# LOCAL COMMUNITY VS. NATIONAL INDUSTRY: THE TMI AND SANTA BARBARA PROTESTS COMPARED*

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*Comparing two examples of local protest--one a failure and the other a success--this paper shows the importance of the interaction between local groups and national social movements in predicting the outcomes of struggles pitting communitites against established industries. A critical difference between the unsuccessful attempt of Santa Barbara activists to prevent the resumption of oil drilling after the 1969 spill, on the one hand, and the successful efforts of TMI residents to block the restart of the reactor adjacent to the one damaged in the 1979 nuclear accident, on the other, is the maturity of the national environmental movement. Focusing primarily on the relatively successful TMI protest, the paper emphasizes the importance of the national antinuclear movement's resources in forcing resourseful actors (individual and organizational) into adversarial positions vis-à-vis the offending utility.*

It is becoming increasingly common for local communities throughout the U.S. to find themselves involved in confrontations with industry and/or government organizations over issues such as technological accidents (Molotch, 1970; Walsh, 1981) or hazardous waste (Levine, 1982). The federal government's current plans to ship radioactive fuel away from nuclear reactors to centralized waste sites will probably involve numerous additional

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communities--along transportation routes as well as near the sites themselves--is such conflicts (Resnikoff, 1983). Which are the relevant factors determining the outcomes of these confrontations? Which are critical?

Social scientists have suggested various answers to these questions. Some emphasize the centrality of individual and group discontent as conditions promoting the emergence of social movements (Gurr, 1970; Smelser, 1963), but until recently little systematic attention has been given to the correlates of protest movement success. Contemporary perspectives focus on social networks, organizational variables, and a variety of internal as well as external resources in explaining the development and outcomes of social movements (Tilly, 1978; Jenkins, 1983). The centrality of the protest group's organizational characteristics and strategies in accounting for its success has been emphasized by Gamson (1975). Goldstone (1980), after realanyzing Gamson's data, argued that organizational characterstics and strategic considerations are essentially irrelevant because protest movements which do not attempt to displace their antagonists eventually succeed if they survive until a societal crisis emerges. Other analysts insist on the importance of mass defiance (Piven and Cloward, 1977), especially in the case of poor people's protests.

At the risk of oversimplification for the sake of summarizing, we might say that social movements analysts have shifted their foci, over recent years, from the individual (Gurr, 1970), to the group (Gamson, 1975), to the societal (Goldstone, 1980; Tilly, 1978) level of analysis. Contemporary resource mobilization perspectives emphasize "macro-scopic issues of the organization of movements and their nesting in larger societal processes" (Zald, 1979).

The reciprocity of influence processes between and among levels of analysis are usually ignored by social scientists (Collins, 1981; Jenkins, 1983), even though most realize that the real world involves complex interactions among individual (micro), organizational (mezzo), and societal (macro) levels. This paper compares two protests--one a failure, the other a success--to show that the interaction between local groups and national social movements, as well as their combined influence on political elites and regulatory agencies, need more systematic consideration. After briefly summararizing the experiences of Santa Barbarans who failed in their efforts to prevent a resumption of oil drilling off their coast in the wake of a series of oil spills (Molotch, 1970; Easton, 1972), the paper focuses on the relatively successful protest efforts following the Three Mile Island (TMI) nuclear power plant accident.

## The Santa Barbara Oil Spill[1]

After having been unsuccessful in their long struggle to prevent offshore drilling, the citizens of Santa Barbara were confronted, on January 29, 1969, with a massive oil spill from Union Platform A. Frightened and angered by the accident, the affluent community mobilized its resources in an attempt to prevent further drilling in the Santa Barbara Channel. The emergent citizens' organization, GOO (Get Oil Out), collected more than 100,000 names on a petition, sent to state and federal officials, demanding an end to the channel drilling. GOO also sponsored rallies, directed legislative lobbying, and initiated court actions in pursuit of their goals.

Unsuccessful in their efforts to prevent the resumption of offshore drilling, GOO and its supporters attributed their failure to the symbiotic relationships between and among officials in the large oil companies and the federal regulatory agencies, state and federal legislators "in the pockets of big oil," and academics whose research budgets depended on the same oil companies. The vulnerability of the national press to manipulation by big oil and its corporate supporters was also noted (Molotch and Lester, 1975). The presidential committee appointed by then-President Nixon to investigate the accident was allegedly headed by a "servant of Oil" (Molotch, 1970:344).

