

CHERNOBYL

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USSR - SOVIETS SAY CHERNOBYL DISASTER MUCH WORSE THAN ADMITTED

WASHINGTON, APRIL 28 (SPECIAL) - THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE BY FELICITY BARRINGER APPEARS TODAY IN THE NEW YORK TIMES:

WASHINGTON - FOUR YEARS AFTER THE EXPLOSION AND FIRE AT THE CHERNOBYL NUCLEAR POWER PLANT, THE SOVIET UNION IS ACKNOWLEDGING THE MEDICAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE DISASTER HAVE BEEN MUCH GREATER THAN THE KREMLIN HAS EVER FRANKLY DISCUSSED.

IN PARTICULAR, RECENT ARTICLES IN THE SOVIET PRESS AND REPORTS TO THE UNITED NATIONS, AS WELL AS INFORMATION GIVEN AT A NEWS CONFERENCE AT THE SOVIET EMBASSY ON FRIDAY, HAVE REVEALED DETAILS OF CURRENT AND PROBABLE FUTURE SUFFERING AMONG PEOPLE AFFECTED BY THE EXPLOSION AND FIRE AT THE NO. 4 REACTOR OF THE PLANT NEAR THE BORDER OF THE UKRAINE AND BYELORUSSIA.

AMONG THE REVELATIONS WAS THE DISCLOSURE FOUR MILLION PEOPLE IN THE UKRAINE, BYELORUSSIA AND WESTERN RUSSIA ARE CURRENTLY LIVING ON CONTAMINATED GROUND.

IT WAS ALSO REVEALED THE THYROID GLANDS OF MORE THAN 150,000 PEOPLE WERE "SERIOUSLY AFFECTED" BY DOSES OF RADIOACTIVE IODINE, A FAR HIGHER NUMBER FOR SUCH PROBLEMS THAN HAD BEEN MADE PUBLIC.

THE SOVIET AUTHORITIES ALSO HAVE SAID:

-EXPECTED RATES OF THYROID CANCER ARE FIVE TO 10 TIMES WHAT WOULD BE EXPECTED FOR 1.5 MILLION SOVIET CITIZENS LIVING IN AFFECTED AREAS.

-LEUKEMIA RATES AMONG CHILDREN IN SOME AREAS OF THE UKRAINE ARE TWO TO FOUR TIMES NORMAL LEVELS.

-THE DEATH RATE FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN WORKING AT THE CHERNOBYL PLANT SINCE THE ACCIDENT IS 10 TIMES WHAT IT WAS BEFORE THE ACCIDENT.

THERE HAS BEEN NO GENERAL PUBLIC RELEASE OF ANY INFORMATION ON THYROID CANCER, LEUKEMIA OR DEATHS AMONG WORKERS.

AMERICAN MEDICAL EXPERTS WERE CAUTIOUS IN THEIR EVALUATION OF THE NEW DATA.

BUT ONE PUBLIC-HEALTH SPECIALIST WHO RETURNED FRIDAY FROM A 12-DAY VISIT TO THE SOVIET UNION SAID, "EVERYONE YOU TALK TO IS TELLING YOU THAT EVERY TIME THEY LOOK, THE SITUATION IS WORSE THAN BEFORE."

DR. ANTHONY ROBBINS, A PROFESSOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH AT BOSTON UNIVERSITY, SAID HE HAD CONSULTED EXTENSIVELY WITH DOCTORS AND RELIEF OFFICIALS DURING HIS VISIT.

"I DON'T THINK ANYONE THERE IS SAYING THEY'VE SEEN THE FULL EXTENT OF THE PROBLEM," HE SAID.

DR. MARVIN GOLDMAN, A PROFESSOR OF RADIATION BIOLOGY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT DAVIS WHO HAS BEEN WORKING ON A SOVIET-AMERICAN TEAM EXAMINING THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE ACCIDENT, WAS CAUTIOUS ABOUT EVALUATING WHAT HE REGARDS AS PIECEMEAL FIGURES WITHOUT A LARGER CONTEXT.

BUT, HE SAID, SOVIET EXPERTS HAVE LARGELY ABANDONED "THE PARTY LINE THEY HAD FOR THE FIRST FEW YEARS, THAT THESE DOSES ARE NOT LIKELY TO SHOW ANY DEMONSTRABLE EPIDEMIOLOGICAL CHANGES."

IN A STRIKING ADMISSION OF THE STRAIN OF CONTAINING THE PHYSICAL SUFFERING AND PUBLIC DISCONTENT, SOVIET DIPLOMATS IN WASHINGTON AND AT THE UNITED NATIONS ARE SOLICITING THE INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE THEIR GOVERNMENT ONCE SPURNED.

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USSR - (1) SOVIETS SAY CHERNOBYL DISASTER MUCH WORSE THAN ADMITTED

IN THE NEWS CONFERENCE FRIDAY, AMBASSADOR YURI V. DUBININ PRESSED HIS COUNTRY'S APPEAL FOR CHARITABLE DONATIONS OF MONEY, MEDICAL AID, FOOD AND CONSTRUCTION SUPPLIES.

