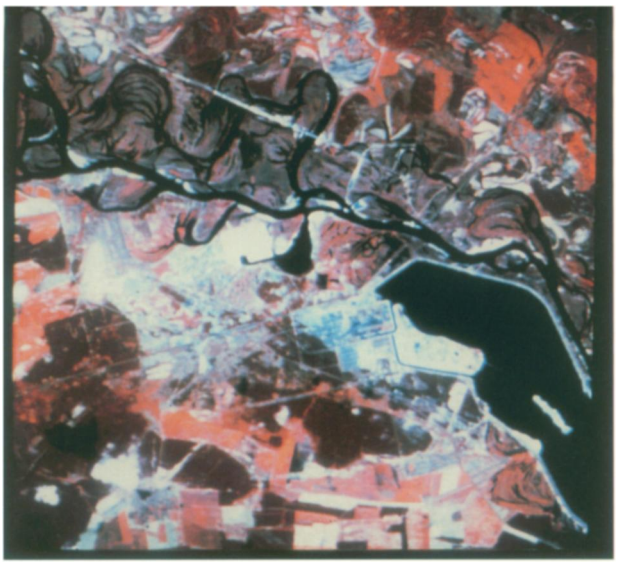
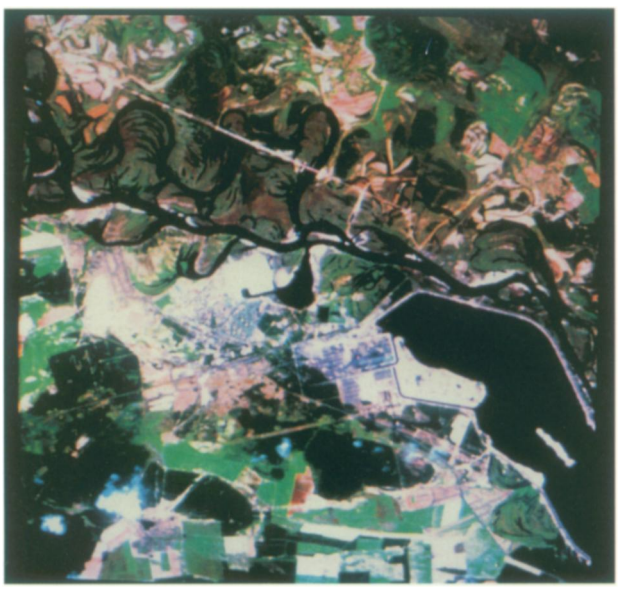
PETER FEND : CHERNOBYL SOLUTIONS

The artist, armed with satellite data, has a knowledge sufficient to form a pan-geographic comprehensive response to urgent site conditions. And reviewers have been alarmed by this new power, since it places the artist's decision and actions beyond their scope of review. Although I have repeatedly experienced fearful attempts by reviewers or even gallerists to contain or even condemn such megalomaniacal proposals, the task is to show, in detail, the logical steps taken with visual evidence. —P.F.

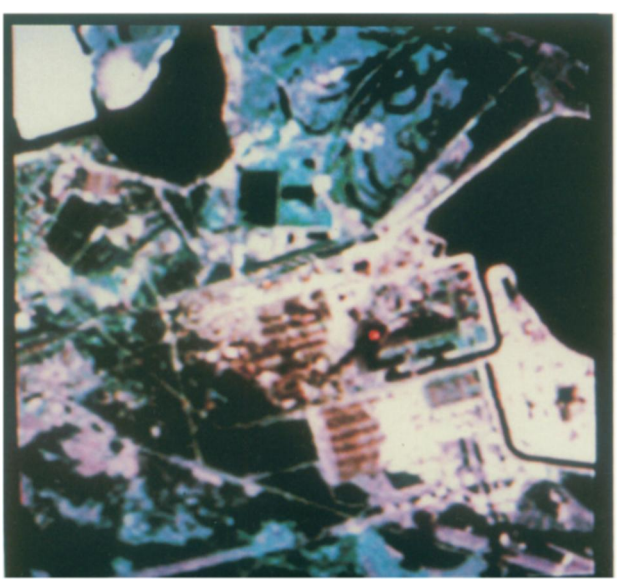
ABOVE ***Stop, Special Pass Required, Radioactive Zone,*** **1996.**



29 April 1986: Initial image created from satellite data of the Chernobyl reactor complex, which is similar to those that appeared in official releases.



