Former Head of Chernobyl Nuclear Plant Dies

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Viktor Bryukhanov (left) at a 1987 session of the Soviet Union's Supreme Court when he was jailed for his role in the 1986 nuclear disaster. **Vladimir Samokhotsky / TASS**

The director of the Chernobyl nuclear plant who oversaw the disaster and initial response efforts has died aged 85, the plant's press service announced Wednesday.

Viktor Bryukhanov was the plant's first and only director during its years of operation, having also managed the construction of the Chernobyl nuclear station from 1970 to 1977.

Bryukhanov was fired within weeks of the April 1986 explosion. Authorities in Soviet Ukraine sentenced him to 10 years in prison on charges of safety violations. He was released after he had served half of his jail term.

The Chernobyl nuclear power station's press service announced Bryukhanov's passing on its Facebook page Wednesday. It did not indicate a cause of death.

"The plant team and administration express their deepest condolences to the family and

friends of the deceased," it said.

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Bryukhanov was famously portrayed by Con O'Neill in HBO's critically acclaimed 2019 "Chernobyl" miniseries, which documented the aftermath of the nuclear accident and the Soviet-era mismanagement of the response efforts.

The April 1986 explosion at the Chernobyl power plant in Soviet Ukraine spread radioactive material across much of the Northern Hemisphere, affecting tens of thousands of people.

Secret documents declassified by Ukraine earlier this year showed Bryukhanov's first post-disaster report assured the authorities that radiation levels following the meltdown were "[under control](#)."

Born in Soviet Uzbekistan on Dec. 1, 1935, Bryukhanov relocated to Ukraine, also part of the U.S.S.R., in 1966 after graduating with an electrical engineering degree from the Tashkent Polytechnic Institute and working at the country's thermal power plant.

Following the disaster and his release from prison, Bryukhanov moved to Kiev and worked for Ukraine's Economic Development and Trade Ministry.

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