

World and Nation

Official: Chernobyl being readied for restart

MOSCOW (AP) — *Izvestia* quoted a member of the government investigating commission Tuesday as saying the three remaining nuclear reactors at Chernobyl are being prepared to resume operation. He did not say when they would restart. The government newspaper also said radioactive waste from the April 26 disaster at the Ukrainian power plant would be buried where a new reactor was to have been built.

It said radiation remained very high in parts of the plant, but quoted an official overseeing the cleanup as saying the temperature of the destroyed reactor had declined to about 390 degrees Fahrenheit.

The last report on the reactor temperature, given Saturday by Deputy Premier Ivan Silaev, put it in the range of 390 to 480 degrees.

Another newspaper acknowledged that many residents of Kiev, 80 miles south of Chernobyl, tried to flee the city of 2.4 million after the reactor explosion and fire. It blamed their fear on "enemy radio voices" from the West.

The Soviet Union did not acknowledge the accident until 68

hours after it occurred, when high levels of radiation had been reported in Scandinavia and Sweden demanded an explanation. The government gave little information initially.

According to *Izvestia*, Silaev's place on the government commission investigating the accident and

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supervising the cleanup has been taken by Lev Voronin, another deputy premier who heads the state supply committee.

No explanation was given for the change.

The paper quoted Voronin as saying the cleanup team has an operations program extending at least to

June 15, and was getting the other three reactors ready for a restart.

Izvestia opened its report by saying no one could go near the No. 4 reactor and the ruined building that housed it because of the high radiation.

It said a 19-ton bulldozer flown in from Chelyabinsk, an industrial city in the Ural Mountains, was helping build a heap of radioactive waste that would be buried where the plant's fifth reactor was to have been constructed.

The account did not say when the cleanup would be completed or estimate when the 92,000 people evacuated from an 18-mile radius could return home.

The report of fear in Kiev by the newspaper *Sovietskaya Rossiya* followed a comment Sunday in Pravda that, "in the first days (after the disaster), there were some vibrations in the (public) mood that were aided by the delayed information."

Pravda also suggested in a report May 9 that the delay in reporting the

disaster contributed to public concern.

Valentin Falin, head of the government news agency Novosti, said in an interview published May 12 by the West German news magazine *Der Spiegel* that hindsight indicated it would have been better to tell the world immediately.

Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev, however, defended the Kremlin's handling of the matter in his first public statement about it, made May 14 on national television.

Genrikh Borovik, a television commentator, bristled at suggestions from West Germany that the Soviet Union pay for damage caused by radiation the Chernobyl fire spewed over Europe.

He said the Soviet people would have as much right, if not more, to demand reparations for "the moral losses" suffered from what he called the distorted coverage of the disaster in the West, especially the United States.

Company officials quoted as admitting mistake in PR

WASHINGTON (AP) — Rocket company officials were quoted as saying on Tuesday that they made a public relations mistake in assigning new job responsibilities to two engineers who opposed the launch of the ill-fated Challenger.

But senior executives of Morton Thiokol Inc., reportedly insisted in private meetings with members of Congress that their actions did not amount to retribution against the two, and said they have no present plans to rescind the reassignments.

Two senators who met with the executives, Sens. Slade Gorton, R-Wash., and Donald Riegle, D-Mich., said they were "reserving judgment" on the company's assertion that it had not disciplined engineers Allan McDonald and Roger Boisjoly. "It is essential that people who come forward to tell the truth not be intimidated," said Riegle.

Added Gorton, "We would be

extremely disturbed if that was to be the case."

Gorton said that the company executives said they "did not intend and do not intend to promote" either of the two engineers. But asked whether they would be given their old back, Gorton said Morton Thiokol officials said they did not want to make further personnel moves until a presidential commission investigating the Challenger accident issues a report next month.

The Challenger blew up 73 seconds into its flight on Jan. 28, and investigators say the accident was caused by a leak in the joint of the right hand rocket booster. The rocket was manufactured by Morton Thiokol.

Both McDonald and Boisjoly later testified publicly that they opposed the decision to launch the Challenger, and the two subsequently were given new job responsibilities.

Damage slows typhoon relief

PORT MORESBY, Papua New Guinea (AP) — Typhoon Namu may have left more than one-third of the Solomon Islands' population homeless, a news report said, and widespread damage forced the postponement of foreign relief efforts Tuesday.