29 April 1986: Image created after further computer processing of the same data by Ocean Earth. The red dot indicates intense radiation.



28 April 1986: Detail of above.

1985 The black track passing through the site at a 90-degree angle to the course of the river was reported by American scientists to be smoke. This track, which indicates hydrological instability, was proven by Ocean Earth to be already evident in 1985. Ocean Earth argued that the "smoke" was actually an area of landfill in the river bed, on which the reactor had been built.

1986

Expert comment by landscape architect David Hulse to Peter Fend, April 24, 1996.

"It's built on an elevated terrace, an engineered landfill. An engineered landfill is perfectly safe, and it's done all the time—for example with skyscrapers built on wetlands in the tropics."

Peter Fend: "Yeah, but what if the river is going straight through the building site?"

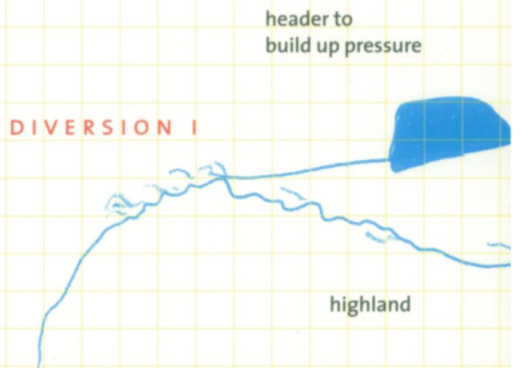
ABOVE Pripyat River bank.

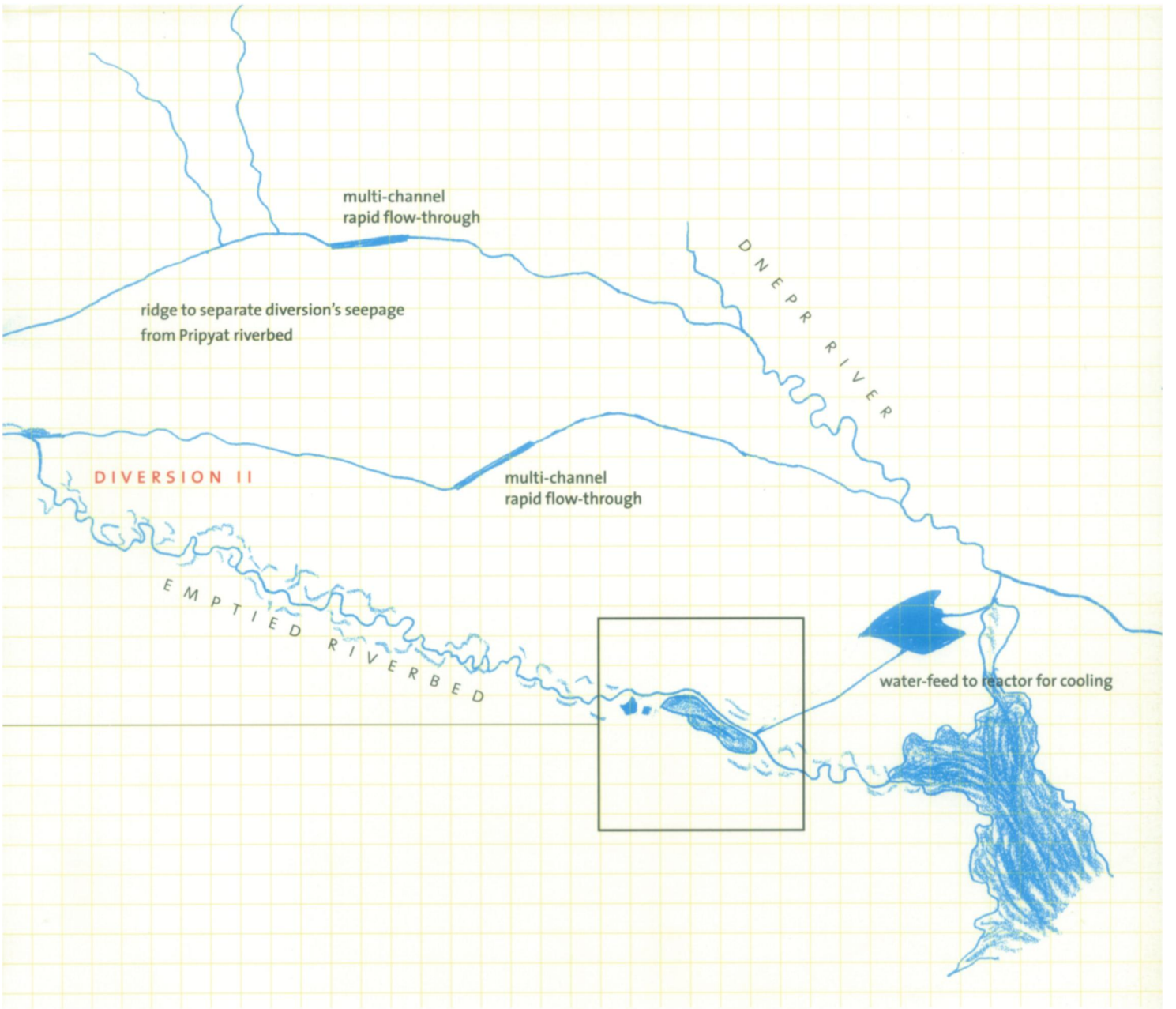
6 May 1986: **Image showing a slick of tar-like substance just upstream from Chernobyl Reactor #4, which may have been applied to the site in an attempt to prevent seepage and upwelling of contaminated water.**

