

[Text] A giant Mi-26 helicopter from the Yakutsk Civil Aviation Administration's Mirnyy Aviation Enterprise has crashed in the northern part of Irkutsk Oblast, near Kirensk. Nine people were killed—crew members and people accompanying the freight. An investigation is taking place.

Western Republics

Belorussia Expresses Concern Over Lithuania

LD2803180190 Moscow TASS in English 1703 GMT
28 Mar 90

[Text] Minsk, March 28 TASS—The Belorussian Communist Party's Central Committee has expressed profound concern and anxiety over developments in Lithuania.

In an address to communists and all people of Lithuania, the Central Committee said that "forces that came to power at the recent elections seek to change the state system in the Lithuanian SSR [Soviet Socialist Republic] and restore the bourgeois system."

"By kindling nationalism and hiding under slogans about independence and sovereignty, militant politicians endanger the cause of perestroika in the republic and the country as a whole," the address said.

"We regret the moral terror unleashed against communists who remain committed to internationalist principles and favor preserving the unity of the USSR."

"We deplore attacks on the Soviet Army and the desecration of our memorials," the Central Committee stated.

"Separatist nationalist forces are trying to erase from people's hearts the feeling of belonging to a single family of Soviet peoples."

"Misinterpreting the slogan of sovereignty, they are moving towards isolationism and separatism and a rupture of economic and spiritual ties with other republics. They maliciously slander the Soviet Union and the Soviet Communist Party."

The Central Committee of the Belorussian Communist Party, respecting the Lithuanian people's right to self-determination and their striving towards economic, social, and cultural progress, believes that "these issues can only be resolved in strict compliance with Soviet legislation and consideration for the mutual interests of Lithuania and other union republics."

Reportage on Aftermath of Chernobyl Disaster

Honesty, Actions Urged

PM2803114390 Moscow IZVESTIYA in Russian
27 Mar 90 Morning Edition p 3

[Own correspondent N. Matukovskiy article: "Disaster. The Lessons of Chernobyl"]

[Text] We finally have to tell ourselves the whole truth about what happened: The world's greatest technological disaster occurred at Chernobyl. And we have only just started to analyze its consequences and how to minimize them. Today we can only talk about adjusting and adapting mankind and the entire biosphere to the new and irreversible conditions in the wake of Chernobyl.

Millions of people live in the disaster zone. The Chernobyl disaster presented us with exceptionally difficult tasks touching virtually all spheres of life and many spheres of science, production, and morality. Those were the conclusions recently reached by a panel of state experts headed by Academicians N. Moiseyev and S. Belyayev and Doctor of Biological Sciences A. Nazarov.

They proceeded on the basis of the only acceptable and possible approach in the situation. Since the disaster has occurred and we cannot move to another planet, we have to urgently find the most effective ways and means of minimizing the consequences of the disaster not only for the present generation but for future generations as well. Above all we have to save the lives and health of people living in the disaster areas and safeguard future generations against its consequences. Even such major scientific authorities as Yu. Izrael, L. Ilin, L. Buldakov, Ye. Chazov, V. Marin, D. Popov, and others tried to play down the scale of the Chernobyl disaster. (Why they should do so we will discuss later). In a letter to the CPSU Central Committee general secretary, 92 scientists tried to claim that the Chernobyl accident was not as terrible as the scientists from the Belorussian Academy of Sciences tried to make out.

In an interview with the newspaper SOTSIALISTICHESKAYA INDUSTRIYA 29 November, D. Popov stated: "Foreign scientists (namely a group of WHO experts) were shaken by the radiological ignorance of the scientists from the Belorussian Academy of Sciences. This clearly had more to do with political short-termism and a desire to win prestige with rallies of people than with real science."

Even previously this "rider" had been repeated virtually word for word by Ye. Chazov, USSR minister of health, in his letter to N.I. Ryzhkov, chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers.

In order to put a stop to the confusion that was arising, V. Soldatov, vice president of the Belorussian SSR [Soviet Socialist Republic] Academy of Sciences, turned for an explanation to Pierre Pellerin, director of the French Central Radiation Service, whose authoritative opinion was quote by D. Popov and Ye. Chazov. Mr.

prevent a disagreeable actor from speaking in the theater. "These claqueurs are here too," the speaker raised his voice. "They must be silenced! They are not letting the informals speak!" But no one interrupted him or the other informals. Mainly they interrupted "representatives of the authorities," not "their own."

An "independent" journalist appeared at the microphone. He was aggrieved: "People in Moscow know us better, they don't let us speak." It is hard to tell whether he is known in Moscow or not, but he is certainly known on Radio Liberty. On two occasions, if not more, he has blurted out cock-and-bull stories on its frequency. During the elections of USSR people's deputies I heard one of them: "The Rostov militia was the most active of all during the elections. Not only did it tear down the bills posted by the defenders of perestroika, but it also provided a ridiculous escort of special vehicles whenever the smallest group of activists just put in an appearance in the center of the city. And those people who were involved in agitation were thrown behind bars." There was nothing of the kind. I do not know why my colleague lied.

There at the rally I could not escape the thought that these speakers were concerned least of all with the AES and people's health. They see their main task as being to fuel tension.

Some informals are striving to twist the question of whether or not the AES should be built above all so as to show party officials in an unfavorable light. It is they who are supposedly in favor of the station, they are "poisoning the people." Some people fall for this line. However, I decided to question leaders of party committees—ranging from party obkom [oblast party committee] to gorkom and raykom [rayon party committee] first secretaries: Did they support or oppose the construction of the station? I was shown letters at the party obkom and the oblistpolkom sent to central bodies over the last two years asking for an expert opinion on the Rostov AES. The answers, succinctly, are as follows: "It is not up to us to decide whether there should or should not be an AES here. There are scientists and specialists to do that. Although we are aware that there is a tremendous shortage of electricity in the area, which is tending to worsen. The prospect is 'not rosy'—that is, we face the disconnection of enterprises and apartment blocks. That's cause for alarm. People must not be worse off."

At a recent Rostov party obkom plenum G. Fomenko, first secretary of Volgodonsk Gorkom, said: Our job is hard now; in the case of the AES it looks as though the construction chief and the party committee secretary made a decision and resolved to construct it on the Don. Many of those who are sitting in this hall—and they are mainly party and soviet personnel—are even asking: "When are you going to shut the station down?"

A. Fisunov, another secretary from this party gorkom, wrote the following in the municipal VOLGODONSKAYA PRAVDA about the construction of the AES:

"All the city's residents are interested in what the CPSU gorkom is doing and what it thinks about the question that has been raised. We are inhabitants of the city with families and children and, believe us, we are equally concerned for them and their future. We are not cutting ourselves off from other citizens. We want an independent, nondepartmental examination conducted by a USSR Government commission. The population of the city and the region should only make a decision on the basis of the commission's findings. We are firmly convinced that specialists and the region's inhabitants should ultimately decide whether or not to build the Rostov AES." That is the candid opinion of yet another party official. So why put them "in the dock"? Why make them scapegoats? Who benefits from their bad reputation?

Events then developed in the following way. A nondepartmental commission of experts was set up on the instructions of the union government following an official question put by the Rostov delegation of USSR people's deputies. However, it has done virtually no work. Yu. Dombrovskiy told me:

"The government's instructions have once again gotten bogged down in department offices. The administrative-edict syndrome is taking its toll. The public are still demanding clear answers."

Rostov party obkom and oblistpolkom once again insistently asked the USSR Council of Ministers to speed up the examination and settle these questions. An answer addressed to B. Volodin, first secretary of Rostov CPSU Obkom, arrived from L. Ryabev, deputy chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers, announcing that a program had been ratified this January and specific dates set for the examination. The results will be considered at the USSR Council of Ministers in the third quarter of 1990 with the public of Rostov Oblast. Nuclear fuel will not be shipped into Volgodonsk until the examination is completed and the relevant decision adopted; the AES startup date has been postponed. USSR Supreme Soviet people's deputies received answers to their questions from the State Committee for Environmental Protection.

So there is general alarm. One should say that there are many other hotspots on the Don. They clamor for attention. In this situation the informals' position will have greater weight, the better the intentions of those who take the floor at their rallies and meetings. At present people trying to use the "Green" movement for gain are worming their way into the movement. But it should not be forgotten that a ship loses speed when it has too many barnacles stuck to its hull.

Nine Killed in Yakutsk Freight Helicopter Crash

*PM2903092790 Moscow IZVESTIYA in Russian
28 Mar 90 Morning Edition p 2*

[Report by own correspondent O. Borodin: "Helicopter Crash"]

Pellerin replied immediately: "I can confirm that during our recent June visit to Belorussia my WHO group colleagues Beninson and Waite, and I myself of course, never called into question the overall competence of the Belorussian scientists. On the contrary, we admired it and have the greatest respect for it. Particularly after our interesting and fruitful exchange of opinions at the Academy of Sciences in Minsk. Of course, the 29 November 1989 claims in SOTSIALISTICHESKAYA INDUSTRIYA are incorrect."

