

# News Digest

By The Associated Press

## Three months after Chernobyl

### Disaster draws review of Kremlin's ambitious nuclear program

MOSCOW — The Chernobyl nuclear accident has created ghost towns, cost top government officials their jobs and triggered a review of the ambitious nuclear program that is the cornerstone of the Kremlin's future energy policy.

Three months after the reactor exploded in a radioactive fireball April 26 in the Ukraine, workers are still cleaning up and the nation's highest authorities are undertaking an unusual public accounting of an unprecedented disaster.

On July 19, the ruling Politburo blamed the accident on gross negligence of plant workers and officials it said ignored safety procedures and undertook experiments without proper precautions.

Most of what is known about the accident comes from official Soviet accounts; few foreigners have been allowed near the plant.

But a picture of some proportions has emerged of what happened at 1:23 a.m., Saturday, April 26, 1986, in Chernobyl's No. 4 reactor near the town of Pripjat, 80 miles north of Kiev, in the Ukraine.

#### The Accident

The No. 4 reactor had been shut down. Without notification, and in violation of safety rules and without proper supervision, workers began experimenting on one of the electricity-producing turbines, according to the Politburo account.

The reactor, cooled by water and moderated by graphite, surged from 6 percent of capacity to 50 percent in 10 seconds. The water cooling

system couldn't handle the overload. Water combined with the graphite and produced hydrogen that exploded. The blast ripped open the reactor core and set fire to the building around it.

One official said the first blast was equivalent to a ton of dynamite and followed by lesser explosions. Two plant workers were killed.

Intense heat turned the graphite into glowing embers that burned for two weeks.

Firefighters battled flames for four hours, some dying, to stop fire from spreading to the adjacent No. 3 reactor building and to a central core of cables, the lifeline for both reactors.

Radioactive particles, including iodine-131, cesium and strontium, formed a cloud that spread across northern and central Europe and eventually around the world in varying degrees.

#### The Evacuation

The 50,000-plus residents of Pripjat, the closest to the reactor, weren't evacuated until Sunday afternoon, April 27. About 1,800 buses were brought from Kiev; officials said later the exodus took just a few hours, but it took eight more days to evacuate the rest of the 18-mile danger zone; no one has explained why.

In all, more than 100,000 people were evacuated, along with thousands of animals. Some went far away to new jobs and new homes. Children were sent to summer camps. Some reports say a few

evacuees were allowed back to villages near the edge of the danger zone but that Pripjat is a ghost town with abandoned wash flapping from clotheslines. Other reports say thousands of people will get new homes this fall farther away from Chernobyl.

No one has said when or if the reactor area will be habitable again.

#### The Kremlin's Reaction

For almost 72 hours, the Kremlin told its own people nothing. Diplomatic queries in Moscow and Europe met curt denials.

But the spreading radiation, detected abroad, couldn't be kept secret. On Monday, April 28, in late evening, the government acknowledged the accident.

#### The Cleanup

Military pilots dumped sand, lead, boron and dolomite onto the reactor, choking off the radiation almost completely.

Miners and soldiers dug and blasted a tunnel to build a concrete and lead platform beneath the reactor block.

Workers are now making a concrete shell for the reactor that is slated to be in place by late autumn — a tomb that will remain radioactive for hundreds of years.

Embankments 12 miles long were built to protect the Pripjat River, which flows by the plant and into the Dnieper, which feeds a reservoir north of Kiev, and then runs through the city itself.

A new water supply system was built for Kiev, although officials say

water there is safe. Underground streams are to be diverted from the plant area to avoid washing radiation into the Pripjat River.

Chemical sprays and synthetic ground covering are being used to decontaminate the plant, the soil and the surrounding villages. Some topsoil is being removed.

Scientists hope contaminated soil can be planted again, but it is not clear now.

#### The Human Cost

The latest official toll is 28 dead and 30 hospitalized. An additional 173 are listed as having radiation disease. Doctors, including three U.S. physicians and an Israeli, performed 13 bone marrow transplants and six fetal live transplants.

One of the Americans, Dr. Robert Gale, has said 50,000 to 100,000 people risk contracting radiation-related diseases, but that the actual number of cases will be much lower. Yet, he and his Soviet colleagues are discussing ways to monitor 200,000 people for life.

#### The Economic Impact

The Politburo said the accident has caused the equivalent of \$2.8 billion in damage, shut down factories and farms and contaminated 400 square miles of land.

Western experts say the reactor itself was worth \$1.4 billion. The cleanup also cost hundreds of millions. Losses in farm produce, work time and factory production are difficult to assess.

The Washington-based research group Planecon says Chernobyl will cost the Soviets \$2.7 billion to \$4.3 billion.

Soviet officials say two of the three undamaged reactors will be working again by October, but there's no word on the third.

An official said alternate sources have been able to make up only a fraction of the energy lost by Chernobyl's shutdown.

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The Politburo said safety procedures at nuclear plants, including the other 11 Chernobyl-type reactors, must be reassessed and workers retrained.

The practice of locating plants near towns and cities is under review and safety improvements are planned for all reactors.

#### Political Fallout

The Chernobyl disaster was a test for Mikhail S. Gorbachev's promises to extend accountability into the Kremlin itself and to carry out investigations and punishment publicly.

No top party officials have been fired but the Politburo's report said a rank equal to a government minister, was fired, along with two deputies. A second chairman was given a strict warning.

Lower down, the plant manager and local party and industry officials have been sacked. The Politburo has said those responsible for the accident will be tried.

## Reagan to propose expanding 'Star Wars' Peres praises summit; Mideast closer to peace

WASHINGTON — President Reagan, trying to clear a way for his "Star Wars" program, is preparing to ask Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev to agree to expanded testing of anti-missile technology in space, administration officials said Thursday.