4 April 1996: Belarus from the air.

18 April 1996: At these latitudes, the change in the sun's angle from summer to winter is radical. Each spring, the ice and snow thaw very rapidly, causing a sudden influx of water and mud into the Chernobyl area. To ease pressure on the site and stem the spread of contamination, Ocean Earth proposes a diversion of the Pripyat River.

August 1986: Image of the Chernobyl reactor complex created from satellite data four months after the accident. Areas a, b, c, e, and f, and possibly d, are new installations, evidently made of concrete. They appear to be lined up with the deep center course of the river.





August 1986: **Proposal for Pripyat River diversion, showing two possible routes for bypassing the Chernobyl reactor site.**

PETER FEND

Contamination from the Chernobyl reactor complex continues to spread into the water of the Pripyat River basin, which flows into the Dnepr, and eventually to the Black Sea. Each spring, the snowmelt and shifting flow of mud and water bear down upon the reactor complex, increasing the levels of contamination and—more disturbing—the possibility of further break-up of the reactor. A shutdown of the entire reactor complex has been recommended for several years.

Peter Fend presents a series of engineering solutions, aimed at ending the spread of contamination and developing a new source of energy and electric power for the region, which would make possible the shutdown of the Chernobyl complex. His proposals, based on satellite surveys by Ocean Earth Development Corporation, the organization Fend founded in 1980, focus on three sites: 1. The Pripyat River upstream from Chernobyl, where Fend models a sixty-kilometer diversion of the river to the Dnepr River, and possibly also to the neighboring Desna River, in order to limit the mud and water pressure exerted on the reactor complex and to decrease the spread of contamination already existent in the surrounding soil. As the reactor complex, sitting on the middle of the river bed, is reported to be architecturally unstable, Fend believes that diverting the river is the only safe solution to the Pripyat pressures and attendant leakage. 2. The Don River, near Volgograd, where the channeled flow can be diverted into the Volga basin, away from the Black Sea, thus making the Black Sea more saline. This would allow greater bioproductivity and, according to some marine scientists, help in absorption of the radionucleides leaking into the sea. Any diversion here follows much discussion among scientists as to what strategies to adopt for improving the biochemistry of the three major southern seas of Russia and its neighbors: the Black Sea (not saline enough); the Caspian Sea (now swelling up with nutrient-poor waters); and the Aral Sea (rapidly disappearing). 3. The coastal waters of the Ukraine, which can be monitored and exploited to yield commercial quantities of brown or green algae that can in turn be harvested by the Ukraine state gas company, UKRGASPROM, for renewable, pollution-free fuel.

At all of these sites, Fend's designs take advantage of the new thinking in hydrological and ocean engineering embodied in 1970s and 1980s earthworks by American artists Michael Heizer and Dennis Oppenheim, and more recently used by Soviet military engineers to divert the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers for the Iran/Iraq war zone. He sees his work as a model *modus operandi* that uses a new conjunction of knowledge—of earth art, on one hand, and of catastrophes in large-scale terrain management, such as war, nuclear accidents, and floods, on the other—to find solutions to the problems caused by those catastrophic events.