The supporters of the "Moscow" concept hold that nothing terrible will happen to the people living in the accident zone if they continue living where the radiation contamination does not exceed 40 curies per square kilometer. And if the external and internal dose of radiation does not exceed 35 rems in 70 years.

Belorussian scientists, on the contrary, claim that people should not live in areas where they cannot obtain food products uncontaminated by radiation. And contamination means 15 or even 10 curies per square kilometer, not 40. The concept of "35 rems in a lifetime" is unscientific and inhuman, because it fails to take any account of people's health at the time of the disaster, of the existence of "high-risk groups" among the population, or of the large impact dose of short-lived radionuclides received by people at the time of the disaster. It is not possible to measure this amount using physical dosimetry methods, nor is it possible at all to monitor the critical 35-rem "threshold" using existing equipment.

Doctor of Chemical Sciences Ye. Petryayev, chief of the Radiochemistry Faculty at the V.I. Lenin Belorussian State University:

It is impossible to determine this "threshold" during someone's lifetime for another reason, too. The norm for all doses is calculated by reference to cesium alone. Yet in the affected areas there was also a fallout of strontium, plutonium, and a large "package" of transuranic elements, which could be breathed in by a human organism as fine aerosols. The most horrifying things were the "hot particles" measuring a micron and above. In the southern part of the Gomel area there are between one and 10 such particles per square centimeter of soil. And all these constitute more than the 35 "official" rems!

To be blunt, the "scientific" argument is not about curies and rems, but about how many people need to be resettled and from which areas. Or, to be more accurate, it is about rubles and how many billions need to be allocated to resettlement—10, 15, or 20? Isn't this hypocritical? We say that human life is priceless and we argue about how many rubles to spend on an individual, an adult, a child....

The Belorussian program (which will become a program in the full sense of the world only after ratification by the USSR Supreme Soviet) envisages spending around R18 billion on eliminating the consequences of the Chernobyl disasters in the five years of the current five-year plan.

Why are we talking only about Belorussia? After all, certain parts of the Russian Federation and the Ukraine also suffered. But out of all our country's radionuclide-contaminated territory more than 70 percent is in Belorussia. In order to bring that percentage "home," I would cite the following figures. On the republic's territory where radiation contamination is more than one curie per square kilometer there are 2,200,000 inhabitants—that is, one-fifth of the total Belorussian population. In the strictly monitored area, where the contamination is more than 15 curies per square kilometer, there are 498 population centers with a population of 102,000 people, of which more than 30,000 are children. Some 12,000 people in 85 villages live in a 624-square kilometer area with a radiation level of over 40 curies. You can't touch anything in your own garden or vegetable patch, you can't take a walk in the woods, you can't pick mushrooms or berries, you can't drink the milk from your own cow, you can't swim in the river, and you can't catch any fish. Even adults could not stand such restrictions. Not to mention children!

Belorussian scientists, upholding the "nonthreshold" concept (nobody in the world has yet studied the long-term impact of small radiation doses on the human organism), are concerned for the future of the entire nation.

In the past few years higher levels of disease in the upper respiratory tract, the gastrointestinal tract, and the endocrine system have been recorded in the affected regions. There have been immunity disorders, psychic disorders, diseases of the circulation system, various pregnancy disorders, and cases of major birth deformities. Of particular concern is the state of children's thyroid glands, in which hyperplasia has become widespread everywhere. "Genetic changes, which could contribute 50-100 percent to these diseases," are one of the causes of the deviations that have been observed. We are faced with the fact that there has been a real increase in the incidence of disease among the population living in territories contaminated as a result of the accident. Available information also points to an increase in genetic pathology. In subsequent decades we will hardly be able to wholly avoid the development of oncological and genetic deviations in a certain proportion of the population.

You might wonder what kind of struggle we can be talking about when we have the kind of official conclusions of state experts that we do. Who could object to such clear and irrefutable facts? Such people exist. Unfortunately, the adoption of a final "overall" decision at the very "top level" depends largely on them. They are, above all, Yu. Izrael, chairman of the USSR State Committee for Hydrometeorology, and L. Ilin, vice president of the USSR Academy of Medical Sciences and director of the Biophysics Institute.

