

CHERNOBYL

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USSR - THOUSANDS STILL LIVING IN CONTAMINATED AREAS, MOSCOW ADMITS

WASHINGTON, APRIL 23 (SPECIAL) - THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE BY MICHAEL PARKS APPEARS TODAY IN THE LOS ANGELES TIMES:

MOSCOW - THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT, ALLOCATING \$26 BILLION IN ADDITIONAL FUNDS TO HELP THE VICTIMS OF THE CHERNOBYL NUCLEAR DISASTER FOUR YEARS AGO, ACKNOWLEDGED SUNDAY THAT THOUSANDS UPON THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE ARE STILL LIVING IN AREAS DANGEROUSLY CONTAMINATED BY RADIOACTIVE FALLOUT, AND EVEN MORE ARE EATING FOOD GROWN IN THOSE AREAS.

ACTING AMID MOUNTING CRITICISM THAT IT WAS DOING TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE AND THUS COMPOUNDING THE CHERNOBYL TRAGEDY, THE SOVIET COUNCIL OF MINISTERS APPROVED AN EMERGENCY PROGRAM FOCUSED ON PROTECTING THE SAFETY AND HEALTH OF THOSE IN THE AFFECTED AREAS, AS MANY AS 3 MILLION TO 4 MILLION PEOPLE, THE OFFICIAL NEWS AGENCY TASS REPORTED.

THE NEW PROGRAM PROVIDES FOR THE URGENT RESETTLEMENT OF SOME OF THOSE LIVING IN CONTAMINATED AREAS, IMPROVED MEDICAL CARE FOR THOSE SUFFERING FROM RADIATION ILLNESSES, PROVISION OF "CLEAN" FOOD TO REPLACE THAT STILL BEING GROWN IN THE RADIATION ZONE AND GREATER WELFARE BENEFITS TO THE CHERNOBYL VICTIMS, PARTICULARLY CHILDREN AND THE ELDERLY.

UNDER THE PROGRAM, WHICH WAS APPROVED BY THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OVER THE WEEKEND AND IS SCHEDULED TO BE SUBMITTED THIS WEEK TO THE SUPREME SOVIET, THE COUNTRY'S LEGISLATURE, A MAJOR EFFORT WILL BE MADE TO IMPROVE MEDICAL SERVICES THROUGHOUT THE AFFECTED AREA AND COMBINE THEM WITH ADVANCED RESEARCH ON THE TREATMENT OF RADIATION SICKNESS.

NEARLY 100,000 PEOPLE HAVE BEEN RESETTLED AS A RESULT OF THE RADIATION AND THE FALLOUT FROM THE APRIL 26, 1986, EXPLOSION. HOWEVER, MANY MORE STILL LIVE IN THE CONTAMINATED AREAS, INCLUDING 118 VILLAGES WHERE RADIATION LEVELS ARE EIGHT TIMES OR MORE GREATER THAN THE LEVEL DEFINED AS ACCEPTABLE BY THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT AND SOME SO DANGEROUS THAT LIVESTOCK, TREES AND PLANTS ARE GROSSLY DEFORMED.

RESPONDING TO GROWING CRITICISM HERE OVER ITS ESTIMATION - NOW REGARDED AS SHOCKINGLY LOW - OF THE DANGER POSED BY CHERNOBYL, THE WORLD'S WORST NUCLEAR DISASTER, THE GOVERNMENT HAS ALSO ORDERED A COMPREHENSIVE SET OF PLANS BE DRAWN UP BY SOVIET AND FOREIGN SPECIALISTS FOR DEALING WITH THE ACCIDENT'S AFTERMATH. THE AREAS INCLUDE THE UKRAINE, BYELORUSSIA AND NEIGHBORING PARTS OF THE RUSSIAN REPUBLIC, ACCORDING TO TASS.

ALTHOUGH LARGER THAN ANYTHING THE GOVERNMENT HAS UNDERTAKEN SINCE THE RESCUE AND CLEANUP OPERATION THAT IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWED THE DISASTER, THE NEW PROGRAM FALLS FAR SHORT OF WHAT SOVIET ENVIRONMENTALISTS BELIEVE IS REQUIRED.

AS IF TO UNDERSCORE THAT POINT, TENS OF THOUSANDS OF UKRAINIANS MARCHED THROUGH THE REPUBLIC'S CAPITAL OF KIEV ON SUNDAY DEMANDING GREATER EFFORTS.

SPEAKERS AT A CLOSING RALLY CALLED FOR UKRAINIAN OFFICIALS TO BE PUT ON TRIAL, INCLUDING VALENTINA SHEVCHENKO, NOW THE REPUBLIC'S PRESIDENT AND ITS DEPUTY PREMIER FOUR YEARS AGO, FOR FAILING TO TELL PEOPLE OF THE DANGER AND FOR FAILING TO TAKE BROADER EMERGENCY ACTIONS THAT BOTH SOVIET AND FOREIGN RADIATION SPECIALISTS ARE SAID TO HAVE RECOMMENDED.

