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Chernobyl's Dirty Secrets

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My archive consists of piles of secret documents on Chernobyl from the Communist Party Central Committee. They reveal why millions suffered and still suffer from the Chernobyl accident in April 1986.

I first gained access to the most classified of those documents in 1991 when I was elected as a deputy to the Soviet Congress of People's Deputies from the city of Zhitomir, just 135 kilometers from Chernobyl. The Communist Party initially banned access to those files, but the secret Central Committee protocols regarding the accident were finally made available to deputies.

These documents reveal that the Politburo first met to discuss the Chernobyl accident on April 29, 1986, three days after the explosion. Then a flood of messages beginning May 4 document the hospitalization of area residents. Judging from the minutes, the number of patients was growing daily and had already reached several thousand.

For example: "Classified. Minutes No. 12. May 12, 1986. A total of 10,198 people have been

hospitalized for examination and treatment, of which 345 show symptoms of radiation sickness."

But most of them were released and sent home. It seems that the more the radiation spread, the healthier the Soviet people became. And here is the reason for this unexpected "miracle cure:"

"Classified. Minutes No. 9. May 8, 1986. The Health Ministry of the Soviet Union has approved new acceptable levels of radiation to which the public can be exposed and that are 10 times higher than former levels. In special cases, levels up to 50 times higher than former levels are acceptable."

The Kremlin was willing to do anything to conceal the extent of the radiation exposure. Only two months had passed since residents had been evacuated from homes within an 30-kilometer radius of the plant when the authorities hurriedly began the opposite process: resettlement.

"Classified. Minutes No. 29. June 23, 1986. Report on the possibility of returning children and pregnant women to areas with radiation levels within the range of 2 millirems per hour to 5 millirems per hour."

To put this in perspective, the U.S. government sets the maximum allowable exposure of an adult working with radioactive material at fewer than 6,000 millirems per year and recommends that human fetuses be exposed to no more than 50 millirems per month.

Another highlight from the Kremlin's criminal acts is its "secret recipe" for making radioactive meat and milk edible. It reads:

"Top secret. Resolution of the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee on May 8, 1986. Minutes recorded by Comrade V.S. Murakhovsky. ... When slaughtering livestock and pigs, it has been found that their meat can be made fit for consumption by washing the stomachs with water and removing the lymph nodes."

Apparently, the Politburo was thinking of new ways to make fillings for pirozhki:

"Classified. Addendum to Item 10 of Minutes No. 32. ... Distribute meat contaminated by radiation as widely as possibly throughout the country and use it in a ratio of 1:10 with normal meat to make sausage, canned and processed meat."

Five years after the Chernobyl disaster, Deputy Prosecutor General V.I. Andreyev gave this written answer to my inquiries as a deputy: "From the period of 1986 to 1989 the indicated areas produced 47.5 tons of meat and 2 million tons of milk with higher than acceptable levels of contamination. ... These circumstances placed approximately 75 million people in dangerous living conditions ... and created conditions for increased mortality, a higher incidence of malignancies, a greater number of deformities. ... For 1.5 million people alone — including 160,000 children under the age of seven — the thyroid glands in 87 percent of the adults and 48 percent of the children were exposed to radiation doses of 30,000 millirems, 11 percent and 35 percent respectively were exposed to doses from 30,000 to 100,000 millirems, and 2 percent of adults and 17 percent of children were exposed to doses exceeding 100,000

millirems."

Despite these horrific figures, no top official was ever prosecuted for the multiple acts of criminal negligence for both the Chernobyl accident itself or the rescue mission afterward.

The top priority for the Communist Party bureaucrats was to "strengthen propaganda measures aimed at exposing the deceitful fabrications of bourgeois information and intelligence agencies regarding events at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant."

Alla Yaroshinskaya is author of "Chernobyl. Crime Without Punishment," published by Vremya in 2006 to coincide with the 20th anniversary of the Chernobyl accident. This book will be published in English by Transaction in August. She is also the author of "Chernobyl: The Big Lie," which was published in April.

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