In a written reply to a question from Deputy N. Ignatovich (7 July 1989) V. Marin said: "Analysis of the data obtained as a result of the medical investigation and

out-patient monitoring of people living in these areas carried out by the USSR Ministry of Health shows that no diseases connected with the effects of radiation have been recorded among the population of the monitored areas of Belorussia."

D. Popov goes even further, claiming that in the radionuclide fallout areas favorable conditions have been created for people to freely obtain curative doses of cesium equivalent to radon baths. He admits that in these areas, "there has been a growth in many diseases. There is just one diagnosis—mass radiophobia."

In SELSKAYA ZHIZN (No. 29 for 4 February) L. Buldakov also fails to experience any alarm about radiation-contaminated areas. "If all our people," he wrote, "only ate food from the Chernobyl region they would receive just an additional 7 millirems a year. This is just 10 percent of the annual dose, which is not dangerous at all. Not at all!"

But if D. Popov and L. Buldakov are "merely" major authorities in the radiology sphere, V. Marin is a member of the government commission on the elimination of the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster.

Why do many senior leaders so stubbornly uphold the idea that nothing terrible or irreparable happened at Chernobyl in 1986?

A. Stepanenko, vice president of the Belorussian Academy of Sciences:

In ancient times a runner who brought ill tidings had his head cut off. But, of course, it is not a question of "historical fear." When this terrible accident happened, all of us—from mere mortals to Politburo members—instinctively rejected the idea that it was not just an accident but a monstrous disaster whose consequences would never be eradicated. The physicists who had given us assurances for so many years about the peaceful nature of the atom could not be so tragically mistaken! Were they now to take a step back from their initial claims, all of us—from top to bottom—would have the natural question: "Does this mean you have lied to the people, the government, and the Politburo for almost four years?"

I think that the stubbornness in upholding obsolete and discredited ideas is also explained by the proverbial monopolism of our central departments, particularly on matters concerning notorious "secret" subjects. Just let somebody try to state the opposite opinion! All kinds of means will be brought into play in order to defend their "pure" positions, and the question of how accurate an opponent's objections were comes a long way down the list. This situation is familiar to us in many spheres, but in this instance we can see for ourselves that monopolism and departmental backscratching do not retreat in the face of even the most sacred of concepts.

It is natural we should have begun this conversation with the purely medical aspect of the Chernobyl problem—

whether or not people will survive, whether or not they will be healthy. There are a large number of other aspects which are also connected in one way or another with the health of people living both in the actual disaster zone itself and a long way from it. The first concerns peasant labor in areas with a level of radiation contamination of over 15 curies per square kilometer. Belorussian scientists are unanimous that peasant labor has lost all point there. Why should people produce "contaminated" goods and for whom? So that the "shadow" of radiation can spread further and further?

In certain rayons of Mogilev and Gomel Oblasts 40-60 percent of the milk is contaminated. At best they reprocess it and feed the skimmed milk to calves. Meat contaminated beyond all permissible levels is partially reprocessed as meat and bone meal, which is fed to the piglets on virtually all the republic's farms. Monitoring the spread of radionuclides in produce sent from the private sector is utterly impossible.

A. Lyutsko, candidate of physical-mathematical sciences and senior lecturer at the V.I. Lenin Belorussian State University:

The Soviet side's report to the IAEA cites estimates of the anticipated collective dose in the European part of the USSR—300,000 man-sieverts from external irradiation, 2 million man-sieverts from internal irradiation. (For comparison: The total damage in dosage units from the accident at America's Three Mile Island was 35 man-sieverts). The point is that the dosage from food products is several times greater than the gamma radiation dose in the contaminated area. Doctors claim that in terms of cesium content in the body, people from Minsk and Vitebsk have already almost the same amount as inhabitants of Gomel and Mogilev Oblasts. It is necessary to immediately pass a law which would envisage the most rigorous criminal liability for the production and distribution of produce contaminated with radionuclides.

There is an extremely complex problem—moving people away initially from territories where radiation contamination exceeds 40 curies per square kilometer, then 15 curies, and finally 5 curies. It is not even a question of the vast resources needed for such a large scale action. It is possible to at least partially divert the republic's housing program "toward Chernobyl." It is possible to issue a special state loan. It is possible, too, to resolve a very acute psychological and moral problem—that of settling people from the affected regions exclusively in separate settlements (even retaining the names of the old villages) or building separate streets for them in cities and settlements. That will maintain the old ethnic and communal relationships and will more quickly cure the "Chernobyl complex" and their sense of feeling disadvantaged and belief that those around them are to blame.

All this can be done. But there is another problem here: What to do with the lands that have been abandoned?

After all, they will run to hundreds of thousands of hectares. Wind erosion cannot be allowed to create secondary radiation.

Problems, problems.... Some will take 5 years to resolve, others 10 years, still others will take 200 years. Then there are those which.... Clearly, no one has studied them as thoroughly as Candidate of Agricultural Sciences A. Volkov, chief of the Land Reclamation Institute's laboratory of problems of the Polesye lowlands. He has spent at least 3 years in the disaster zone, established several thousand metering points, produced hundreds of charts showing the radioactivity level, measured the radiation level in hundreds of population centers, and observed people who have "absorbed" an excessive dose of radiation externally and internally. In some rayons of Gomel and Mogilev Oblasts he was quite simply chased away: "Get out immediately and take your apparatus with you, don't frighten our people, don't cause panic among them!"

Such was the official position not only of the party obkoms [oblast committees] but also of the republic's soviet and party leadership. Briefly, it can be summed up like this: Yes, there was a disaster, but we'll cope with it. We don't need any help from foreigners, we aren't paupers. Back in 1987 the Japanese offered to build a large joint hematology center in Gomel. "Great! So now we're going to reveal our secrets to the Japanese!" (I was present in the office of M.V. Kovalev, chairman of the Belorussian SSR Council of Ministers, when this conversation took place). There is no hematology center in Gomel to this day.

The republic leadership's position has resulted in tens of millions of rubles being wasted building levees which, their designers believed, would keep the contaminated silt in the rivers. It did not work—the silt "crossed" the levees and settled in the places where the current is sluggish. The levees had to be destroyed because they were causing flooding. Tens of millions of rubles have been wasted on useless decontamination, on a re-evacuation which was nothing more than an ostentatious show, and on the construction of new settlements in places where they shouldn't have been built. Some R17 million were wasted just on the "Bratstvo" state farm in Gomel Oblast's Narovlyanskiy Rayon after the Chernobyl catastrophe. Whether this "heroism" was the result of local initiative or whether it was prompted from above has yet to be investigated by an independent parliamentary commission of the new Belorussian SSR Supreme Soviet.

So, A. Volkov has this to say:

Pripyat has been virtually ruined and along with it the entire Pripyat basin over 122,000 square kilometers—it can only be used as an ecological conservation area. Today the waters of the Pripyat and the Sozh and their tributaries, the Nesvich, Iput, Besyad, Braginka, Kolpita, and Pokot, carry radioactive silt into the Dnepr. The Kiev reservoir is gradually becoming a "time bomb."

The water is uncontaminated but all the silt is "hot" and there is already 60 million tonnes of it. The whole series of electric power stations on the Dnepr right down to the Black Sea is in great jeopardy. Yet 40 million people live in this area!

Another two problems also give me no rest. An elderly woman once called me out to her house, complaining of daily headaches. Some 300 milliroentgens per hour were recorded in the stove, which she stoked with firewood from the neighboring forest. The firewood was the cause. All the wood in the affected areas is radioactive. It must not be used for furniture, for construction, or even for firewood. The peat is also "hot." Where can people get fuel from?

The so-called "burial sites" simply horrify me. I did not see a single one built according to all the regulations—with concrete walls and a concrete covering. They are generally large pits whose walls and bottom are covered with polyethylene sheeting. In two or three years the ground waters will freely wash away the radioactive dust and run into the rivers and lakes.

I have also made several visits to the "dead zone," which has been turned into a dumping ground where everything is piled up—equipment, clothing, and furniture. Deserted, untended houses "glow" like candles. The fires that break out there when the peat becomes too dry intensify the tragedy. Smoke carries the radiation over a great distance. How can we combat this disaster?

There are two opinions about the future of the cluttered "dead zone." The first is that it should be handed over to the Main Administration for Atomic Power Stations to be sold to foreign scientists, two or three hectares each. This land is indeed worth its weight in gold because it is the only place that truly unique radiobiological studies and experiments can be conducted in natural rather than under laboratory conditions. Nowhere else in the world are there such conditions for scientists.

The second opinion is that since this land is unique it should be left at the disposal of the governments of the Ukraine and Belorussia. Let them lease it out in return for the requisite medical equipment and medicines. I consider the second option to be fairer—why reward the main culprit?

Another very sensitive question that has not been settled is what should be done with the Chernobyl AES itself. After all, each of its surviving three reactors contain 192 tonnes of nuclear fuel. Last year there were more than 30 "registered malfunctions" in the main equipment at the station, including 13 through staff error.

Belorussian SSR Academician E. Konoplya, director of the Radiobiology Institute:

The Chernobyl AES must be shut down, there can be no other opinion. We do not have the right to tempt fate twice. After all, the land it is on represents a vast blot of contamination from whence radiation is gradually

creeping in all directions. Not to mention potential mishaps on a more major scale. Of course, it would be hard to do without its 3 million kilowatts, 1 million of which goes to Belorussia. But a way out must be found—and as soon as possible. Of course, we cannot do without nuclear power in the future. But atomic power stations must not be like the Chernobyl AES; they must be constructed quite differently, a long way from densely populated areas. Is it expensive to transport electricity over long distances? Is it cheaper to eliminate the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster?

My last interview was with Academician V. Platonov from the USSR Academy of Sciences, president of the Belorussian Academy of Sciences:

Our scientists are in an extremely difficult position because they are having to wage a war on two fronts—against the authors of the antiscientific concepts of “35 rems for life” and a “comfortable 40 curies per square kilometer” and against the republic’s government, which is displaying astounding “obedience.” Ye. Chazov had hardly written his letter to N.I. Ryzhkov than we were told, not without spite: It turns out that you are incompetent! We proposed not building new settlements for the settlers so near the zone—but you built them there. Now they have to be abandoned. We proposed not producing any food products in the strictly monitored zone—yet they are still being produced there now. We proposed immediately evacuating everyone who lived in the zone with more than 40 curies per square kilometer—people are still living there even now. Many people are even living where there are levels of 60-100 curies. It is indeed a question of the nation’s future.

Take the following question. Three years ago scientists, writers, and informants claimed that we would not cope with our disaster without international aid. It is only today, after wasting three years, that our government has asked governments, parliaments, and peoples of all countries for aid. We have been talking for a long time about setting up a Belorussian National Committee To Protect the Population Against Radiation and Declare the Republic a National Disaster Zone. We last adopted a resolution to this effect at a Presidium of the Academy of Sciences 7 March. If the government does this straightaway, we would get direct access to many foreign organizations. We would obtain great aid—scientific, medical, technical, and material.

I listened to Vladimir Petrovich and thought: Will we really stick to our unpopular principle of “We are not paupers, it is not becoming for us to ask capitalists for aid” once again. The scale and nature of the disaster are such that we have no choice. We must make maximum use of all our resources and means and not be ashamed to ask for help from those whom yesterday we considered to be our enemies.

Today we are all people, living on earth—a planet that is not that large. Ours is a common disaster. It is a crime to the people themselves not to ask for help. If we are

offered help, as we were by the Japanese in 1987, it would be simply immoral and inhuman to ponder it and reject it. After all, the Chernobyl catastrophe represents a disaster for the whole world.

Money Raised for Aid Fund

*PM2803145590 Moscow PRAVDA in Russian
28 Mar 90 Second Edition p 8*

[PRAVDA correspondent V. Drozd report under the “From the Latest Mailbag” rubric: “Aid or Ambitions?”]

[Text] Lvov—On Sunday Lvov Oblast newspapers and one central newspaper once again recalled the Chernobyl tragedy. Expressing the wishes of hundreds of collectives and most of the region’s public organizations and inhabitants, the Lvov Oblast Trade Union Council urged working people to go to their workplaces on a Saturday in the near future and give all their earnings to the inhabitants of Zhitomir Oblast who suffered from radioactive contamination. It is proposed to transfer more than 2 million rubles into the aid fund (from the experience of previous subbotniks). This money would be enough to build a hundred homes in the Lvov area and offer Zhitomir Oblast families housing. The initiative seems worth consideration in the republic.

Thus it was all the more surprising when the poet I. Drach, leader of the republic’s Rukh, divulged to us on the same day his intention to organize a splendid human chain 26 April to run between the nuclear power stations of the Ukraine, Belorussia, the RSFSR [Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic], and the Baltic. The poet sees this as serving to increase the prestige of Rukh itself. But is it moral to gratify personal ambition through human calamity?

People have a much greater need of concrete aid rather than words (they have heard more than enough of them over the last four years) and “human chains.” This is a case where hands offering help are truly holier than praying lips....

