

CHERNOBYL

FF107

B-WIRE

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USSR - REUTER ON CHERNOBYL

(W/CN-98)

MOSCOW, APRIL 25, REUTER - A SOVIET PARLIAMENTARIAN SAID ON THE EVE OF THE FOURTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CHERNOBYL NUCLEAR DISASTER THAT ABOUT 300 PEOPLE -- 10 TIMES THE OFFICIAL FIGURE -- HAD DIED FROM THE TRAGEDY.

YURI SHCHERBAK, WHO HAS WRITTEN A BOOK ON CHERNOBYL, SAID ON WEDNESDAY THE COST OF THE DISASTER, IN WHICH A NUCLEAR REACTOR EXPLODED AND SENT A RADIOACTIVE CLOUD ACROSS EUROPE, COULD BE AS HIGH AS 250 BILLION ROUBLES (415 BILLION DOLLARS).

MOSCOW HAS STUCK BY AN OFFICIAL DEATH TOLL OF 31. SHCHERBAK SAID THE FIGURE OF 300 WAS CALCULATED BY AN ORGANISATION CALLED THE CHERNOBYL UNION FORMED RECENTLY IN UKRAINE WHERE THE STRICKEN PLANT IS LOCATED.

MOST OF THE DEAD WERE EMPLOYEES AT THE PLANT AND EMERGENCY WORKERS WHO RUSHED THERE.

BUT THIS FIGURE WAS NOT FINAL. "SIX HUNDRED THOUSAND PEOPLE WENT THROUGH THE CHERNOBYL AREA TO ELIMINATE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE ACCIDENT," SAID SHCHERBAK, A UKRAINIAN WHO IS A MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT'S COMMITTEE ON ECOLOGY.

"IT IS NOW DIFFICULT TO SAY HOW MANY WERE AFFECTED, AND WE MUST FIND THESE PEOPLE."

HE SPOKE AT A NEWS CONFERENCE DURING A BREAK IN A PARLIAMENTARY DISCUSSION ON AN EMERGENCY 16 BILLION ROUBLE (26 BILLION DOLLAR) PROGRAMME TO HELP PEOPLE AFFECTED BY THE EXPLOSION AND FIRE AT THE POWER STATION ON APRIL 26, 1986.

SOVIET OFFICIALS RECENTLY HAVE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE DISASTER DID MORE DAMAGE THAN FIRST ANNOUNCED, AND THEIR DISCLOSURES HAVE TOUCHED OFF PUBLIC ANGER.

TENS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE MARCHED IN THE UKRAINE ON SUNDAY TO DEMAND THAT OFFICIALS BE PUT ON TRIAL FOR FAILING TO REVEAL HOW DANGEROUS THE RADIATION LEAK REALLY WAS.

MORE PROTESTS ARE EXPECTED IN NEIGHBOURING BYELORUSSIA ON THURSDAY'S ANNIVERSARY.

SHCHERBAK SAID THE ACCIDENT COULD COST MOSCOW FROM 180 TO 250 BILLION ROUBLES (300 TO 415 BILLION DOLLARS) FOR CLEANING UP CONTAMINATED AREAS, RESETTLING PEOPLE, AND PROVIDING MEDICAL CARE AND "CLEAN" FOOD FOR HUGE SECTIONS OF THE POPULATION.

HE SAID HE HAD SEEN THIS FIGURE IN A LETTER WRITTEN BY SCIENTISTS TO SOVIET PRESIDENT MIKHAIL GORBACHEV.

"BUT PRAGMATICALLY SPEAKING NO ONE KNOWS. IF INFLATION GOES UP 10 TIMES, IT WILL BE MORE."

A DEPUTY FROM BYELORUSSIA, YURI VORONEZHTEV, SAID OFFICIALS IN HIS REPUBLIC HAD CALCULATED THE ACCIDENT WOULD COST BYELORUSSIA ALONE 75 BILLION ROUBLES (125 BILLION DOLLARS), SEVERAL TIMES ITS ANNUAL BUDGET.

THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC, ALEXANDER KICHKAILO, TOLD PARLIAMENT THAT BYELORUSSIA, WHICH AT FIRST WAS THOUGHT TO HAVE BEEN ONLY marginally affected by CHERNOBYL, IN FACT RECEIVED 70 PER CENT OF THE RADIATION. (PTO)

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B-WIRE

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USSR - (1) REUTER ON CHERNOBYL

STOCKHOLM, APRIL 25, REUTER - CHERNOBYL STILL CASTS ITS ATOMIC SHADOW OVER SCANDINAVIA FOUR YEARS AFTER SWEDEN ALERTED THE WORLD TO THE SOVIET REACTOR DISASTER.

