

Nazarbaev did not refer to the commission directly, but his warning that certain students and members of the intelligentsia are continuing to pour oil on the fire of interethnic conflict suggests that the Party leader is nervous about the activities of Shakhanov and his helpers. He apparently fears that in their zeal they will endanger the rather fragile stability in interethnic relations that has existed in the republic since the Alma-Ata events and that has already been damaged by

the interethnic disturbances that occurred last summer in Novyi Uzen' and other towns in western Kazakhstan.¹⁵

¹⁵ See Ann Sheehy, "Interethnic Disturbances in Western Kazakhstan," *Report on the USSR*, No. 27, 1989, pp. 11-14; and Nazarbaev's speech to young people in Alma-Ata in *Kazakhstanskaya pravda*, January 17, 1990.

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UKRAINE

Areas of Northern Ukraine to Be Evacuated

David Marples

The Ukrainian government recently issued a decree ordering the evacuation of several settlements in Zhitomir and Kiev Oblasts that are still suffering the impact of radioactive fallout from the Chernobyl' disaster of April, 1986. Although the decree represents a step forward, it provides for the evacuation of only a fraction of the villages affected by high levels of radiation and is therefore seen as inadequate by those who have long advocated such a move. In Ukraine today, and particularly at Chernobyl' itself, a major debate is taking place on the relative feasibility of evacuating a very large number of people, or, alternatively, of ensuring that territories are rendered safer by more extensive decontamination techniques. At the same time, there is increasing evidence that the number of settlements in which radiation levels are still dangerously high is considerably larger than officially acknowledged.

Commenting on the new decree, Konstantin Masyk, chairman of the Permanent Extraordinary Commission established by the Ukrainian government to investigate the effects of Chernobyl', noted that a considerable amount of work had been carried out to secure the future of the 92,000 residents already evacuated from the Ukrainian side of the designated thirty-kilometer zone around the damaged reactor.¹ Nevertheless, he said, efforts to secure safe living conditions in the remainder of the settlements affected by Chernobyl' have not proved successful everywhere, and therefore fifteen settlements have been designated for prompt evacuation. Of these, thirteen are located in Narodichi Raion, Zhitomir Oblast—Rudnya, Ososhnya, Khristinovka, Malye Klishchi, Peremoga, Khriplya, Malye

Min'ki, Zvizdal', Shishelovka, Velikie Klishchi, Polis'ke, Nozdrishche, and Staroe Sharne.² Two other villages are located in the Poleskoe Raion of Kiev Oblast, namely, Yasen' and Shevchenkovo.

In addition, the removal of residents from the raion centers of Narodichi and Poleskoe will proceed in stages. Previously, the authorities had maintained that there was no need to evacuate Narodichi itself. The fifteen settlements are to be emptied in the course of 1990 and 1991, three years earlier than original prognostications had suggested. They embrace about 3,370 families, or 5,500 people. Of these families, 2,910 are scheduled to receive new homes later this year. Evidently the families are being moved primarily to the southern regions of Kiev and Zhitomir Oblasts, where 2,300 cottages and eighteen apartment blocks are being constructed to house them. Those working temporarily in the thirty-kilometer zone (mainly staff of the "Kombinat" production association) will also be housed permanently in these new residential complexes.

The decree represents the culmination of frantic and protracted protests by the residents of Narodichi Raion and by organizations such as the "Zelenyi svit" (Green World) ecological association that have long pleaded their case. Nevertheless, the fifteen villages represent a very small proportion of those affected by high levels of radiation. One of the difficulties in resolving this predicament has

² These are the same villages that were cited during a meeting in Narodichi in March, 1989, at which members of the Ukrainian Committee for Hydrometeorology were present. Rudnya and Ososhnya are twin settlements, however, and were at that time listed as one, making a total of twelve villages that were said to merit evacuation in Narodichi Raion (*Zhovtnevi zori*, April 4, 1989).

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¹ *Radyans'ka Ukraina*, January 5, 1990.

been the shortage of adequate resources with which to carry out an evacuation. Masyk indicated, however, that a republic-wide campaign is to be initiated to construct new housing for evacuees, involving building organizations from the majority of Ukrainian oblasts, each under the control of a deputy chairman of the relevant oblast government, and with the aid of various all-Union and republican ministries.