Foreign Experts Consider Plan

*LD2803153190 Moscow TASS in English 1044 GMT
28 Mar 90*

[By TASS correspondent Aleksey Trotsenko]

[Text] Kiev March 28 TASS—A group of foreign experts, currently in the USSR at the invitation of the Soviet Government, will consider a plan for the safe habitation of areas contaminated as results of the Chernobyl accident.

On Tuesday the group completed a three-day survey in the Kiev and Zhitomir regions.

They were received by Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Konstantin Masik. He stressed that the Ukrainian Government seeks to expand international cooperation to eliminate the after-effects of the Chernobyl disaster and is grateful for help.

Masik told the experts that over 90,000 people had been evacuated from the affected areas. Fourteen settlements are being constructed in "clean" zones, where about 15,000 people will live.

The official also spoke of measures that reduced the radiation level in the disaster area by two-four times and the re-orientation of agriculture there.

At the same time, 1,450,000 people still reside in affected areas. Five million hectares of land are contaminated in the Ukraine. That is why a new plan for the safe habitation of these regions is needed, Masik said. He expressed hope that the experts will contribute to the plan. According to the International Atomic Energy (IAEA) assistant deputy director-general, the group includes representatives of the Commission of the European Communities, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Health Organisation and the IAEA Agency, as well as Austrian, British, American and Japanese experts.

They will work for three or four months in affected zones of the Ukraine, Belorussia and Russia in order to estimate the population's irradiation level and its impact on human health.

The information will be used to ensure the safety of people residing in the affected areas.

Caucasus

Violence Causes Azerbaijan Border Closure

AU2903160690 Paris AFP in English 1547 GMT
29 Mar 90

[Text] Moscow, March 29 (AFP)—The Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan has closed its border with Armenia amid reports of renewed armed clashes between the two communities, a Radio-Moscow publication reported here Thursday.

A number of villages in the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic, part of Azerbaijan which borders Armenia, have come under fire, notably in the Shabkhur, Babek and Ilyichyovsk regions, INTERFAX said.

A number of local residents have also been abducted, while Army reinforcements have been sent to the area, the publication added.

The decision to temporarily close the border was taken at a special joint session of the Azerbaijan Communist Party Central Committee and government on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, Moscow has rushed General Yuriy Shatalin, the head of the internal ministry troops, to the Caucasus to "end violence, mass disorders and civil disobedience" in the region where recently clashes left a dozen dead and scores of injured, TASS news agency reported Thursday.

A group of Azeri deputies have also sent a message to Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev urging him to reinforce security along the border between their republic and Armenia.

The presidium of the Azerbaijan Supreme Soviet has also declared invalid a session of the local government in the Armenian-dominated enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh, over which both Armenia and Azerbaijan claim sovereignty.

The local government had decided at a recent meeting in Stepanakerk to restore the Armenian-controlled regional executive committee and end a campaign of civil disobedience there, INTERFAX said.

All industrial premises were reported to have resumed work in Stepanakerk Wednesday, it added.

Further on Azerbaijan Violence

NC2903160190 Baku Domestic Service in Azeri
0440 GMT 29 Mar 90

[Text] The newspapers report that the joint meeting held by the Azerbaijan Communist Party Central Committee and the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic [SSR] Council of Ministers on 28 March examined the situation in the Nakhichevan Autonomous SSR and in Kazakhskiy, Gedebebskiy, and Kel'badzharskiy Rayons, along with other rayons which have common borders with the Armenian SSR. The meeting also examined the urgent measures required to stabilize the situation.

The chauvinist and nationalist forces in the Armenian SSR have, like bandits, organized a number of armed attacks on the residential areas in Azerbaijani border regions in order to disrupt the inclination to normalize the situation and in order to make the current situation much worse. Equipped with modern combat equipment and [word indistinct] arms, including arms manufactured abroad, the armed men have fired on the towns and transport vehicles, set houses on fire, and detonated explosives on the railway tracks and motorways.

Blood has again been shed in our land, and dozens of peaceful residents in the republic have been killed, as during previous extremist activities. This has occurred before the very eyes of the Armenian SSR's party, soviet, and law enforcement organs and as a result of the opportunities they have created for such activities.

Ayaz Mutalibov, first secretary of the Azerbaijan Communist Party Central Committee, and Gasan Gasanov, chairman of the Azerbaijan SSR Council of Ministers Presidium, indicated that USSR President Mikhail Gorbachev; Nikolay Ryzhkov, chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers; Vladimir Kryuchkov, chairman of the Committee for State Security; General V.I. Varennikov, commander in chief of the ground forces; and other leaders who are responsible for the security of the people in our country have been extensively briefed on the current complex situation. It was [word indistinct] that

all the means available to the USSR should be used to end the bloody and tragic situation which has continued for two years.