The affluent and mobilized Santa Barbara citizen activists were unable to have their collective voice heard when they challenged the corporate interests of the oil companies.[2] Molotch (1970:345ff.) draws out some of the more pessimistic implications of these phenomena for the pluralist theory of U.S. democracy. The TMI story, however, is a strikingly similar one in many respects with a very different outcome. After summarizing the response to this Pennsylvania accident, we will return to a comparison of the two phenomena.

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1 This summary is derived from more extended accounts of Molotch (1970) and Easton (1972). It should be noted that both the Santa Barbara and TMI area communities had been assured by industry officials, prior to the accidents, that such events had negligible probabilities of occurring.

2 Easton (1972) suggests that the Santa Barbara protest was a major precipitating factor for the environmental movement of the 1970s.

## The TMI Accident and Response

More than 150,000 people from within a 15-mile radius of TMI evacuated their homes during the initial emergency period at Unit 2 reactor in late March, 1979 (Flynn, 1979). When they returned, local protest organizations formed in Middletown, Newberry Township, York, Harrisburg, Lancaster, and numerous other surrounding communities (Walsh, 1981; 1983a; 1983b).

The immediate goal of these social movement organizations (SMOs) was to prevent the utility, General Public Utilities (GPU), from bringing Unit 1--a second nuclear reactor which was down for routine refueling at the time of the accident--back on line. The Lancaster community, with a drinking water intake approximately ten miles downstream from TMI, was also determined not to allow GPU to dump any of the hundreds of thousands of gallons of radioactive water from the accident into the Susquehanna River. As the struggle progressed, the local SMOs became just as concerned with monitoring the safe cleanup of Unit 2 as with preventing Unit 1 from coming back on line.

Just as in the previously mentioned oil spill response (Molotch, 1979; Easton, 1972), these communities used public meetings, rallies, and petition drives in their efforts to have their voices heard. The focus of attention was on the federal and state elected officials as well as on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). One after another local community passed resolutions against any Unit 1 restart, but GPU publicized its own hopes to have Unit 1 back into operation by early summer (1979). As things eventually turned out, Unit 1 has not restarted (October, 1983) and is not expected to de so before 1985 (if ever).[3] How did this relatively successful protest develop?

The national antinuclear movement immediately portrayed the TMI accident as the fulfillment of its dire prophecies. Providing an invaluable source of ideological as well as technical support for local protest groups. Educational films such as "Incident at Browns' Ferry" and Hollywood's "The China Syndrome" had predicted a major nuclear accident. The national movement's organizing skills and technical talent were also available. On

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3 The delay has been caused by a variety of factors, as will be noted below, but today's (October 8, 1983) Harrisburg Patriot includes a frontpage story with the headline "Decision on TMI-1 May Be Years Off." The story opens: "The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission yesterday said its decision on whether to allow reactivation of the Unit 1 reactor at Three Mile Island Nuclear Power Station may not be made until mid-1985 or later."

May 6, 1979, for example, less than two months after the beginning of the accident, a national rally was organized in Washington, D.C., where an estimated 200,000 people showed their support for the TMI residents by according them places of honor. The Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS), an elite group of nuclear power critics, also contributed in numerous ways to citizen protest groups' efforts. A UCS letter, including a strong technical criticism of the NRC's safety program, appeared in the Washington Post, for example, while many TMI area residents were still away from their homes (April 8, 1979).

By late May, 1979, citizen groups from the TMI area were pressuring their state and federal representatives to take public positions against a Unit 1 restart. Politicians who appeared at open meetings heard story after story about the confusion and terror associated with the evacuation experience. GPU officials publicly discussed their hopes of having Unit 1 returned to service within the next few months, despite the anti-restart resolutions adopted by an increasing number of local communities. Local citizens involved in a direct action group expected, in early June, to have to take considerable personal risks in the face of GPU's attempt to restart Unit 1 (Walsh, 1981). The NRC, although being subjected to stinging criticisms by the Kemeny Commission which was conducting its investigation during this period, remained mute on the restart issue.