HE THEN GAVE THE FLOOR TO A VISITING GROUP OF MEMBERS OF THE SOVIET PARLIAMENT, WHO GAVE THE MOST CONCRETE DATA YET ON THE EMERGING HEALTH CONSEQUENCES OF THE EXPLOSION AND FIRE ON APRIL 26, 1986, THAT SPILLED RADIOACTIVITY OVER MOST OF EUROPE.

YURI SHCHERBAK, A DOCTOR, JOURNALIST AND UKRAINIAN REPRESENTATIVE AT THE SOVIET NATIONAL LEGISLATURE, SAID 13,000 PEOPLE IN ONE UKRAINIAN VILLAGE, POLESNOYE, ARE LIVING IN AN AREA WHERE THE SURFACE CONTAMINATION OF RADIATION IS 40 CURIES PER SQUARE KILOMETER.

GOLDMAN SAID WITHOUT KNOWING WHETHER THE POPULATION OF THE VILLAGE WAS COMING IN DIRECT CONTACT WITH THE RADIATION, SUCH INFORMATION MADE IT IMPOSSIBLE TO JUDGE THE SEVERITY OF THE DOSES THEY WERE ABSORBING.

BUT HE INDICATED SUCH A LEVEL OF RADIOACTIVE CONTAMINATION IN A SETTLED AREA WAS EXTRAORDINARILY HIGH.

BEYOND THE MEDICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE CATASTROPHE FOR A LARGELY RURAL POPULATION WHOSE LANDS HAVE BEEN PERMANENTLY FOULED AND WHOSE LIVES HAVE BEEN DISTORTED, SHCHERBAK AND HIS COLLEAGUES MADE CLEAR THE INITIAL COVER-UP OF THE ACCIDENT'S SCOPE, AND THE LATER COVER-UP OF HEALTH DATA, HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE WIDE DISTRUST OF THE KREMLIN AMONG THE FAR-FLUNG AND DIVERSE ETHNIC POPULATIONS OF THE SOVIET UNION, EVEN THE RELATIVELY COMPLACENT BYELORUSSIANS AND UKRAINIANS.

GEORGI KOMAROV, A MEMBER OF THE SOVIET PARLIAMENT WHO APPEARED AT THE NEWS CONFERENCE WITH SHCHERBAK, NOTED THE SUPREME SOVIET'S DECISION TWO DAYS AGO TO SPEND \$26 BILLION ON FURTHER CHERNOBYL EXPENSES OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS.

FOR THE LAST THREE YEARS, OFFICIAL SOVIET ACCOUNTS STATED 31 PEOPLE DIED IN THE ACCIDENT AND IN THE WEEKS IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING IT, 300 PEOPLE WERE HOSPITALIZED AND 145 SUFFERED FROM ACUTE RADIATION SICKNESS.

SHCHERBAK ON FRIDAY REPEATED AN ESTIMATE THAT 300 OTHERS HAD DIED SINCE, ALMOST ALL OF THEM PEOPLE WHO WORKED AT THE PLANT OR NEAR THE REACTOR RIGHT AFTER THE BLAST.

VLADIMIR LIPSKY, A BYELORUSSIAN WRITER WHO HEADS THAT REPUBLIC'S CHILDREN'S FUND, TOLD THE GOVERNING COUNCIL OF UNICEF THIS WEEK 2.2 MILLION BYELORUSSIANS - ONE IN EVERY FIVE - ARE LIVING IN CONTAMINATED REGIONS, AND ONE OR TWO CHILDREN A WEEK IN A MINSK HOSPITAL ARE DYING OF LEUKEMIA, COMPARED TO ONE OR TWO A YEAR BEFORE THE ACCIDENT.

LIPSKY ASKED UNICEF FOR MONEY, MEDICAL DIAGNOSTIC EQUIPMENT, DISPOSABLE SYRINGES AND DOSES OF THYROID-GLAND HORMONES TO FIGHT THE EFFECTS OF THE CHERNOBYL DISASTER.

AMERICAN MEDICAL EXPERTS SAY CHILDREN GIVE EARLY WARNINGS OF THE EVENTUAL MEDICAL CONSEQUENCES OF RADIATION EXPOSURE, SINCE CHILDREN SUFFER MORE THAN ADULTS FROM HIGH DOSAGES.

AMERICAN MEDICAL EXPERTS SAY LEUKEMIAS LINKED TO RADIATION EXPOSURE ARE LIKELY TO BEGIN APPEARING IN CHILDREN TWO YEARS AFTER THEIR EXPOSURE, AND THE RATE TENDS TO GO UP SHARPLY FOR FOUR MORE YEARS BEFORE LEVELING OUT AND EVENTUALLY TAPERING OFF. ABOUT A DECADE AFTER THE FIRST APPEARANCE OF CHILDHOOD LEUKEMIA, SOLID TUMORS LINKED TO THE SAME EXPOSURE USUALLY BEGIN DEVELOPING IN ADULTS. AM/FW/