It was noted that the republic's party leaders and government are resolutely safeguarding Azerbaijan's sovereignty and the life and peaceful existence of the republic's people. Measures are being taken to temporarily close the air and land borders with the Armenian SSR. The leaders of the neighboring republic were seriously informed that if they are not capable of controlling and disarming the bandit groups, the Azerbaijan SSR will then take the measures necessary in light of its constitutional rights to safeguard the territorial integrity of the republic and to provide security for its citizens.

The meeting adopted a decision to provide the necessary material aid to the families of those who have perished.

Azerbaijani Deputies Address Letter to Gorbachev

*NC2803210090 Baku Domestic Service in Azeri
0440 GMT 28 Mar 90*

[From the Republican Press Review]

[Text] The USSR people's deputies from the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic [SSR] have conveyed a letter of appeal to USSR President Mikhail Gorbachev. The letter, which was published on the front pages of the newspapers today, explained the attacks launched against the entire length of Azerbaijan's border with the Armenian SSR by armed Armenians on 24 and 25 March. The letter said:

The objective behind the savage attacks is totally obvious. The fact that the situation has begun to normalize in the region, including the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast, does not please certain unofficial organizations in the Armenian SSR and some leading workers in that republic who support them. How long will a handful of terrorists trifle with the (?achievements) of a world power like the Soviet Union? It is not clear why the leaders of the Soviet Army and the internal troops, who showed themselves [word indistinct] during the incidents in Baku, fail to advise against the frantic activities of the terrorists and turn a blind eye to the activities of the well armed national army in the Armenian SSR which is waging an undeclared war against the Azerbaijan SSR.

All this has been debated during many rallies and meetings in Azerbaijan SSR. The workers are demanding that the USSR use all the means at its disposal to end the tragic situation which has been going on for two years.

The USSR people's deputies from the Azerbaijan SSR appeal to you to use all the presidential powers which have been vested in you to take urgent measures in connection with this situation.

In their letter, the USSR people's deputies put forward a number of proposals aimed at stabilizing the situation. According to the signatories of the letter, if these urgent

measures, which are of primary importance, are not put into effect, the outburst of violence in the region will get worse and the people will justifiably describe such inactivity as the condoning of activities conflicting with the law and with humanity.

Official Sent To 'Normalize' Caucasus Region

*LD2803190190 Moscow TASS International Service
in Russian 1750 GMT 28 Mar 90*

[Text] Moscow, 28 Mar (TASS)—As the press center of the USSR Interior Ministry reported today, Colonel General Yuriy Shatalin, head of the Chief Administration of Internal Troops of the USSR Interior Ministry, has left for the Transcaucasus region. He has been instructed to ensure normalization of the situation, to prevent acts of violence and disobedience of the requirements of the law.

By resolution of the USSR Supreme Soviet of 5 March concerning the situation in the Azerbaijan SSR [Soviet Socialist Republic] and Armenian SSR and measures for the normalization of the situation in the region, the bodies of state power and administration of both republics were instructed to ensure the disbanding of extremist organizations and associations responsible for terrorist actions, pogroms, and mass disturbances, and to secure normalization of the transportation situation. But in both republics there are certain circles which act against the implementation of these decisions and whip up interethnic conflict. In the last few days there have been several clashes in border districts. There are casualties.

The actions of the extremist forces and corrupt elements which have brought real tragedy upon the peoples of Azerbaijan and Armenia are doing great damage to the peoples of the whole country and to the development of democratic processes, the report from the press center of the USSR Interior Ministry points out. In view of this, the USSR Interior Ministry is taking measures to stabilize the situation and ensure investigation into all cases of crime and unlawful activities.

Train Bombing in Megrinskiy Rayon Examined

*NC2803163790 Baku Domestic Service in Azeri
1730 GMT 27 Mar 90*

[Text] It was reported earlier that the locomotive of passenger train No. 669, which was travelling on the Norashen-Baku line, was destroyed close to the Karchevan railway station in the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic [SSR] Megrinskiy Rayon three days ago. Why are the troops not protecting the main railway lines? Is the protection of the lines not included among the duties of the troops? An AZERINFORM correspondent called on Agayanov, who is the procurator of the Nakhichevan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic's transportation network, to reply to these questions which the people of the republic are asking. Agayanov said: