

I had become aware of the extent of natural and man-made disasters in the late 1960s when working for the *Daily Telegraph* and therefore proposed an *International Rescue Organisation* in 1967 [see Title 81] in order to overcome the shocking waste and inefficiencies when help for disaster victims was attempted.

In my major analysis "Disasters—Past and Future" of 1972 I defined:

- Accidents** less than 1000 dead or in imminent danger of death
- Disasters** 1000-1000000 dead or in imminent danger of death
- Catastrophes** more than 1000000 dead or in imminent danger of death.

I had always invited, and kept my eyes open, for possible articles on Disasters and by the middle of 1986, I had enough material to prepare a Special Issue of I S R on the subject; it was published in December 1986.

I devoted my Editorial to *The Martyrs of Science*, an article I had written for the *Daily Telegraph* [see Title 155] in 1967 after the Apollo 1 fire, but it was never published. I expanded it for this Special Issue and named those scientists who had given their lives in ballooning, aviation, in the Arctic and Antarctic, as explorers of distant lands and in underwater research. I headed the Editorial with a message to the public, written in March 1912 by Captain Robert Falcon Scott RN when dying on his return from the South Pole

*We took risks, we knew we took them;
Things have come out against us,
And therefore we have no reason for complaint.*

Michael Michaelis, Washington DC, contributed an excellent Comment on the two accidents "Challenger and Chernobyl: Why?" and traced the causes of both to 'human failure'. This he based on lack of vital information, arrogant attitudes, and flawed decision-making in case of the spacecraft accident. For the Chernobyl atomic disaster (12500 dead), the Investigating Commission threatened operators causing a further accident through human failure, with police and criminal proceedings. In the opinion of the author, this added further unbearable stress to taking proper corrective procedures. He pleaded for a proper scientific investigation of the phenomenon of 'human failure'.

The other outstanding contributions to this Special Issue were:

- Disasters and the United Nations* Sir Robert Jackson of the UN, New York
- Drought* J.H. Hulse and V.J. Escort, Ottawa, Canada
- Disaster Planning* Harold D. Foster, University of Victoria, Canada
- Dangers of Hydromagmatic Volcanism in Italy* A.M. Duncan *et al.*, England
- Technologies: Accident, Crime and Terrorism* R. Westrum, Michigan, USA
- Ice Problems for Ships and Structures* A. Joensuu, Wärtsilä, Finland