

Note on the dissatisfaction of the residents of the Polessiya district with the authorities' measures in solving social, medical and environmental problems in the region

March 20, 1989

Secret

On the operational situation in the Polesie District

On March 18, 1989, the urban-type settlement of Polesie was visited by Comrade V.S. Shevchenko, Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, and Comrade I.S. Plyushch, Chairman of the Kiev Executive Committee. They held a meeting with residents of Polesie near the building of the Polesie District Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine. The meeting was also attended by First Secretary of the District Committee, Comrade N.I. Priymachenko, and Chairman of the District Executive Committee, Comrade V.S. Sharavara. Approximately 500 people attended the meeting.

The meeting began with questions from Polesie residents:

- Why aren't we being informed about the radiation situation in Polesie and the villages in the district?
- Why aren't there any newspaper publications or maps of radionuclide contamination for Polesie and the villages in the district?
- Why aren't residents of the district informed of the results of ongoing tests? For example, they take blood samples, including from children, but don't inform parents of the results; medical workers conceal the identity of blood groups A, B, C, D, etc?
- Why are medical examinations of children and other residents of the district poorly conducted?
- Why isn't the 30-rouble surcharge being paid in all settlements in the district (the villages of Maryanovka, Vovchkov, Mlachevka, and Zelenaya Polyana) as in most other villages?
- Why are visiting forestry workers in the Kiev region, who are planting on land contaminated with radionuclides exceeding 2,960,000,000,000 Bq/km² [2.96 TBq/km²], paid a 100% bonus, while residents of the region receive only 25%?

A.P. Boyko, chairman of the "Ukraine" collective farm (Maryanivka village), asked:

- Why has the issue of additional payments to machine operators of the Shchorsa collective farm (N. Markovka village), who work on land near the evacuated village of Bober and whose contamination is 1,480,000,000,000-2,960,000,000,000 Bq/km² [1.48-2.96 TBq/km²] or more, not been resolved?
- Why does gamma radiation on the ground in some areas of the urban-type settlement of Polesie reach 10-20 µSv/hr (for example, near the gas depot), while residents are told that the gamma radiation on the ground is no more than 1-2 µSv/hr. Who should we believe?
- Why were dosimetry equipment confiscated from furniture and clothing factories, as well as other organisations, after the accident?
- When will residents of the villages of Yasen and Shevchenkovo be resettled, will they be compensated, and where will they be resettled?
- Why do many children have enlarged thyroid glands, frequent nosebleeds, headaches, and general malaise, yet doctors don't explain the reasons or give any specific recommendations?

- Why aren't the decontamination efforts producing positive results? Initially, after decontamination, background radiation levels decreased somewhat, but then (after 2.5 months) they rebound. Why waste public money?
- Why do military personnel participating in decontamination efforts receive a 100% bonus at their place of work, while residents of the district receive only 25%?
- Why aren't pensioners receiving a 25% supplement?
- Why aren't changes being developed to the age-old retirement categories, as for residents living and working in the special zone?
- Is it possible to grow food (potatoes, carrots, etc.) in garden plots? Who should we believe if some say it's possible, while others say it's not? Where should we dispose of the grown produce if it turns out to be unfit for consumption?
- Why aren't residents of the district being issued personal dosimeters? When will they be issued?
- Why isn't the village of Denisovichi, located in the 30-km zone, is not being evacuated, even though all the neighbouring villages in and around the Byelorussian SSR were evacuated back in 1986?
- Why aren't the vacation periods for factory workers being extended? Is it really possible to properly recuperate in 15 days?
- Why hasn't the Central Regional Hospital had a dermatologist for two years? If everything is fine here, as you say, then why do young doctors leave for other parts of Ukraine after three years of work?
- Why are children mostly sent to summer camps and health centres, not to specialised sanatoriums?
- Why isn't there soap or washing powder for sale, especially for those located in this area?

Other questions were asked.

During the conversation, which was heated and emotional, Comrade Shevchenko, Plyushch, Prymachenko, and Sharavaro tried to give concrete answers, which many of those present received with disbelief.

Some women expressed the opinion that the residents of the Poleskoye settlement should be evacuated and given apartments in other districts. Some of those present, not believing the leaders' answers, openly declared that they would not participate in the elections for People's Deputies of the USSR on March 26, 1989.

Comrade Shevchenko then visited Secondary School No. 1, held discussions with the principal and school staff, and visited several classes.

On March 17, 1989, during a conversation with the dosimetrist at the Vilcha railway station, Comrade Redchits N.V. established that a commission from the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant had visited the railway station in January of this year, but the commission members had not identified themselves. They had been measuring radiation levels on the surface of the railway station tracks in the area of 42 km, where there had previously been a decontamination station for contaminated railcars arriving from the 10 km zone (Yanov station), but they had not reported the results of the survey to the management of the Vilcha railway station.

In connection with the above, on March 10, 1989, a commission consisting of: Comrade V.E. Dzhuma, Head of the 2nd Department of the Korosten Branch of the South-West Railway; V.D. Mikus, Radiologist of the Korosten Branch of the South-West Railway; V.N. Rudkevech, