

## **Bhopal: Blueprint:Endplan**

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1. Bhopal: capital of Madhya Pradesh, India, population 1,800,000. 'City of Lakes', location of Asia's largest mosque and the Union Carbide India Limited pesticide plant, cause of the world's worst industrial disaster.

2. Blueprint: cyanotype process used in duplication of engineering and architectural plans.

The Madhya Pradesh Government official number of fatalities was 3,787. Other Indian Government agencies have since calculated the total at more than 15,000. Perhaps between 100,000 and 200,000 people still live with gas-related disabilities. The rickshaw driver who drove me to the plant (in a densely populated area, just north of the railway station) was eight on that night – 2nd/3rd December 1984 when 28 tonnes of lethal gas rolled across the centre of Bhopal. He recalled waking with excruciating pain in his eyes and being rushed to a chaotic hospital by relatives. Countless family members still live with the effects of that night.

Tank 610 - containing 42 tons of methyl isocyanate (MIC) – was rapidly filled by water late on December 2nd, causing the temperature of the tank to rise to more than 200°C.

Union Carbide downplayed the incidents of phosgene leaks (some involving fatalities) in 1981, 1982 and multiple MIC leaks in 1982, 1983 and early 1984. Indian authorities warned of the probability of a major incident from 1979 onwards. Visiting US experts in 1981 warned Union Carbide of the potential for a 'runaway reaction' in the MIC plant.

The MIC tank alarms had not worked for four years and there was only one manual back-up system as opposed to the four relied on in US plants. The flare tower and gas scrubber had been inoperable for five months prior to the disaster but in any event the scrubber was designed to handle only one quarter of the pressure which had built up in the tank and the tower one quarter of the volume of gas. Carbon steel valves, which corrode when in contact with acid were used to save money. Water sprays were set too low and could not reach the gas.

The US parent company (Union Carbide) argued that this was a Badiouan 'event' or 'rupture', without precedent, not easily anticipated and certainly not planned. But perhaps it had more the quality of an 'endplan', - a destiny born of contempt for the poor, distant, and unknown - an outcome written in the blueprints, recoverable after the event through these digital cyanotypes made in 2010.

3. Endplan. Evidence recoverable after the event and which reveals the event to be immanent in the blueprint.