

CHERNOBYL

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B-WIRE

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USSR - CHERNOBYL ANNIVERSARY MARKED WITH PROTESTS, STRIKE, TELETHON
MOSCOW, APRIL 26 (AP) - WIDESPREAD PROTESTS, A 24-HOUR TELETHON
AND A STRIKE AT A MAJOR FACTORY THURSDAY ADDED UP TO THE SOVIET
UNION'S BIGGEST NATIONWIDE COMMEMORATION YET OF THE 1986 CHERNOBYL
NUCLEAR PLANT DISASTER.

RESIDENTS IN THE SOUTHWESTERN SOVIET REGIONS MOST CONTAMINATED BY
THE BLAST ORGANIZED PROTESTS THURSDAY TO DEMAND BETTER MEDICAL
TREATMENT, PROTECTION FROM RADIATION AND PUNISHMENT FOR THE OFFICIALS
WHO COVERED UP THE ACCIDENT'S EFFECTS, ACTIVISTS SAID.

IN THE BYELORUSSIAN CITY OF GOMEL, MOST OF THE 35,000 WORKERS OF
THE GOMSELMASH INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX WALKED OUT ON A DAY-LONG STRIKE,
SAID ALEXANDER KORNIIEV, A PLANT WORKER.

HE SAID STRIKERS WERE CALLING FOR BETTER MEDICAL CARE AND WANTED
ALL OFFICIALS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE COVER-UP BROUGHT TO TRIAL.

THE CHERNOBYL TELETHON, ONE OF THE SOVIET UNION'S FIRST
EXPERIENCES WITH THE INTENSIVE METHOD OF BROADCAST FUNDRAISING, HAD
COLLECTED SOME 23 MILLION RUBLES (38 MILLION DOLLARS) AND ALMOST 1
MILLION U.S. DOLLARS AFTER ITS FIRST 12 HOURS, ORGANIZERS SAID.

THE LIVE BROADCAST, ORIGINATING IN MOSCOW, INTERSPERSED SINGING
GROUPS AND INTERVIEWS WITH TRAGIC FOOTAGE SHOWING CHERNOBYL RESCUERS
AND CHILDREN IN THE CONTAMINATED ZONE SUFFERING FROM RADIATION-CAUSED
CANCERS. ALONG WITH MONEY, PLEDGES TO THE TELETHON CENTER INCLUDED
DONATIONS OF RADIATION-FREE FRUIT AND EVEN 500 KILOGRAMS (1,100
POUNDS) OF HONEY FOR CHILDREN IN THE CONTAMINATED AREA.

THE ACCIDENT WAS ONE OF THE WORST DISASTERS IN SOVIET HISTORY AND
ITS POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL FALLOUT CONTINUE BE FELT IN
THE SOVIET UNION AND AROUND THE GLOBE.

THE UKRAINIAN LEGISLATURE HAS DECLARED THURSDAY "CHERNOBYL
TRAGEDY DAY" AND ITS BYELORUSSIAN COUNTERPART PASSED A SIMILAR
MEASURE. OTHER GOVERNMENT BODIES IN THE AFFECTED AREAS SANCTIONED
WIDESPREAD DEMONSTRATIONS, AND THE SOVIET LEGISLATURE TOOK ACTION TO
ASSIST CHERNOBYL VICTIMS.

THE OFFICIAL WILLINGNESS TO PLAY UP THE CHERNOBYL ANNIVERSARY
APPEARED TO REFLECT BOTH THE GROWING SOVIET AWARENESS OF THE
CATASTROPHE'S AFTERMATH AND THE PRO-DEMOCRACY VIEWS OF MANY NEWLY
ELECTED LOCAL GOVERNING COUNCILS.

OFFICIAL REPORTS SAY 31 PEOPLE WERE KILLED WHEN ONE OF FOUR
REACTORS AT THE CHERNOBYL PLANT, IN THE UKRAINE, CAUGHT FIRE AND
EXPLODED APRIL 26, 1986. UNOFFICIAL REPORTS SAY 250 DIED. THE BLAST
SPEWED CESIUM, STRONTIUM AND PLUTONIUM OVER A WIDE AREA OF THE
UKRAINE, BYELORUSSIA AND RUSSIA, AND ALSO SENT A CLOUD OF RADIOACTIVE
GAS AROUND THE WORLD.

THE TV NEWS PROGRAM VREMYA FOCUSED ITS AFTERNOON SHOW ON
CHERNOBYL REPORTS. "WE HAVE BEEN SILENT TOO LONG," A VREMYA REPORTER
SAID.

ON THE EVE OF THE ANNIVERSARY, THE SOVIET LEGISLATURE ADOPTED A
16-BILLION-RUBLE (26-BILLION-DOLLAR) PROGRAM THAT WOULD INVOLVE
RESETTLING AN ADDITIONAL 200,000 PEOPLE FROM IRRADIATED AREAS.

THE PROGRAM WAS ADOPTED WEDNESDAY EVEN THOUGH MANY MEMBERS OF THE
LEGISLATURE, THE SUPREME SOVIET, CRITICIZED IT AS INADEQUATE TO DEAL
WITH THE HEALTH, AGRICULTURAL, ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFTERMATH
OF THE ACCIDENT.

AFTER A DAY OF DEBATE, INCLUDING CHARGES OF AN OFFICIAL COVER-UP
OF THE DISASTER AND BUNGLED EVACUATIONS, THE SUPREME SOVIET ENDORSED
A PROGRAM FOR DEALING WITH CHERNOBYL FROM 1990-1992, THE TASS NEWS
AGENCY REPORTED. FROM 180,000 TO 200,000 PEOPLE STILL LIVING IN
CONTAMINATED AREAS FOUR YEARS AFTER THE ACCIDENT ARE TO BE RESETTLED.

IN THE MONTHS AFTER THE ACCIDENT, SOME 116,000 PEOPLE WERE
EVACUATED, AND SOME SOVIET SCIENTISTS AND POLITICIANS HAVE BEEN
CAMPAIGNING SINCE THEN FOR FURTHER RESETTLEMENTS. THEY SAY A TOTAL OF
4 MILLION SOVIETS ARE LIVING ON CONTAMINATED LAND. (PTO)

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B-WIRE

26-APR-1990 15:59:16

USSR (1) - CHERNOBYL ANNIVERSARY MARKED WITH PROTESTS...

THE 16 BILLION RUBLES (26 BILLION DOLLARS) EARMARKED WEDNESDAY IS A MAJOR INCREASE IN SPENDING ON THE CHERNOBYL AFTERMATH. IT IS TWICE THE LEVEL SPENT IN THE FOUR YEARS SINCE THE ACCIDENT BUT STILL SHORT OF THE 250 BILLION RUBLES (405 BILLION DOLLARS) LEGISLATOR YURI SCHERBACK HAS ESTIMATED IS NEEDED OVER THE NEXT 10 YEARS.

MANY CHERNOBYL-AREA RESIDENTS HAVE COMPLAINED OF INADEQUATE MEDICAL CARE AND CASES OF ANEMIA, LEUKEMIA AND CANCERS HAVE BEEN REPORTED RISING AMONG PEOPLE LIVING ON IRRADIATED LAND. MANY RESIDENTS STILL EAT IRRADIATED FOOD BECAUSE ALTERNATIVES ARE NOT AVAILABLE.

DEALING WITH THE LARGER QUESTIONS POSED BY CHERNOBYL, THE SUPREME SOVIET DIRECTED THE GOVERNMENT TO DRAFT A BILL ON THE USE OF NUCLEAR ENERGY AND NUCLEAR SAFETY, AND TO PHASE OUT THE CHERNOBYL POWER PLANT. THE UKRAINIAN LEGISLATURE HAS CALLED FOR THE PLANT, WHOSE THREE REMAINING REACTORS ARE STILL OPERATING, TO BE CLOSED BY 1995.

SEVERAL OTHER NUCLEAR POWER PROJECTS AROUND THE COUNTRY WERE CANCELED BECAUSE OF THE HEIGHTENED SAFETY CONCERNS GENERATED BY THE CHERNOBYL ACCIDENT.

SOVIET PREMIER NIKOLAI I. RYZHKOV SAID IN AN INTERVIEW PUBLISHED THURSDAY THE COUNTRY WILL NOT PHASE OUT NUCLEAR ENERGY ALTOGETHER, BUT IT WILL IMPROVE SAFETY SYSTEMS.

CURRENT ESTIMATES OF CLEANUP COSTS ARE 30 TIMES THE ORIGINAL 8 BILLION RUBLES (13 BILLION DOLLARS AT THE OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATE). SURVEYS BY THE THREE REPUBLICS AFFECTED INDICATE THE COST MAY REACH 250 BILLION RUBLES (405 BILLION DOLLARS) OVER THE NEXT DECADE. MR/