A critical development in the TMI story occurred, in late June, 1979, when Governor Richard Thornburgh instructed the state's Justice Department to petition the NRC for a suspension of GPU's operating licence. Pressured by local protest groups as well as national antinuclear spokespersons, Thornburgh intervened when it appeared that the NRC would remain on the sidelines and allow GPU to precipitate a massive citizen protest by restarting Unit 1. The increasingly damaging evidence against both GPU and the NRC emerging from the documents of the special commission established by then-President Carter to investigate the accident--under the direction of John Kemeny--also probably influenced Thornburgh's decision.[4] The governor listed a series of conditions, including the final reports of the Kemeny Commission and other official investigations into the

4 The Kemeny Commission held a few hearings in the TMI area which promoted the cause of local protest organizations. The latter published the most damaging evidence from the minutes of these hearings in their newsletters and also recruited activist members from the audience (see Walsh, 1981; Walsh and Warland, 1983).

causes of the Unit 2 accident, which should be satisfied before the NRC might consider a restart of Unit 1.

The importance of this intervention by Governor Thornburgh in shifting the power alignments in this struggle is difficult to exaggerate. The NRC was in no position to defy Thornburgh, especially in view of the serious criticisms it was then receiving from testimony being presented the Kemeny Commission regarding its lack of effective regulation of the nuclear industry. Henceforth, the considerable resources of the State of Pennsylvania could be viewed as shifting significantly towards the opponents' side.[5]

In response to Thornburgh's intervention, the NRC suspended GPU's licence to operate TMI-1 on July 2, 1979, pending the outcome of a public hearing and review process. Although leaving the NRC with more power to decide the fate of Unit 1 than antinuclear groups would have preferred in other circumstances, the scheduled hearings meant that any resumption of Unit 1 operations would be delayed for at least a year to allow for preparations, hearings and decision-making.

These Unit 1 restart hearings provided the opportunity for local, state, and national critics of nuclear power to mobilize their resources. The fact that, for the first time in the history of the U.S. nuclear power industry, an already-commissioned and operating nuclear reactor was not being permitted to operate, pending the outcome of the hearings, provided national attention for a serious debate. GPU and the NRC now would have to satisfy the public that TMI was safe to operate--rather than public intervenors having to try to convince the NRC, as was usually the case, that serious safety questions existed. Subsequent events would show that neither GPU nor the NRC could withstand public scrutiny.

Most observers expected the NRC-directed restart hearings to be a sham, with a pro-GPU decision assured from an agency commonly viewed as a rubber stamp for the nuclear industry. The anti-TMI citizen groups intended to use their NRC testimony in subsequent civil court appeals of the expected pro-GPU decision. Unforseen events, however, significantly modified these predicted outcomes.

The first phase of the hearings occurred between October,

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5 This is not to suggest that Thornburgh, or most other Pennsylvania politicians, have ever been viewed as overt allies by protest group leaders in the local comunities. On the contrary, the latter tend to view most elected officials as political opportunists who must be coerced into adopting anti-TMI positions.

1980, and June, 1981. During that time, as summarized in Figure 1, below, two local SMOs received favorable rulings against the NRC from civil courts regarding various issues associated with the accident. Such decisions, in addition to encouraging citizen protestors, also served notice to the NRC that its final ruling on restart might be successfully challenged in civil court. During the same period, the NRC also suffered diminished credibility deriving from revelations of public deception by

