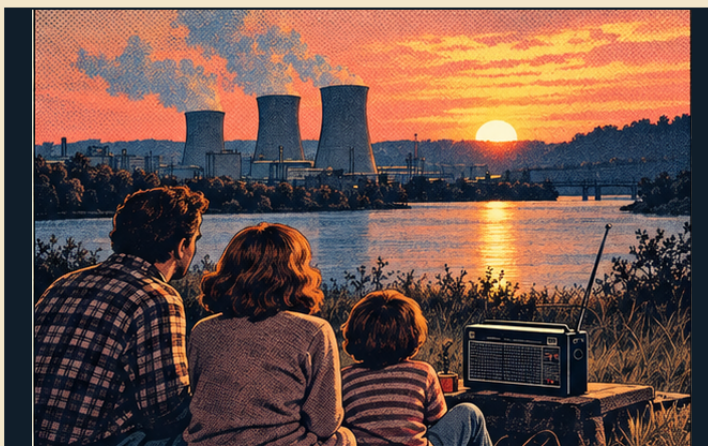
4 Misleading indications

The control-room indication did not reveal that the relief valve remained open. A high water level in the pressurizer was also mistaken for evidence that the reactor vessel contained enough water.



5 Decisions in confusion

Operators reduced emergency injection and stopped vibrating coolant pumps. NRC accounts explain these actions through misleading information and training deficiencies. The actions worsened cooling; intent is a separate question.



6 Outside the fence

The core was partly uncovered and severely damaged. Outside, residents faced uncertainty and conflicting information. A damaged reactor and public fear are documented; they do not by themselves identify a saboteur.

02 / BETER SEES AN INTENTIONAL ACT

AL45, 27 April 1979: an accusation built around a real emergency.



1 One month later

In AL45, Beter called Three Mile Island a domestic counterpart to Guyana. He connected the reactor crisis to his earlier Jonestown account, framing both as deliberate sacrifices of civilians.



2 Closed valves as a clue

For Beter, closed valves and interruptions of cooling looked too unlikely to be innocent. He inferred sabotage. The NRC also documented incorrect valve alignment, but treated it as a safety failure requiring investigation and correction.



3 The alleged objective

His proposed motive was political: frighten the public, close nuclear plants, deepen energy shortages and expand government control. He attributed the scheme to the hidden faction he called the Bolsheviks.



4 Fear becomes part of the story

Beter treated public alarm and confusing reports as elements of this larger design. They can also arise during a poorly understood emergency. The same visible consequence can fit more than one causal explanation.



5 The cultural backdrop

He linked the timing of The China Syndrome to the climate surrounding the accident. In his argument, a film and a disaster reinforced each other. A temporal association does not establish coordination.



6 What would establish intent?

An authenticated order, corroborated testimony or traceable interference could support an accusation. AL45 offers Beter's interpretation and unnamed sources, not independently verifiable proof of who ordered sabotage at TMI.

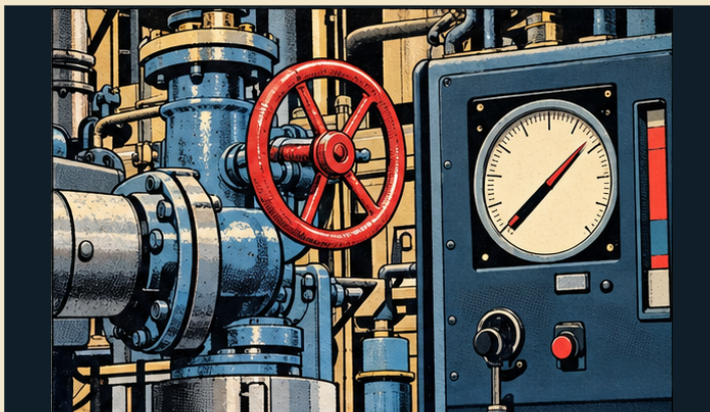
03 / WHAT THE INVESTIGATIONS CHANGED

Technical causes, public communication and the limits of a claim.



1 A sequence to reconstruct

Investigators worked from equipment behavior, operator actions and the event chronology. NRC's explanation combines component failures, design weaknesses and human error. It does not substantiate Beter's proposed political command behind the accident.



2 The interface mattered

April 1979 NRC bulletins addressed valve indications, coolant inventory and operating procedures. These records show that serious weaknesses were recognized publicly. A control signal and the actual position of a valve are not the same evidence.



