

Extraordinary Session of the CC CPSU Politburo, April 28, 1986 , Working copy

1. Information about the accident at the fourth block of the Chernobyl NPS (Nuclear Power Station]

Gorbachev M. S. Let's hear cde. V. I. Dolgikh's information.

Dolgikh V. I. On April 26, at 1:30 a.m. there was an explosion at the Chernobyl NPS when the fourth block was being decelerated for repairs. All work was being performed according to regulations. Version [of events proposed by] specialists: an explosion of hydrogen occurred in the lower tank, as a result of which the graphite rods were pushed up and the top lid torn off. Seventeen people were at work at the time. One died, one was not found. The level of radiation as of 9 in the morning of April 28 was 1,000 roentgen in the vicinity of the reactor and 230 milliroentgen in the city. The population has been evacuated. Out of the 45,000 residents, only 5,000 who service the station, canteens, etc., remain in the city. The evacuees are provided for. The radioactive cloud has spread for 60 kilometers.

Ryzhkov N.I. Yesterday it reached Vilnius at the upper levels of atmosphere.

Dolgikh, V. I. What is being done? Measures are being taken to prevent eruptions by pouring sand, red clay and lead from helicopters into the main crater of the reactor.

Gorbachev M.S. Don't we have planned measures?

Dolgikh V.I. We need [to undertake] comprehensive analysis of the causes of the accident and to devise appropriate measures to eliminate the consequences of the accident. At this point, we only have hypotheses. One hundred and thirty persons suffered radiation poisoning. They were transported to Moscow. But this number could rise. Now the main priority is to extinguish the reactor. The fourth block as such is lost. It has to be buried. Second—protection of the other three blocks. Explanatory work is being conducted in the party organizations of Ukraine. People at the station acted stoically. Now we need to find employment for the evacuees and also find compensation for the lost electrical power.

Gorbachev M.S. Are they dropping sacks of sand and boron from the air?

Dolgikh V.I. From helicopters. Sixty sacks had been dropped. We need 1,800. But it is not safe to fly the helicopters either.

Solomentsev M.S. Was the accumulation of hydrogen supposed to be controlled?

Dolgikh V.I. Yes, but I repeat, this is just a hypothesis.

Gromyko A.A. Is this phenomenon unpredictable?

Gorbachev M.S. This is still just guessing. We need the most comprehensive analysis of all circumstances. We will discuss the results at a Politburo session. We cannot give up on the NPS, but we must take all necessary measures to strengthen safety.

Akhromeev S.F. Until last night, the level of radiation was rising. It has spread over 600 square kilometers, but the cloud is moving south and west. Decontamination measures are being taken. Tomorrow a special unit will arrive for this purpose. We provided tents for 15,000 people to the local authorities. We have not found any contamination of the Dnepr.

Gorbachev M.S. What, in your opinion, should be done?

Akhromeev S.F. Realistically, only dropping bags of sand and boron on the reactor.

Gorbachev M.S. Have we engaged our scientific forces?

Dolgikh V.I. A.P. Aleksandrov and other scientists are working on it.

Gorbachev M.S. Maybe we should create groups of scientists for separate issues?

Dolgikh V.I. They have been created.

Chebrikov V.M. There is nothing of concern so far in our area. The population is calm. But we have to keep in mind that only a small circle of people know about the accident.

Ryzhkov N.I. Cde. Dolgikh told us in detail about the situation at the Chernobyl NPS. On Saturday, the information was more or less calm. However, after cdes. B.E. Scherbina and A.I. Majorets flew to the site, it turned out that the situation was in reality more complicated. Temperature in the reactor is about 900 degrees. We have to extinguish the fire. What can be done? [They] decided on sand and

boron. A second way of putting it out would be to drop lead with pig iron pellets. One hundred and fifty tons of lead was already delivered. Altogether, 1,500 will be needed. It has been found. We discovered another 20 people in the Chernigov oblast who were exposed to radiation. Most likely those are fishermen. We found people who observed the explosion. We must analyze the accident and draw necessary conclusions.

Ligachev E.K. I talked with the first secretary of Kiev city party committee, cde. G. I. Revenko. I also spoke with cde. V.V. Shcherbitsky. They are conducting active work to explain what happened to the population.

Gorbachev M.S. What are we going to do with the information?

Dolgikh V.I. We must complete the containment of the source of radiation.

Gorbachev M.S. We should issue a statement quickly, we must not delay. We should say that there was an explosion, that we are taking necessary measures to contain its consequences. This is first of all.

Vorotnikov V.I. Yes.

Gorbachev M.S. And secondly, we should continue work on decontamination. We should take all necessary measures to protect the property of citizens from looters. We should create the necessary material and living conditions for the evacuees, take care of their nutrition, employment, schooling for children, and so on.

Ligachev E.K. People were relocated well. We should not delay the information statement.

Yakovlev A.N. The sooner we make an announcement the better.

Aliev G.A. We should provide information

Chebrikov V.M. That's right.

Dobrynin A.F. The Americans will notice the fact of the explosion and the spread of the radioactive cloud anyway.

Chebrikov V.M. The victims are being given the necessary assistance.

Gromyko A.A. The statement should be written in such a way that it does not cause excessive anxiety or panic.

Gorbachev M.S. We have 18 nuclear power stations. We must analyze the causes of the accident at the Chernobyl NPS thoroughly. We have to take a look at what our Atomic Oversight [agency] is doing. Was everything done at the Chernobyl NPS to ensure safety? We created the Atomic Oversight [agency] precisely for this purpose. The accident took place at a time when the fourth reactor was supposed to be switched over to repairs. That means there had to be representatives of Atomic Oversight on site. We have to investigate it all thoroughly. We need a most serious, a most dispassionate analysis of this case.

Chebrikov V.M. A criminal investigation has been launched into this accident.

Gromyko A.A. Maybe we should provide our friends with special information about what happened? Because they buy our equipment for NPSs.

Gorbachev M.S. First of all, we should inform our own public. When making a final assessment of what happened, we should pay attention to the issue of the location of NPSs and discuss once again where we should build them.

Yeltsin B.N. Maybe we should close the zone where the radioactive cloud is spreading to entry from the outside.

Dobrynin A.F. We should take into account the experience of eradicating the consequences of accidents at nuclear power stations when explosions took place in the United States.

Gorbachev M.S. Then let's take the following decision:

- take into account cde. V.I. Dolgikh's information on this issue;
- continue measures to eliminate consequences of the accident;
- for the Council of Ministers: take measures to ensure material and living conditions and employment for the citizens who were evacuated from the region of the accident;
- prepare and publish an announcement for the press about the accident;
- report to the CC Politburo about the final results of the investigation of the accident.

Politburo members: [We] agree.
The resolution is adopted.

Source: Archive of the President of the Russian Federation (APRF), Record of Session of the CC CPSU Politburo, 28 April 1986, working copy, published in Rudolph Pikhov, *Sovetskii Soyuz: Istoriya Vlasti, 1945-1991* (Novosibirsk: Sibirskii Khronograph, 2000), pp. 429-432.

[Translated by Svetlana Savranskaya for the National Security Archive]

**NATIONAL
SECURITY
ARCHIVE**

This document is from the holdings of:

The National Security Archive

Suite 701, Gelman Library, The George Washington University

2130 H Street, NW, Washington, D.C., 20037

Phone: 202/994-7000, Fax: 202/994-7005, nsarchiv@gwu.edu