At the same time, Reagan has tentatively decided to assure Gorbachev

that the United States would not deploy the proposed shield against nuclear attack for five to seven years, said the officials, who demanded anonymity.

The Soviet leader, who has condemned the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative as a potential expansion of the superpower arms race, proposed in a letter to Reagan on June 23 that deployment be delayed for 15 to 20 years.

In exchange, officials said, Gorbachev offered to negotiate cutbacks of more than 50 percent in U.S. and Soviet long-range bombers, submarines and nuclear missiles.

The president, after consulting with his advisers, decided to reject the overture and to counter with the five-to-seven-year pledge. He also will urge Gorbachev to accelerate the pace of Geneva negotiations and be willing to accept cutbacks of less than 50 percent as a first step to the larger reductions both leaders seek.

Three U.S. envoys sent to consult with allied governments in Western Europe and Asia were due back shortly.

The officials stressed their reports would be weighed before a final decision was made.

The proposal for expanded testing is designed to go beyond the laboratory in determining if mobile sensors and chemical lasers capable of tracking and destroying attacking missiles could be effective in a space-based defense system.

This would require a major concession from Gorbachev, who has condemned Reagan's space initiative while conceding that at least some of the U.S. research can neither be detected nor stopped.

Reagan's "new approach" on testing is designed to advance an active and ambitious program while stopping short of deploying the exotic technology, an official said.

A U.S. pledge to cut off deployment for five to seven years amounts to a guarantee the United States would observe the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty at least that long. Either side now can withdraw from the agreement with six month's notice.

JERUSALEM — Prime Minister Shimon Peres said Thursday his two-day summit with King Hassan II of Morocco moved the Middle East a step closer to peace despite disagreement on key issues.

He called the meeting a "first rate" achievement because it brought contacts between Israelis and Arabs into the open, and predicted that it would encourage future dialogue.

The Moroccan monarch, in contrast, made no optimistic comments during a nationally televised speech to his people Wednesday night. He said no progress was made toward peace, adding: "We did not meet to negotiate or to find a solution, but to explore the possibilities."

Hassan, a pro-Western moderate, is only the second Arab head of state to meet publicly with an Israeli prime minister. President Anwar Sadat of Egypt signed a peace treaty with Israel

in March 1979 and was assassinated in October 1981.

Secretary of State George P. Shultz sent Peres a telegram praising the prime minister for "unwavering determination to pursue the search for peace." He added: "Today, you and King Hassan made history."

State Department spokesman Bernard Kalb said: "The United States believes that this was a valuable and historic effort. No one ever suggested that making peace in the Middle East would be easy, nor did the United States expect any dramatic breakthrough at this session or that all problems could be resolved in two days of meetings."

Syria broke relations with Morocco because of the meeting. The premier of Iran, which is Moslem but not Arab, and the official Syrian press made threats of assassination against Hassan. Radical Palestinian groups also threatened the king's life.

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## Play banned after anti-Semitic incidents

TORONTO — Ninth-graders in an Ontario school threw coins at Jewish students and scrawled swastikas on their desks after the class began studying William Shakespeare's classic drama of Shylock, the Jewish moneylender.

Parents complained and the local school board banned "The Merchant of Venice" until the Education Ministry or Human Rights Commission rules whether it is anti-Semitic.

Some people praise the decision July 10 by the board in Kitchener-Waterloo, 50 miles southwest of Toronto, but others call it absurd.

"I find it preposterous that after 400 years this play gets banned," said veteran actor John Neville, artistic director of the annual Shakespeare Festival at Stratford, Ontario.

Jewish scholar W. Gunther Plaut of Toronto's Holy Blossom Temple argued, however, that the play would have been

relegated to library shelves long ago were it not by the Bard of Avon.

Writing in the Toronto Globe and Mail, Plaut acknowledged that Shylock utters the memorable plea for tolerance: "I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions?"

"But these lines hardly counterbalance the overwhelming thrust of the story, which depicts the Jew as basically greedy, a veritable anti-Christ who, accompanied by the merry laughter of the audience, gets his just deserts," Plaut said.

In the play, Shylock lends money to Antonio, a Christian, and demands a pound of flesh when the debtor defaults. At the end, Shylock's daughter elopes with one of Antonio's friends and a judge strips the moneylender of his fortune.

Scholars have debated for generations whether Shakespeare was anti-

Semitic, at a time when there were virtually no Jews in England, or was ridiculing bigotry.

Complaints to the Waterloo County board of education about teaching the play to students at such a junior level arose in 1966.

Last month, nine Jewish students testified to the board about being called "Jew moneylender," and of other discriminatory treatment by classmates. "I get coins thrown at me and told to 'Pick them up, Jew,'" one said. "This has happened more times than I can count. I never had a coin thrown at me until we studied 'The Merchant.'"

A girl student said she was chosen for the part of Shylock when the teacher asked the class to act out parts of the drama.

"Here I was, nervously playing a man who was called Jew-dog, Jew-devil and so forth," she complained. Later, classmates covered her desk with

swastikas.

Parents asked the board to restrict study of the play to high school seniors.

"If you are 14 and the only Jew you know is Shylock, and at some point you hate him for his villainy, you tell me if you might not at some point also hate him for his Jewishness," said one parent, Monna Zentner.

The likely solution, according to Toni Silberman of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, is a set of guidelines for teachers on how to present sensitive racial and ethnic issues. The commission also has received complaints about Mark Twain's references to "niggers" in "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn."

The League for Human Rights of B'nai B'rith records about 100 anti-Semitic incidents a year in Canada, including bomb threats, vandalism and harassment, national director Alan Shefman told The Associated Press.