BUT THE MARCH AND RALLY, WHICH DREW AN ESTIMATED 50,000 TO 70,000 PEOPLE, QUICKLY BECAME AN EXPRESSION OF RESURGENT UKRAINIAN NATIONALISM. PROTESTERS DEMANDED INDEPENDENCE FOR THE REPUBLIC, CHANTING "DOWN WITH BOLSHEVISM\$" AND "DOWN WITH LENINISM\$" AND SINGING THE ANTHEM OF THE UKRAINIAN FORCES, WHICH WERE DEFEATED BY THE BOLSHEVIKS IN 1920 IN THE WAKE OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION.

FURTHER DEMONSTRATIONS ARE PLANNED FOR THURSDAY, THE FOURTH

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USSR - (1) THOUSANDS STILL LIVING IN CONTAMINATED AREAS ...

CONCERN IS GROWING HERE THAT THE CONTAMINATION FROM CHERNOBYL IS SPREADING - RADIOACTIVE PARTICLES OF METAL, DIRT AND DEBRIS CARRIED BY WIND - THROUGH THE REGION'S RIVERS AND LAKES, EVEN THROUGH THE FOOD CHAIN.

"RADIATION STRUCK EVERYTHING - FOOD, WATER, THE FORESTS," ALEXANDER YABLOKOV, A DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF THE SUPREME SOVIET'S ECOLOGY COMMISSION, SAID FOLLOWING HEARINGS LAST WEEK ON THE AFTERMATH OF CHERNOBYL.

WINDS SPREAD THE RADIOACTIVE DUST, AS DID FOREST FIRES, HE ADDED. MIGRATING BIRDS AND WILDLIFE CARRIED THE RADIATION AND RADIATION-GENERATED DISEASES EVEN FARTHER.

THE GOVERNMENT'S MAPS OF THE FALLOUT AREAS, SHOWING CONCENTRATIONS OF STRONTIUM 90 AND CESIUM 137, HAD PROVED INACCURATE, YABLOKOV SAID, BUT THE REAL PROBLEM WAS SIMPLY THAT EACH ELEMENT HAD A RATHER LONG HALF-LIFE, OR PERIOD OF DECAY, OF ABOUT 30 YEARS.

YURI SHCHERBAK, ANOTHER VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE SUPREME SOVIET'S ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION, ESTIMATED EARLIER THIS MONTH THAT MORE THAN 4 MILLION PEOPLE STILL LIVE IN DANGEROUSLY CONTAMINATED AREAS AND THAT A 10-YEAR PROGRAM OF MEDICAL CARE FOR THEM, REHABILITATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND FURTHER DECONTAMINATION WOULD COST A TOTAL \$320 BILLION.

MORE THAN 200,000 CHILDREN ARE ALSO BELIEVED TO BE LIVING IN SERIOUSLY AFFECTED AREAS, ACCORDING TO MEDICAL OFFICIALS, AND THEIR FATE IS AN INCREASING WORRY FOR THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, WHICH FEARS FOR THE FUTURE OF THE SOVIET UNION AS A SLAVIC NATION. IN MARCH, 51 UKRAINIAN CHILDREN WERE SENT TO ISRAEL FOR TREATMENT OF RADIATION SICKNESS, AND MORE ARE SCHEDULED TO GO AS PART OF THE NEW CAMPAIGN TO FOCUS ON THE CHILDREN AFFECTED BY THE FALLOUT.

BUT THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE AFFECTED IS FAR GREATER THAN ORIGINALLY ESTIMATED, AND THAT WORRIES OFFICIALS ATTEMPTING TO COPE WITH THE AFTERMATH AND ECOLOGISTS WHO FEAR EVEN GREATER DAMAGE TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL SYSTEM THAN NOW SEEN.

OFFICIAL FIGURES SHOW THAT 31 PEOPLE DIED AS A RESULT OF AN EXPLOSION AND FIRE AT THE CHERNOBYL ATOMIC ENERGY STATION IN THE UKRAINE IN THE FIRST FEW HOURS FOLLOWING THE BLAST. BUT SOME SOVIET OFFICIALS HAVE SUGGESTED THAT THE NUMBER OF DEAD IS NOW MORE THAN 250, THOUGH THIS ESTIMATE HAS NOT BEEN VERIFIED BY PATHOLOGISTS.

IN BYELORUSSIA, AN ESTIMATED 118,000 MORE PEOPLE MUST BE EVACUATED FROM CONTAMINATED AREAS, ACCORDING TO GOVERNMENTAL OFFICIALS THERE, AND 17,000 SHOULD BE MOVED IMMEDIATELY. ONLY 25,000 PEOPLE HAVE BEEN RESETTLED SINCE THE DISASTER.

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