



AT PRESS CONFERENCE IN MOSCOW

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Addressing a press conference here today USSR Deputy Foreign Minister Anatoly Kovalyov stated: "Sincere gratitude is expressed in the Soviet Union to governments, public organizations, individuals, who expressed sympathies in connection with the accident at the Chernobyl atomic power station. We gratefully accept the assistance which is offered with good intentions and which might prove useful".

"On the other hand, inventions, falsehoods that are heaped up around the Chernobyl accident have a clearly hostile attitude underlying them", the First Deputy Minister said.

"What has happened at Chernobyl is, certainly, a misfortune. But lessons can be learned not only from achievements, but also from tragedies", Kovalyov said.

The lessons of what happened confirmed again the chief conclusion that the governments, peoples, all of mankind should not forget the immense dangers of nuclear weapons.

That explained why it was so important to achieve without delay the cessation of all nuclear tests, and start finally the reduction, down to total elimination, of nuclear weapons.

Touching upon the Statement of the leaders of seven major industrial nations in Tokyo on problems of nuclear safety, Kovalyov said that while making statements that have an objective and on the whole positive nature, they also make a reproach about the information granted by the Soviet side. "But this reproach cannot be accepted", the Deputy Minister said.

"As soon as reliable information appeared, this was immediately reported", Kovalyov said. "As soon as we came to know particulars of the situation in the area of the accident, we started issuing information and do so almost every day"

For purposes of the safety of residents, they have been evacuated from areas adjoining the station. The evacuation took just 2 hours. The necessary aid - medical, material - has been given to them at the new places of residence.

Boris Shcherbina noted that the commission had not yet ended its work. Final results will be submitted by us according to the established procedure; we have nothing to hide.

Ivan Yemelyanov, corresponding member of the USSR Academy of Sciences, told the press conference that the chain reaction of fission in the damaged reactor was halted. The reaction was stopped automatically.

Yuri Sedunov, First Deputy Chairman of the State Committee of the USSR for Hydrometeorology and Control of the Environment, said that the main rise in the level of radioactivity was observed only in the area of the nuclear power station and there was no direct threat to the population of foreign countries. True, the waves of somewhat enhanced natural radiation were observed in several countries. The effect was short-lived and insignificant.

The scientific and technical level of work connected with nuclear power engineering in the USSR and of the designs of atomic power stations and nuclear reactors is very good, said Andranik Petrosyants, Chairman of the State Committee of the USSR for the use of atomic energy. A number of items are superior to Western makes.

Forty-one atomic power-generating units are operating in the USSR. It is incorrect to claim that atomic power engineering in the USSR is worse than abroad.

Boris Shcherbina said that new additional measures will have to be taken to ensure a greater reliability of the stations. As for the Soviet Union, new capacities of almost 40 million kilowatts will be put into operation at nuclear power stations in the next five years.

Right after the accident, the USSR notified by a special cable Hans Blix, IAEA General Director, who at once expressed gratitude for such dispatch. He asked to continue informing him and we do it regularly.

Boris Shcherbina, Chairman of the governmental commission on taking measures to overcome the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power station and determine its causes, Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers, told the press conference that the radiation situation is being normalized in the area of Chernobyl as a result of the measures which were taken. Its level has declined still more in the past 24 hours.

He said results of the systematic monitoring of radioactive contamination of terrain on the territory of the Ukraine, Byelorussia and Moldavia showed that the radiation level had not exceeded the norms of radiation safety established by the International Atomic Energy Agency and the USSR Health Ministry. Water facilities and the Kiev water reservoir were kept under regular control.

Increased levels were recorded on the territory in the immediate proximity of the site of the accident where maximum radiation levels now reached 10-15 milliroentgens per hour. The highest radiation was recorded there on April 27.

Boris Shcherbina said that the likeliest cause of the accident was a chemical explosion in the reactor. In view of fact that the design was in keeping with both Soviet and international standards and that there was strict control over the assembly and commissioning of the equipment, it can be said that the accident has been the result of the coincidence of several highly improbable and therefore unforeseen failures.

Two persons had died as a result of the accident. More than 100 others had sustained radiation injury. On the night of April 27 all of them were brought to Moscow where they are given the necessary medical aid.