"THE SOIL CONTAINS ABOUT THE SAME RADIOACTIVITY TODAY AS IT DID JUST AFTER THE CHERNOBYL ACCIDENT," SAID RESEARCHER PER STRAND OF NORWAY'S STATE RADIATION BOARD.

"RADIATION LEVELS ARE STILL TWICE AS HIGH AS NORMAL IN MOST OF SWEDEN AND UP TO 10 TIMES HIGHER IN THE MOST AFFLICTED AREAS," SAID LEIF MOBERG, RESEARCH SECRETARY OF THE SWEDISH RADIATION PROTECTION BOARD.

THE EXPLOSION ON APRIL 26, 1986 IN THE UKRAINIAN NUCLEAR POWER STATION SOME 2,000 KILOMETRES (1,300 MILES) TO THE SOUTHEAST LAUNCHED A MASSIVE CLOUD OF RADIOACTIVE DUST WHOSE HUMAN AND ECOLOGICAL COSTS WILL BE COUNTED FOR DECADES.

SWEDEN WAS FIRST TO REPORT THE DISASTER, RAISING A FALLOUT ALARM WHEN RADIOACTIVE DUST WAS FOUND ON THE SHOES OF A WORKER ARRIVING AT A NUCLEAR POWER PLANT NORTH OF STOCKHOLM.

UNFORTUNATE WEATHER CONDITIONS STRUCK SWEDEN WITH AS MUCH AS 10 PER CENT OF THE LONG-LASTING RADIOACTIVE CESIUM-137 EMITTED FROM CHERNOBYL. SWEDEN'S NORTHEASTERN COASTLINE AND A HANDFUL OF PROVINCES IN NORWAY AND FINLAND WERE WORST AFFECTED.

RADIATION EXPERTS ADVISE AGAINST EATING LARGE AMOUNTS OF GAME, FRESHWATER FISH, WILD MUSHROOMS, OR BERRIES IN SOME PARTS OF SCANDINAVIA -- DAMAGING CHERISHED NATURE-LOVING LIFESTYLES.

LAPP HERDERS, FORCED TO KILL UP TO 80 PER CENT OF THEIR REINDEER IMMEDIATELY AFTER CHERNOBYL, REMAIN CONCERNED ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THEIR ANCIENT NOMADIC CULTURE, THOUGH RADIATION IN REINDEER MEAT IS NOW MOSTLY DOWN TO ACCEPTABLE LEVELS.

NORWAY STILL SPENDS UP TO 50 MILLION CROWNS (7.5 MILLION DOLLARS) A YEAR ON MEASURES TO HELP REDUCE RADIOACTIVITY IN FOOD, PARTICULARLY MEAT FROM REINDEER AND SHEEP, STRAND SAID.

SWEDEN HAS PAID 200 MILLION CROWNS (30 MILLION DOLLARS) IN COMPENSATION FOR CONTAMINATED FOODSTUFFS TO LAPPS AND FARMERS.

IN SOME PARTS OF SWEDEN, PEOPLE WILL HAVE TO LIMIT CONSUMPTION OF GAME AND FISH AND CHECK RADIATION LEVELS IN MEAT FOR YEARS, PERHAPS DECADES, TO COME, MOBERG SAID.

IN THE WORST AFFECTED PART OF FINLAND, A BELT ACROSS THE SOUTH AND MIDDLE, PEOPLE ARE RECOMMENDED NOT TO EAT LAKE FISH MORE THAN TWICE A WEEK.

THE DISASTER ALSO ALERTED THE WORLD TO CROSS-BOUNDARY EFFECTS OF THE NUCLEAR ENERGY DREAM. FINNISH MEDIA CLOSELY FOLLOWS SOVIET PLANS FOR A NEW 6,000-MEGAWATT NUCLEAR POWER STATION IN KARELIA, CLOSE TO THE BORDER.

SWEDEN HAS SIGNED BILATERAL AGREEMENTS WITH THE SOVIET UNION, EAST GERMANY AND POLAND TO SHARE INFORMATION ABOUT ATOMIC POWER SAFETY AND ALERT EACH OTHER URGENTLY TO NUCLEAR ACCIDENTS.

IT IS ALSO EXPANDING A SOPHISTICATED RADIATION MONITORING SYSTEM AND IMPROVING THE COORDINATION AND TRAINING OF NUCLEAR AUTHORITIES AND EMERGENCY STAFF.

"THE BRIGHT SIDE OF CHERNOBYL IS THAT IT OPENED OUR EYES. IF IT HAPPENED AGAIN WE WOULD BE MUCH BETTER PREPARED," SAID SVEN CARLSSON OF THE SWEDISH RADIATION PROTECTION BOARD.

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