

April 29, 1986 Politburo Session Notes
[from the Diary of Vitaly I. Vorotnikov]

The meeting started at 10:30 in the morning. We listened to a more comprehensive information report from Dolgikh. "The situation at the NPS is catastrophic. The reactor is practically destroyed. There is an active expulsion of graphite [from the core]. The temperature of the nuclear fuel in the reactor is rising. The level of radiation is extremely high. Over one hundred people received high doses of radiation and have been hospitalized. They were taken to Moscow (the Third Department of the USSR Ministry of Public Health). The radioactive cloud is spreading. The first (very preliminary) graph after the measuring [shows]: areas of radioactive contamination were discovered in the north-western, western and southern directions, in the distance of 4 to 5 kilometers from the Chernobyl NPS.

Proposals adopted by the Commission jointly with scientists and specialists:

1. To continue dumping sand, boron and lead on the reactor.
2. Detailed analysis and decontamination of the territory. Sanitary cleanup and evacuation of people.
3. Monitoring of the air masses. The direction of the air movement is changing. Dispersal is uneven. It is necessary to expand the radius of search and measurements of radioactivity levels of the contamination.
4. To establish a standing group for communications with Chernobyl.
5. Delimitation of a zone with a 10-kilometer radius. Controlled entry.
6. The Shcherbina Commission should be replaced shortly because they received high doses of radiation. Use the shift method for the work of the Commission."

Then we heard information reports from Israel, Burenkov, Altunin, Ginko, Akhromeyev, Aleksandrov, Vlasov (Ministry of Interior).

Essence of Aleksandrov's explanations. The biggest accident. The NPS is of RBMK type. Most important now is not to allow contact between the nuclear mass and water. The melting could move downward (under the reactor and the cement plate is a pool with water). [If contact occurs], then – detonating-gas and a catastrophe.

Serious criticisms of civil defense and the Ministry of Public Health. Decontamination is organized poorly, primitively. There are shortages of equipment and materiel. One cannot approach the zone of strong contamination with radionuclides. No protection. Testing and medical treatment of people are inadequately organized.

[Translated by Svetlana Savranskaya for the National Security Archive]

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