| Year | Month | Event |
|---|---|---|
| 1979 | May | Antinuclear rally in Washington, D.C. |
| | June | PA Governor demands the delay of TMI-1 restart by NRC |
| | July | NRC suspends GPU licence to operate TMI-1 |
| | August | NRC orders public hearings on TMI-1 restart issue |
| | October | Report of President's Commission (Kemeny) |
| | November | National funders assist local protest groups in TMI area |
| 1980 | January | Rogovin report says TMI within 30 minutes of meltdown |
| | March | Appeals court rules in favor of Lancaster protest group |
| | | GPU files suit against reactor manufacturer (B&W) |
| | May | Pennsylvania PUC removes TMI-1 from rate base |
| | June | Heidelberg (Germany) scientists criticize krypton venting |
| | August | Congressional panel criticizes bomb-testing deceptions of 1950s |
| | October | TMI-1 restart hearings begin, directed by NRC |
| | November | Appeals court rules in favor of Middletown protest group |
| | December | GPU files suit against NRC |
| 1981 | January | U.S. Supreme Court rules in favor of Lancaster protest group |
| | May | NRC criticizes GPU cleanup efforts at Unit 2 |
| | June | TMI-1 restart hearings (phase 1) end |
| | | GPU credit cut by banks |
| | July | NRC discovers evidence of GPU operator cheating on examinations |
| | November | Restart hearings (phase 2) reopen on cheating allegations |
| | December | TMI-1 steam tubes discovered to be leaking |
| 1982 | January | Appeals court rules in favor of Middletown protest group |
| | February | Pennsylvania Council of Churches opposes TMI-1 restart |
| | April | Milhollin report to NRC urges prosecution of GPU re: Cheating |
| | May | Three counties in TMI area vote 2-1 against restart (referendum) |
| | November | NRC challanged by TMI residents at restart meeting |
| | December | NRC postpones own decision on restart |
| 1983 | January | Out of court settlement of GPU vs. Babcock and Wilcox suit |
| | February | UCS pressures Thornburgh to block TMI-1 restart |
| | March | TMI "Whistleblowers" criticize TMI-2 cleanup procedures |
| | May | Congressional hearings held on Whistleblowers' charges vs. GPU |
| | June | Pennsylvania Governor again opposes TMI-1 restart |
| | July | Restart hearings (phase 3) on TMI-1 to be scheduled |

**Figure 1:** Selective Summary of Non-Local Events Contributing to the Successful TMI Protest.

its predecessor agency, the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC). Stories about AEC's repression of evidence concerning the high radiation doses received by humans and animals during the 1950s and 1960s nuclear resting were fiven prominent coverage by local newspapers, with the obvious implication that NRC reports about radiation doses from the TMI accident were suspect.

Evidence of growing rifts between the NRC and GPU began to surface a few months after the Unit 1 restart hearings began. In December, 1980, GPU filed a U.S. $4 billion lawsuit against the NRC, alleging negligence by the latter in passing on information from a previous plant malfunction strikingly similar to TMI's. In May, 1981, NRC officials publicly criticized the GPU cleanup efforts, claiming that the Unit 1 restart was receiving priority over the Unit 2 cleanup by the utility.[6]

The delayed restart of TMI-1, and especially its removal from the utility's rate base by the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PUC), prompted banks participating in the GPU revolving credit agreement to reduce the credit limit by U.S. $10 million in the summer of 1981. Beset by challenges from local protest groups, the state's PUC, the NRC, and, finally, the banks, GPU officials were relieved to see the Unit 1 restart hearings end in June, 1981, and expected a favorable ruling on that issue from the federal agency. Utility officials told the press they looked forward to the restart of Unit 1 by the end of that year.

Within a month of the closing of the hearings, however, the NRC reported evidence of widespread cheating during a federal licencing test of GPU reactor operators and senior operators in April, 1981. New hearings were initiated, under the direction of Administrative Judge Gary L. Milhollin, serving as master to the NRC's Atomic Safety and Licensing Board, in November, 1981. By April, 1982, Milhollin had issued his report which urged federal prosecution of two shift supervisors for cheating and chided the GPU management for failing "in its responsibility to instill in the operations staff a proper attitude toward the NRC examination." This cheating case was, of course, most

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6 Some observers felt that the NRC's official position as arbiter of the restart decision allowed individuals within the federal agency with misgivings about the safety of nuclear reactors to have theirs voices heard. Victor Gilinsky and Peter Bradford, two of the five NRC commissioners, had shown themselves sympathetic to the concerns of local residents since shortly after the accident, for example, and lower ranking staffers also impressed some protest leaders as sincere in their concern for citizen safety.

damaging to the already low credibility of the utility, but the defective steam tubes discovered in the Unit 1 reactor during December, 1981, and January, 1982, were even more serious threats to the proposed restart. The thousands of leaking steam tubes introduced a further delay which meant that Unit I could not restart before fall, 1982, at the earliest.

Voters in three counties around TMI were given the opportunity to register their own views toward the proposed restart when the question was put on a nonbinding referendum in May, 1982. Despite the objections of Governor Thornburgh, who insisted that the issue was too complex to be decided by the public, area newspapers, religious leaders and some union officials joined protest leaders in leading the opposition. The final vote was approximately 2-1 against a Unit 1 restart.