In other regions, however, decontamination has been favored over evacuation as a more expedient solution. Thus, on November 3, 1989, a meeting took place in the Party committee of the "Kombinat" production association, which was created after the Chernobyl' accident to supervise the clean-up operation. For the most part, "Kombinat" has been concerned with cleaning the thirty-kilometer zone, but last summer its activities were expanded to include parts of Poleskoe Raion. In particular, it signed an agreement with the Kiev Oblast government to examine the feasibility of introducing farming and to make recommendations to prevent individuals in the settlements of Polis'ke, Grezila, Novaya Markovka, and Zhovtneve from receiving high doses of radiation (exceeding thirty-five rems over a lifetime, a norm that was introduced on January 1, 1990).³ A sum of almost 20 million rubles has been designated for this task, which will be carried out between August 15, 1989, and June 30, 1991.⁴

This campaign has given rise to a dispute between the deputy chief engineer of "Kombinat," A. G. Chekalov, and a secretary in the Department of Dosimetric Control of this same association, A. G. Zhidik. The latter has stated that specialists are in no doubt about the need to evacuate residents in the above villages without delay. Chekalov, on the other hand, is reported to consider it more expedient to decontaminate the settlements so that relatively normal living conditions can be procured. The debate has been featured in the newspaper for the staff of "Kombinat," *Trudovaya vakhta*, which is published and distributed only in the town of Chernobyl' itself.⁵ At the above-mentioned meeting, representatives of "Zelenyi svit" were also in attendance, a sign of this organization's growing influence in Ukrainian life.

A representative of "Zelenyi svit," A. Hlazovy, notes that Chekalov is one of the signatories to a technical report on the radiation situation in the four settlements of Poleskoe Raion. The Department of Dosimetric Control, together with specialists from the Institute of Nuclear Research at the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, carried out radiation checks in the presence of farmers and committees made up of concerned local residents. Hlazovy praises the attitude of the dosimetrists, who evidently went about their work as if it were their own families who were affected. This sort of thinking, Hlazovy declares, has been in short supply in these post-accident years. The ensuing report concluded that the cost of decontamination work

would greatly exceed the amount of money assigned for it and that the alternative of evacuation should be considered.

The report observed that, in the summer of 1989, official prognoses about Poleskoe Raion were not so gloomy and that a subsequent decree of the USSR Ministry of Health (October 21, 1989) had foreseen the possibility of normalization of life there and the transferral of cattle onto clean pasture. But this analysis turned out to be erroneous. Instead, it proved virtually impossible to decontaminate a wide area of affected land, and a new investigation undertaken by "Kombinat" and the Institute of Biophysics revealed that not only areas to the west of Chernobyl', but also the city for Chernobyl' operatives, Slavutich, to the east, were zones of concern, a point that appeared to confirm earlier fears about the location of this newly constructed settlement of 10,000.

This error of judgment had arisen, according to Hlazovy, because of mistakes committed by specialists from the State Committee for Hydrometeorology in the selection of areas for soil samples and because the amount of data collected was inadequate to draw conclusions from. In view of this surprising revelation, Hlazovy notes that he was also taken aback by the reaction of Chekalov at the "Kombinat" Party meeting, when the latter suggested that the contents of the report be ignored. Chekalov and his supporters adhere to the view that, whereas decontamination work requires only "technology, people, and time," the construction process that is concomitant with any mass evacuation of people necessitates materials, funds, the employment of specialists, and more. In other words, financial considerations have been uppermost in the minds of those who oppose a major evacuation of affected areas.

As Hlazovy notes, when such financial considerations are in the ascendancy, there is no guarantee that the health and safety of local residents will receive top priority. He paints a disarming portrait of local farmers, effusive with gratitude to dosimetrists for revealing the true radiation picture in their vicinity. It is a familiar tale in the post-Chernobyl' saga, and one that has pervaded areas much further away from the scene of the accident. Thus, in the Rovno Oblast of Western Ukraine last month, meetings were held at the raion centers of Rokitnoe and Dubrovitsa to discuss, very belatedly, the impact of radiation on local settlements. The chairman of the Rovno Oblast Executive Committee, A.V. Yershov, remarked at this meeting that, until now, a curtain has been drawn over the effects of radiation in Rovno Oblast. Now, however, he said, it is essential to improve medical services and to provide the two raions with clean supplies of food and "ecologically safe" pastures for livestock.⁶

These comments are an indication of the scope of the problem. The situation will now be alleviated by the relatively quick evacuation of the fifteen villages in the Narodichi and Poleskoe Raions cited above, although

³ See *News from Ukraine*, No. 50, 1989.

⁴ *Robotnycha hazeta*, December 22, 1989.

⁵ *Trudovaya vakhta*, November 10, 1989.

⁶ *Radyans'ka Ukraina*, December 24, 1989.

even this has only now been made possible after belated official recognition of a predicament that became evident as long ago as last spring. In the meantime, new and equally serious problems have been revealed, and their resolution is clearly being impeded at every turn by some officials who have chosen to ignore or dispense with evidence collected by specialists. In turn, the information that the State Committee for Hydrometeorology made

"mistakes" in its original analysis has disturbing implications. Does it indicate, for example, that most of the data released about the level of radioactivity is inaccurate? It is one thing for official data to be classified but quite another for that data to be declared erroneous, particularly in the light of the new and controversial radiation limits now in effect.

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