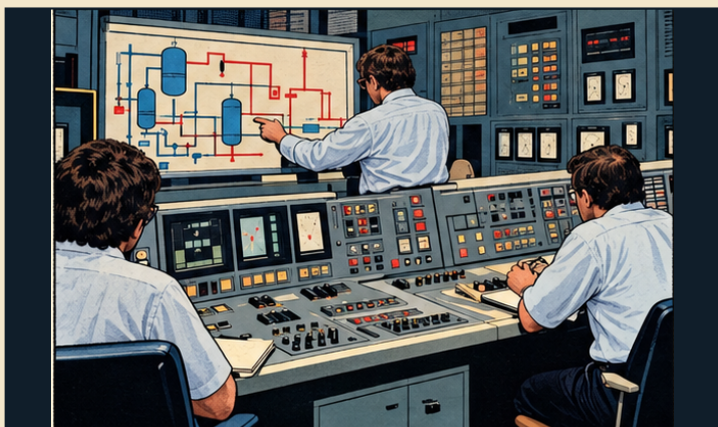
3 Reassurance and trust

Confused communication intensified the crisis beyond the plant. Subsequent reforms addressed emergency planning and coordination. Public distrust deserves explanation, but distrust alone cannot decide which account of the accident is correct.



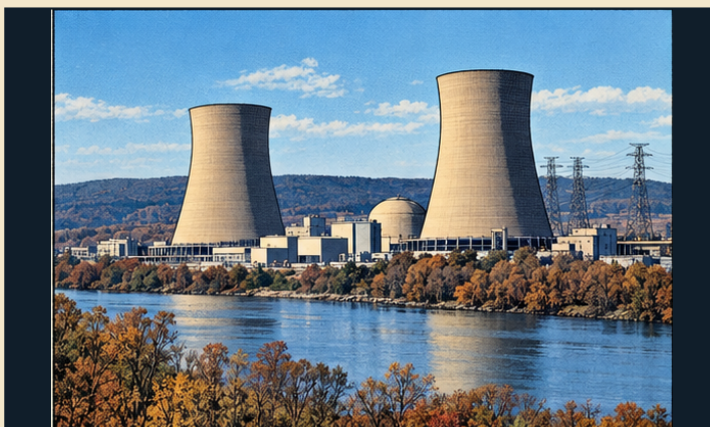
4 Measured consequences

NRC's review reports small radioactive releases and no detectable radiation-related health effects among workers or the public. That finding is distinct from the severe reactor damage. AL45's medical assertions are not a reliable health guide.



5 Learning from failure

NUREG-0585 recommended changes to plant design, operation and regulation. Training, procedures and control-room information became central lessons. A technical account can expose institutional failure without requiring a hidden attacker.

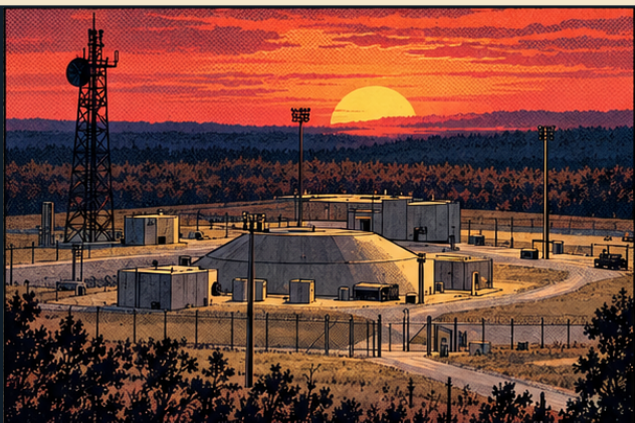


6 A case kept separate

TMI-2 was a civilian power reactor. The next case concerns a military missile with hazardous propellants and a nuclear warhead. Their common theme is the interpretation of failure, not a demonstrated common operation.

04 / THE NIGHT AT DAMASCUS

Arkansas, 18-19 September 1980: a Titan II accident.



1 A different nuclear system

Titan II missiles stood in underground silos as part of the American deterrent. Their storable liquid propellants allowed rapid readiness but created demanding maintenance hazards. Damascus was an operational military site, not a reactor.



2 Maintenance on 18 September

During work at Launch Complex 374-7 near Damascus, a socket fell from a wrench. The accident account identifies this dropped tool component as the start of the fuel leak.



3 A punctured tank

The socket struck and punctured the missile's fuel tank. This was a physical maintenance accident in the documented sequence. The illustration conveys that sequence without reproducing a weapon design or maintenance procedure.



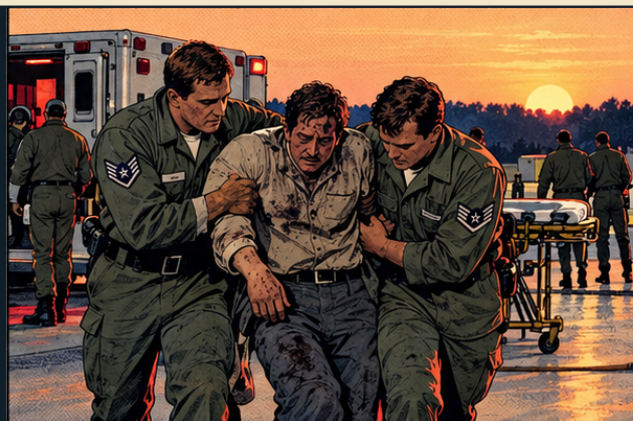
4 Hours of danger

Personnel withdrew, nearby residents were evacuated and specialists assessed the hazardous atmosphere. Responders faced a changing emergency involving leaking propellant. The long interval later became important to Beter's alternative account.