As long as the reactor was not on line, opponents felt that time was on their side. Local organizers frequently said that "given sufficient time, GPU will continue to shoot itself in the foot." The operator cheating scandal as well as the leaking steam tubes were cited as examples. Then, in March, 1983, three persons associated with the Unit 2 cleanup operations publicly alleged that GPU was taking economic shourtcuts. Although GPU tried to discredit the "whistleblowers," as might be expected, subsequent investigations by the NRC showed that the critics had only touched the surface of wrongdoing by the utility in the cleanup procedures.

Despite its public announcement, in the autumn of 1982, that it would make a restart decision public not later than December 10, 1982, the NRC has postponed its decision until 1984 or 1985 (see footnote 3, above). The defective steam tubes and other "hardware" issues were mentioned as part of the reason for the delay, but "ongoing federal investigations of GPU Nuclear's management competence and integrity" were the main reasons given. Another seemingly important reason for the NRC's reluctance to make a decision was a public meeting in Harrisburgh, on November 9, 1982, attended by all five NRC commissioners. Approximately 1,800 people packed into a high school auditorium where selected speakers were permitted three minutes to comment on the TMI-1 restart decision which was to be announced the next month, according to the NRC's own timetable. The speakers were overwhelmingly opposed to any restart, and some even threatened to occupy TMI as well as the NRC offices in Washington, D.C., if GPU was given permission to restart Unit 1. Prolonged cheering and fistwaving by the audience made it clear that these speakers had widespread public support. Had the commissioners left that meeting where a few of them were visibly shoked at the intensity of opposition,

and then issued a restart permission within a month, their action would have been interpreted as overt defiance of the public's preferences in the TMI area. In early December, a spokesperson for the NRC said the promised decision would be delayed because of questions about the reactors' ability to withstand earthquakes. The earthquake issue had never been considered a factor before, and local activists were convinced that the show of public opposition was more critical than the federal officials would admit.

In its attempt to spread blame for the accident, GPU initiated multi-billion dollar lawsuits against both the NRC and the Unit 2 manufacturer, Babcock and Wilcox. The latter case was providing a forum for accusations and countercharges which only provided further valuable information for the antinuclear forces when both sides decided to settle out of court, in January, 1983. Local protest groups are currently using the transcripts from those proceedings to prepare their own appeals in the event that the NRC rules in GPU's favor.

New problems, however, continue to surface for GPU. In early October, 1983, the U.S. Justice Department announced that they expected an indictment against GPU from a federal grand jury on charges that the company falsified data concerning a leaky valve, shortly before the 1979 accident, to avoid having to shut down the Unit 2 reactor for repairs.

Summarizing and simplifying this TMI account, the suspension of the GPU licence by the NRC shifted the burden of proof to the shoulders of the supporters of nuclear power. Serious doubts raised by antinuclear critics regarding the safety, cleanness, and economics of the technology were given support by the accident and its aftermath. The restart hearings provided a forum for those doubts to be entered on the record. Rifts between the utility, reactor manufacturers, and federal regulators emerged under pressures from lossely coordinated protest groups and the media. These rifts encouraged individuals and groups--both within and outside "the atomic brotherhood" (Ford, 1982)--to reveal what they knew about previous coverups and other wrongdoing. This mutual finger-pointing was encouraged, of course, by antinuclear critics and the mass media.

The TMI protest has been relatively successful, although most local citizens will not regard their struggle as successful unless the NRC rules that neither nuclear facility may ever reopen. Santa Barbarans, on the other hand, were unable to prevent oil drilling in their channel from resuming within a few months of the 1969 spill. What are the main reasons for this difference in outcomes?

## Protest Phenomena Compared

There were numerous similarities between the two protests. An accident associated with a major industrial technology regulated by a federal agency precipitated community mobilization processes in both instances. Critics, in each case, charged that the federal agencies responsible for regulating the industries were ineffective, if not outright promoters of oil (Department of the Interior) and nuclear power (Nuclear Regulatory Commission). Both accidents threatened the lifestyles and routines of local residents, and were also serious enough to warrant a special visit by the incumbent president as well as his appointment of an "elite" committee to investigate the causes and make recommendations. Local residents, in both areas, formed organizations to eliminate the offending industry, using petitions, litigation, legislative lobbying, and nonviolent civil disobedience.

