

KRASHYI ARKHIV

Атомная энергия -
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FE060
USSR -- B-WIRE
HUGE PLANT SITED NEAR CITY

LONDON, JUNE 27 (SPECIAL) -- THE LONDON TIMES HAS AN ARTICLE BY CHRISTOPHER WALKER IN VILNIUS WHICH READS AS FOLLOWS:

AS A GESTURE OF FAITH IN SOVIET NUCLEAR POWER, IT HAS BEEN ANNOUNCED HERE THAT A GIANT REACTOR OF THE CHERNOBYL DESIGN, BUT 50 PER CENT GREATER IN CAPACITY, WILL BEGIN OPERATING LATER THIS YEAR. IT WILL BE AT A NEW NUCLEAR PLANT NOW UNDER CONSTRUCTION LESS THAN 80 MILES FROM THE LITHUANIAN CAPITAL, A CITY OF 500,000 INHABITANTS.

THE 1,500 MEGAWATT RMBK REACTOR IS NEARING COMPLETION AT A VAST BUT LITTLE-PUBLICIZED PLANT AMONG PINE FORESTS NEAR THE TOWN OF IGNALINA, FROM WHICH IT TAKES ITS NAME. IT WILL JOIN ONE OF SIMILAR SIZE WHICH HAS BEEN OPERATING FOR TWO YEARS, WITH TWO MORE DUE TO BE BUILT BY 1990, MAKING THE LITHUANIAN NUCLEAR COMPLEX ONE OF THE BIGGEST IN THE WORLD.

THE NEW REACTOR WILL BE SITED ONLY 300 MILES FROM THE STRICKEN 1,000 MEGAWATT REACTOR AT CHERNOBYL NOW BEING BURIED IN THICK LAYERS OF PROTECTIVE CONCRETE.

A NEW TOWN IS BEING BUILT NEXT TO THE PLANT TO HOUSE WORKERS, SIMILAR TO THE NOW DESERTED TOWN OF PRIPYAT WHICH HOUSED THOSE WHO RAN CHERNOBYL.

THE DECISION TO PRESS AHEAD WITH THE REACTOR HAS CAUSED CONCERN AMONG THE RESIDENTS OF VILNIUS. ANXIETY IN THE CITY HAS BEEN HIGHER THAN IN MANY PARTS OF THE SOVIET UNION BECAUSE THE FULL SCALE OF THE CHERNOBYL DISASTER WAS DISCOVERED THROUGH POLISH RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTS WHICH CAN BE EASILY RECEIVED.

"MANY PEOPLE HAVE WRITTEN TO THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE LITHUANIAN COMMUNIST PARTY EXPRESSING THEIR WORRIES ABOUT WHAT IS HAPPENING AT IGNALINA," ONE SOVIET SOURCE SAID. "AS A RESULT, THE PARTY LEADERS WENT THERE AND CAME BACK TO REASSURE US THAT IT IS ALL SAFE."

DIPLOMATIC SOURCES SAID THAT THE STARTING-UP OF SUCH A LARGE REACTOR IN THE BALTIC REGION WOULD ALSO CAUSE NEW CONCERN IN THOSE COUNTRIES WHICH WERE WORST HIT BY THE FALLOUT FROM CHERNOBYL, INCLUDING POLAND WHICH BORDERS PART OF LITHUANIA.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT THE NEW REACTOR WAS MADE TO A SMALL GROUP OF JOURNALISTS ON A RARE OFFICIAL TRIP TO LITHUANIA, ONE OF 15 SOVIET REPUBLICS.

SENIOR SOVIET OFFICIALS WERE OPENLY DISMISSIVE OF CONCERN EXPRESSED IN THE WEST.

MR BRONIUS ZAIKAUSKAS, CHIEF OF LITHUANIA'S ECONOMIC PLANNING ORGANISATION, CONFIRMED THAT THE NEW REACTOR WOULD BE OF THE GRAPHITE-MODERATED TYPE WHICH EXPLODED AT CHERNOBYL, AND THE DESIGN OF WHICH IS UNIQUE TO THE SOVIET NUCLEAR INDUSTRY. HE SAID PROUDLY THE PLANT WOULD BE THE FIRST OF ITS SIZE.

"SINCE CHERNOBYL, A TEAM FROM THE ACADEMY OF SCIENCES HAS VISITED IGNALINA TO INSPECT THE REACTORS AND TO TAKE CARE OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION," MR ZAIKAUSKAS SAID. "A NUMBER OF EXTRA SAFETY MEASURES HAVE BEEN INTRODUCED AND WE ARE SATISFIED WITH THEM."

THE OFFICIAL DID NOT SPELL OUT WHAT THE ADDITIONAL PRECAUTIONS WERE. BUT INSPECTION OF THE 30FT-LONG ILLUMINATED MODEL OF THE GIGANTIC PLANT, TAKING PRIDE OF PLACE AT THE EXHIBITION OF "LITHUANIAN ECONOMIC ACHIEVEMENTS", REVEALED NO SIGN OF THE TYPE OF CONTAINMENT VESSEL COMMON IN THE WEST. (PTO)

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MR ZAIKAUSKAS MADE CLEAR THAT, FOR ECONOMIC REASONS, THE COMMUNIST PARTY HAD NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO PRESS AHEAD WITH THE RAPID EXPANSION OF NUCLEAR POWER LAID DOWN IN THE NEW FIVE-YEAR PLAN. "THERE WILL SOON BE NO OTHER FORMS OF ENERGY. I AM NOT OPTIMISTIC OR PESSIMISTIC. WE HAVE NO CHOICE," HE SAID.

WHEN IGNALINA IS COMPLETED, LITHUANIA WILL BECOME A NET EXPORTER OF ELECTRICITY TO OTHER PARTS OF THE SOVIET UNION, AS OPPOSED TO AN IMPORTER, AS AT PRESENT. ALTHOUGH BOTH THE SOUTH AND EAST OF THE REPUBLIC WERE DIRECTLY HIT BY THE CHERNOBYL CLOUD, OFFICIALS TRIED HARD TO MINIMIZE THE EFFECTS OF THE DISASTER.

BUT ONE SPOKESMAN FROM THE LITHUANIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY DISCLOSED THAT TWO WEEKS AFTER THE EXPLOSION IN THE UKRAINE, THE REPUBLIC'S MINISTER OF HEALTH HAD MADE A SPECIAL LOCAL TELEVISION BROADCAST DESIGNED TO REASSURE THE 3.5 MILLION CITIZENS.

THE SPOKESMAN SAID THAT THE BROADCAST WAS NECESSARY BECAUSE OF "WILD RUMOURS" THAT SPREAD BECAUSE OF POLISH REPORTS OF THE PRECAUTIONS BEING TAKEN THERE. AD/