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*From the Private Secretary*MR. UNWIN**CHERNOBYL: SOVIET MANAGEMENT OF THE CRISIS**

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The Prime Minister has read with considerable interest the recent JIC note on this subject. She has asked what contingency plans we are now making. Although our safety procedures are much better than those in the Soviet Union, she feels that we should be ready.

I am copying this minute to Sir Percy Cradock.

CDP

20 June, 1986.

TOP SECRET

file  
12



Prime Minister 13  
CDP  
23/6

SECRET

P 02125

From: J B UNWIN  
23 June 1986

MR POWELL

CHERNOBYL

Thank you for your minute of 20 June about contingency plans following the Chernobyl disaster.

2. As David Norgrove is aware, I have set in hand a comprehensive exercise in the Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU) to review all relevant UK plans in the light of the Chernobyl experience. Work is already in train in a CCU Working Group chaired by Brigadier Budd. I have asked him to produce a progress report by the end of July, and the full report by mid-October. I propose to submit this to Ministers after consideration by the full CCU.

3. For convenience I attach the Terms of Reference of the Study, which have been agreed with Permanent Secretaries. You will see that these cover a wide range of aspects of our contingency plans for dealing with major nuclear or other incidents occurring within our outside the UK.

J B UNWIN

Cabinet Office

3. The Group's Terms of Reference are:-

a. In the light of experience in the United Kingdom following the recent release of radioactive material from the Soviet Nuclear power station at Chernobyl the Working Group is to examine all aspects of existing UK National contingency plans for coping with the effects of incidents involving the release of radioactive material; occurring within or outside the UK and involving civil or military establishments or equipment; with a view to recommending improvements, to permit a more effective response to be made to any future similar incidents.

b. The following specific points should be covered:

- i. A brief historical survey of the Chernobyl incident;
- ii. Identification of the ways in which current plans proved inadequate;
- iii. Assessment of the range of possibilities of similar incidents, with the potential to affect any part of the UK, occurring in the future and their probable effects;

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iv. The adequacy of early warning systems, including intelligence assessments, meteorological forecasts and "nuclear network" arrangements;

v. The adequacy of arrangements for monitoring and the collation and interpretation of data prior to health assessments;

vi. The effectiveness of arrangements for coordinating the provision of information and/or advice to the media, and directly to the public, to include the adequacy of communications available for this purpose and the possibility of using departmental regional facilities where appropriate;

vii. The desirability of nominating a lead department and identification of the responsibilities such a department should undertake;

viii. The role of the Civil Contingencies Unit;

ix. The role of local authorities in the light of their responsibilities for emergency planning and civil defence;

x. The effectiveness of arrangements for providing advice to UK citizens in affected areas overseas and their reception on return to this country;

xi. The efficiency of arrangements for cooperating with other European Community states, particularly in areas of Community competence, such as external and internal trade;

xii. The adequacy of legal powers available to control the import of goods contaminated with radioactivity and the appropriate circumstances for their use;

xiii. The possibility of recommended improvements to national plans being applicable to incidents other than those involving radioactivity eg. toxic gases as experienced in the Bhopal and Seveso incidents.

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4. The Group is to complete its work as quickly as practicable but, at the latest, a report should be ready for consideration by the Civil Contingencies Unit at official level by mid October 1986, with a view to a report being submitted to Ministers by the end of that month. The Group has been requested to produce an interim report, for the Permanent Secretaries who met under Sir Robert Armstrong's chairmanship on 4 June, by the end of July.

signed BRIGADIER J A J BUDD

Cabinet Office  
10 June 1986

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DISASTERS Soviet Nuclear Disaster 4/86