5 About 3 a.m., 19 September

An explosion destroyed the missile and wrecked the silo. This was a propellant explosion, not a nuclear detonation. The presence of a nuclear warhead made recovery urgent but did not make the blast nuclear.



6 The human cost

David Livingston died and other Air Force personnel were injured. The official accident summary records recovery of the warhead and no radioactive contamination. The loss was serious without an atomic blast.

05 / THE ATTACK IN BETER'S ACCOUNT

AL58, 30 September 1980: an alleged cosmosphere over Arkansas.

**1 An alternative cause**

Eleven days after the explosion, Beter described it as a Soviet first strike against a single American missile. In his narrative, the fuel leak created an opportunity to disguise a deliberate attack as an accident.

**2 Waiting above the site**

He claimed a Soviet cosmosphere waited high overhead while local people were warned and evacuated. No independently authenticated observation or operational record establishing that vehicle is supplied in AL58.

**3 The alleged beam**

Beter said a charged-particle beam struck the silo and triggered destruction of the missile. This picture visualizes his claim. It is not a recovered technical drawing, a forensic finding or evidence that such an attack occurred.

**4 An alleged new mission**

He also claimed Titan II had been converted for fractional-orbit attacks and fitted with a new cobalt warhead. These assertions belong to his strategic narrative. NPS records instead describe the deployed Titan II with a W53 warhead.

**5 Secrecy is not identification**

Beter interpreted official caution about the warhead as concealment of that alleged replacement. Secrecy about a nuclear weapon can explain limited public comment; it cannot identify a different warhead without supporting evidence.

**6 Two sounds, one inference**

He cited reports of successive blasts as support for a beam strike followed by a propellant explosion. Multiple sounds do not uniquely identify a weapon. Establishing that cause would require evidence beyond the auditory sequence.

06 / TWO CASES, TWO LEVELS OF EVIDENCE

Keep the events, the explanations and the missing evidence distinct.



1 Investigating the wreckage

The Damascus accident account begins with a puncture and a fuel leak. Beter adds a hidden external attacker. That additional claim requires additional evidence; it does not follow automatically from the scale of the destruction.



2 People before theories

Behind the strategic arguments were responders, plant workers and families facing real danger. Their experiences should not disappear behind spectacular reconstructions. These illustrations are respectful editorial scenes, not authenticated portraits of individual witnesses.



3 Risk without a secret strike

A nuclear arsenal can suffer dangerous accidents without a hostile beam. NPS places Titan II's service between 1963 and 1987. Its eventual retirement does not, by itself, prove Beter's alleged campaign against the missile force.



4 Not the same mechanism

At TMI, the question is how cooling failed and why operators acted as they did. At Damascus, it is how a maintenance accident developed into an explosion. A common political interpretation does not merge the two mechanisms.



5 What the tapes preserve

AL45 and AL58 preserve Beter's contemporary interpretation of frightening events. Their historical value as records of his thinking is separate from whether his sabotage and cosmosphere allegations can be independently verified.



6 Leave the record open to checking

The source register identifies the tapes, technical notices and institutional histories used here. Readers can trace each comparison. A vivid image helps tell the story; it never substitutes for a document or a tested explanation.

TIMELINE / EVENTS AND CLAIMS

Documented events are distinguished from dates in Beter’s narrative.

DATE	EVENT / SOURCE	SIGNIFICANCE / CLAIM
1963	Titan II enters service	NPS: start of operational service.
28 Mar 1979	TMI-2 accident	Loss of cooling and core damage.
5 / 11 Apr 1979	NRC bulletins	79-05A and 79-06: early technical lessons.
27 Apr 1979	Beter’s AL45	Allegation of politically directed sabotage.
Oct 1979	NUREG-0585	Proposed changes to safety policy.
18 Sep 1980	Leak at Damascus	Dropped socket punctures fuel tank.
19 Sep 1980	Titan II explosion	Death and injuries; no nuclear detonation.
30 Sep 1980	Beter’s AL58	Alleged cosmosphere attack and secret warhead.
1987	Titan II service ends	NPS: end of operational period.

AN EVENT DOES NOT AUTOMATICALLY PROVE AN EXPLANATION

Both accidents are documented. Beter’s assertion of intent must be assessed separately: accurate details do not by themselves establish his proposed cause, actors or political plan.

Sources: Sources.txt / Sources.pdf — complete source register attached.