Because only one protest succeeded, however, the differences between the two are especially interesting. The nuclear accident was perceived as more threatening to human life than the oil spill, suggesting that perhaps higher levels of discontent in the TMI communities was a critical variable. The Santa Barbara community, however, had more internal resources available during the early months of the struggle (see Molotch, 1970; Walsh, 1981), and contemporary analysts emphasize such structural variables over discontent and other "mental" ones (Gamson, 1975; Oberschall, 1973; McCarthy and Zald, 1977). The evidence summarized above suggests that neither discontent nor internal community resources were critical in explaining the differences in protest outcomes.

The political environments surrounding the two protests were different in that the oil spill preceeded--indeed, helped precipitate (Easton, 1972)--the environment movement whereas the nuclear accident occurred at the zenith of the same movement's antinuclear phase. The maturity of the antinuclear movement as well as the intervention of state officials after the TMI accident were critical differences between the two citizen protests. Many of the other differences between the two accidents, listed in Figure 2, can be attributed to their timing vis-a-vis the national environmental movement. Even the intervention by the Pennsylvania governor cannot be viewed as an event independent of pressures from local as well as national levels of the antinuclear movement. A few members of the Kemeny Commission, for example, were somewhat sympathetic to the environmental movement, and they were influential in helping write the final report which was quite critical of GPU,

the nuclear industry, and the NRC. The national scope of the antinuclear movement at the time of the TMI accident also assured widespread support from around the country for the local protest organizations. It would also be sociologically naive to imagine that the differential responses of the courts to the two protests were unrelated to the variations in political environment--not only because antinuclear legal help was more widespread and better prepared for the nuclear accident, but also because the judges themselves are social beings.

Despite the considerable resources of the Santa Barbara community which were mobilized to challenge "big oil," drilling in the Santa Barbara Channel resumed within a few months after the initial accident. The local community's lack of legal and legislative support at both the state and federal levels were critical (Molotch, 1970; Easton, 1972). The national press also neglected the plight of the Santa Barbarans after the initial accident (Molotch and Lester, 1975). The national antinuclear movement, on the other hand, was just waiting for a serious power plant accident to occur, and within weeks had organized a major rally in the nation's capital.[7]

| | | Santa Barbara Oil Spill | TMI Nuclear Accident |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | local community profile | | |
| | a socioeconomic status | upper-middle class | middle class |
| | b pre-accident political climate | very conservative | very conservative |
| | c pre-accident attitudes | anti-oil | neutral/pro-nuclear |
| 2 | immediate impact of accident | damage to beaches, reduced tourism | evacuation, economic losses |
| 3 | national movement assistance | negligible | significant |
| 4 | scope of protest | primarily local | local, state, national |
| 5 | immediate federal response | appoint DuBridge Panel | appoint Kemeny Commission |
| 6 | thrust of federal committee findings | support oil | critical of nuclear |
| 7 | state government response | hands off | interventionist |
| 8 | regulatory agency response | resume drilling | hearings on restart |
| 9 | courts' response | support oil | challenge nuclear |
| 10 | outcome of protest efforts | failure | success |

**Figure 2:** Comparison Between Selected Aspects of the Two Accidents.

Thornburgh's intervention, in June, 1979, forced the NRC's hand and pressured this federal agency to address some of the issues raised by the antinuclear forces. Had GPU been permitted to return Unit 1 to service in the wake of the accident, major demonstrations in the TMI area would probably have drawn antinuclear activists from around the nation and across the world. Ronald Reagan, as governor of California during the oil spill, did nothing to support Santa Barbarans in their attempts to prevent the drilling, and he had little reason to be concerned about massive outside support for that community. However complex Thornburgh's motivation,[8] his pressures on the NRC forced the agency into the beginning of an adversarial relationship with GPU which evolved into a problem of considerable concern for the utility.[9]

The NRC's suspension of GPU's license to operate Unit 1 shifted the burden of proof, ever so slightly at first, to the shoulders of the supporters of nuclear power. Public attention was focused on the utility and its federal regulators after serious doubts had been raised by antinuclear critics regarding the

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7 This is not to suggest that TMI citizens were able to rely on outside help from the national antinuclear movement in mobilizing local resources and directing the struggle against GPU. To the contrary, many local protest organizers were disappointed after the May 6th Rally when they found themselves on their own to organize, decide on litigation strategies, and write funding proposals to environmental agencies. The point, however, is that valuable outside resources were available to the TMI citizens' groups, because of the maturity of the antinuclear movement, which were not available to the Santa Barbara residents.

8 The fact that the TMI accident occurred close enough to the personal residences of state officials living in and around Harrisburg, the capital, may have had some influence on Thornburgh and his administration in prompting them to intervene. Sacramento, the California capital, on the other hand, is hundreds of miles north of Santa Barbara.

9 Few observers expected the NRC restart hearings to present a serious challenge for GPU. In preparing for these hearings, the protest groups were following the law which gave the NRC jurisdiction in such matters. The groups intended to use the civil courts after the presumed restart permission was given by the NRC. As mentioned in the paper, operator cheating, defective steam tubes, GPU "whistle blowers," and an increasing body of damaging evidence against GPU pushed the NRC into more and more of an adversarial position.

safety, cleanness, and economics of commercial nuclear power. The restart hearings provided a forum for entering those doubts on the public record while also preventing GPU from restarting Unit 1 and presenting the public with a fait accompli. The intrinsic weaknesses of GPU's nuclear facility as well as rifts between and among organizations within "the atomic brotherhood" (Ford, 1982) began to emerge under the pressures of public scrutiny.

The restart hearings did not, by themselves, prevent GPU from returning Unit 1 to service. Local protest organizations were, in fact, convinced that the NRC was ready to issue a restart permission at the conclusion of the hearings, but then GPU contributed to its own demise as revelations of operator cheating and leaky steam tubes surfaced. The hard work and perseverence of the protesters has also been a critical factor in preventing any restart, but the Santa Barbara protesters were, presumably, ready and willing to work just as hard to prevent the resumption of the oil drilling. Without questioning the importance of citizen initiatives, neutralized elites, and target vulnerability, this paper has emphasized the centrality of national movement maturity in accounting for the success of local protests.

## Summary and Reflections

Both the oil spill and the nuclear accident were examples of hazard situations created by major industries regulated by government agencies. The citizen protest efforts, however, were not equally successful in preventing the industries from resuming normal operations in the wake of these technological threats to local populations.

At the time of the Santa Barbara oil spill, the victim communities had no existing national network of "anti-oil" organizations ready to support local citizens in pressuring state, federal and industry officials to suspend drilling in the Santa Barbara Channel. Despite their relatively high socioeconomic status--and corresponding political leverage--Santa Barbarans were left alone in the struggle against the oil industry. Drilling resumed within months, and local activists could only console themselves with the knowledge that their efforts had been a major precipitant in the emergence of the environmental movement of the 1970s (Easton, 1972).

The TMI accident, on the other hand, took place after the antinuclear branch of the environmental movement had matured. There were public interest lawyers specializing in antinuclear

issues, the UCS scientists and academicians willing to provide expert legal and technical assistance to protest groups, funding organizations, and a variety of other support networks for aggrieved citizen groups. The antinuclear movement also contributed to the preparation of a receptive atmosphere among state and federal officials, judges, and the general public.

To emphasize the importance of the timing and interaction between local protest organizations and national social movements is *not* to advocate monocausal explanations of successful insurgency (see Walsh, 1978). Without the creative organizing and enlightened decision making of local protest leaders, the resources of the national antinuclear movement could not have been channeled into the TMI protest (Walsh, 1981; 1983). Pressures from area residents as well as from national antinuclear groups helped account for Thornburgh's critical intervention which led, eventually, to a sometimes bitter adversarial relationship between GPU and the NRC. The internal weaknesses of GPU--especially as revealed in the cheating scandal, defective steam tubes, and cleanup challenges--were only revealed as a result of the attention focused on the utility by the hearings and restart delay.[10]

This comparison between citizen protest efforts shows that the interactions between and among the individual, group, and societal levels are more important than commonly acknowledged by social movement analysts. Without denying the independent importance of variables at these different levels, the evidence presented here shows that the interactions, especially those between the group and societal levels, are most critical.

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