

CHERNOBYL

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B-WIRE

27-APR-1990 03:56:40

USSR - RALLIES, STRIKE MARK 4TH ANNIVERSARY OF CHERNOBYL ACCIDENT

WASHINGTON, APRIL 27 (SPECIAL) - THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE BY SCOTT SHANE APPEARS TODAY IN THE BALTIMORE SUN:

MOSCOW - WITH DEMONSTRATIONS, MEMORIAL SERVICES, A STRIKE AND A CHARITY TELETHON, THE SOVIET UNION THURSDAY MARKED THE FOURTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CHERNOBYL NUCLEAR ACCIDENT, WHOSE CATASTROPHIC CONSEQUENCES ARE STILL BEING REVEALED TO AN ATOM-WARY PUBLIC.

AN ESTIMATED 60,000 PEOPLE FILLED THE SQUARE IN FRONT OF KIEV'S ST. SOPHIA CATHEDRAL, 80 MILES FROM CHERNOBYL, FOR A RELIGIOUS SERVICE DEDICATED TO THE VICTIMS OF THE 1986 POWER PLANT DISASTER. UKRAINIAN ENVIRONMENTALIST AND PARLIAMENTARIAN YURI N. SCHERBAK SAID THIS WEEK THAT 300 PEOPLE HAVE DIED AS A RESULT OF RADIATION RELEASED DURING THE ACCIDENT.

A COMBINED RALLY AND REQUIEM FILLED A STADIUM IN MINSK, THE CAPITAL OF BYELORUSSIA, AND DEMONSTRATIONS WERE REPORTED FROM SEVERAL OTHER CITIES. IN THE BYELORUSSIAN TOWN OF GOMEL, 35,000 WORKERS STRUCK THURSDAY TO DEMAND GREATER GOVERNMENT ATTENTION TO CLEAN-UP AND EVACUATION EFFORTS, THE OFFICIAL SOVIET NEWS AGENCY TASS REPORTED.

IN A SIGN OF THE NEW, HARD-WON OPENNESS OF SOVIET AUTHORITIES ON THE ACCIDENT, THE KIEV SERVICE WAS SHOWN ON THE NATIONAL TELEVISION NEWS, CULMINATING A SERIES OF CANDID BROADCASTS THIS WEEK. MEANWHILE, ANOTHER CHANNEL BROADCAST A GLITZY, 24-HOUR TELETHON TO RAISE MONEY FOR CHILDREN SUFFERING FROM RADIATION EXPOSURE.

AN ESTIMATED 4 MILLION PEOPLE STILL LIVE IN THE IMMEDIATE CHERNOBYL FALLOUT AREA IN THE UKRAINE, SOUTHERN RUSSIA AND BYELORUSSIA. ONE-FIFTH OF THAT TERRITORY IS SAID TO BE TOO CONTAMINATED FOR AGRICULTURAL USE. ABOUT 260,000 PEOPLE ARE IN URGENT NEED OF EVACUATION, TELEVISION COMMENTATOR VLADIMIR MOLCHANOV SAID THURSDAY, AND 15,000 NEED MEDICAL CARE.

MORE THAN 100,000 PEOPLE WERE EVACUATED IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE WORLD'S WORST NUCLEAR POWER ACCIDENT, IN WHICH A TURBINE TEST SET OFF A SERIES OF EXPLOSIONS AS WELL.

IN 1986, THE ACCIDENT ITSELF WAS HUSHED UP BY SOVIET OFFICIALS UNTIL RADIATION MONITORS IN OTHER COUNTRIES FORCED THEM TO REVEAL IT. SINCE THEN, AUTHORITIES BOTH IN THE UKRAINE AND IN MOSCOW HAVE MINIMIZED THE ACCIDENT'S CONSEQUENCES, ONLY GRADUALLY ACKNOWLEDGING THE SCALE OF THE FALLOUT. (PTO)

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B-WIRE

27-APR-1990 03:58:04

USSR -(1) RALLIES, STRIKE MARK 4TH ANNIVERSARY ...

PARTICULARLY SINCE THE RETIREMENT LAST YEAR OF LONGTIME UKRAINIAN COMMUNIST PARTY CHIEF VLADIMIR V. SCHERBITSKY, THE TRUTH ABOUT CHERNOBYL HAS BEEN GRADUALLY UNVEILED.

BUT PUBLIC TRUST HAS BEEN DESTROYED, AND "RADIOPHOBIA," SOMETIMES ACCOMPANIED BY SYMPTOMS DIFFICULT TO DISTINGUISH FROM THE REAL THING, IS A COMMON MALADY. REPORTS OF MUTANT ANIMALS BORN IN THE FALLOUT AREA ARE COMMON.

IN A SURVEY OF 400 REGULAR PATIENTS OF THE CENTER FOR RADIATION MEDICINE IN KIEV, ONLY ONE SAID HE TRUSTED WHAT THE DOCTORS THERE WERE SAYING, A UKRAINIAN NEWSPAPER REPORTED IN FEBRUARY. PRIME MINISTER RYZHKOV, IN AN INTERVIEW PUBLISHED THURSDAY, NOTED THAT THE CHERNOBYL "SYNDROME WILL LONG REMAIN IN THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF PEOPLE."

HE EMPHASIZED THAT THE COUNTRY CANNOT DO WITHOUT NUCLEAR POWER, A POINT HE HAS MADE REPEATEDLY WITHOUT STOPPING THE RAPID PROGRESS OF ANTI-NUCLEAR ACTIVISTS. KR/