There has been no official figure on the death toll or number of people made homeless in the Pacific chain. The Australian Associated Press, in a report from Port Moresby, quoted unidentified relief workers in estimating 90,000 people were homeless and 50 others missing.

Officials said the storm roared in Monday packing winds of 115 mph that downed power lines, uprooted trees, and tore roofs off homes.

Central American accord 'within reach'

WASHINGTON (AP) — A group of more than 100 lawmakers said Tuesday that a Central American peace agreement which meets U.S. "legitimate security considerations" is finally within reach.

But the State Department accused Nicaragua of failing to negotiate in good faith.

This came in the wake of a Pentagon study which said the United States eventually might have to send up to 100,000 troops to fight against Nicaragua as a consequence of the peace agreement, which it said could not be enforced.

As the peace talks continued in Panama, Charles Redman, the State Department spokesman, said Nicaragua "is asking its neighbors to buy a pig in a poke" because it wants to defer some key negotiations until after the treaty is signed.

Rep. Richard Gephardt, D-Mo., who obtained 101 signatures for a letter urging President Reagan to support peace negotiations, told a news conference the administration is deeply divided over whether to support the agreement that appears to be emerging.

"There is a furious debate in the administration," Gephardt said. "They don't know what they want to do."

He said presidential envoy Philip Habib is actively supporting the peace negotiations but is meeting resistance within the administration.

The so-called Contadora group of Latin American nations is proposing a June 6 signing of a peace agreement by Nicaragua, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala.

While the United States is not a

party to the negotiations, its support is crucial because one aim of the treaty would be to halt U.S. support for the Contra rebels in Nicaragua.

Larry Speakes, the White House spokesman, denied there was any disagreement in the administration over the peace negotiations.

But a disagreement involving the Pentagon surfaced after it released its study saying American troops might eventually have to be sent to Central America to fight because the proposed peace agreement probably would result in Nicaraguan cheating.

State Department spokesman Redman denounced the study and the decision to release it.

"It has no standing as a U.S. government document," he said at the department's regular news briefing. "It is an internal study written under

contract and released without authority."

Speakes also cast doubt on whether the study carried any weight in the administration, saying no one "in the top echelon" had seen it.

In their letter, the 101 members of Congress urged Reagan to take a "step for peace" and support the proposed Contadora peace agreement.

The letter asked Reagan to support the plan by agreeing to negotiate directly with Nicaragua on issues dividing the two countries.

Rep. Lee Hamilton, D-Ind., chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, told a news conference that "enormous progress has been made in negotiating a Contadora agreement" that bars military advisers and bases from Central America,

ends support for insurgents, and strains the size of armies and provides for internal reconciliation in Nicaragua.

Hamilton said U.S.-Nicaragua negotiations should focus on the "certain external conditions" the United States finds objectionable and, "in return, we will permit Sandinistas to exist."

The signers of the letter, which was sent to the White House Tuesday and released Tuesday, also opposed U.S. aid to the anti-government Contra rebels in Nicaragua.

The Pentagon report, released Tuesday, said if cheating occurs, the United States' allies in the region probably would not react for three years.



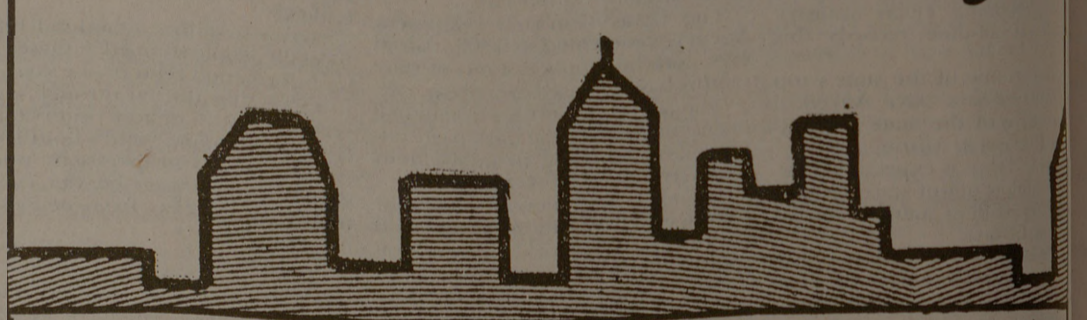
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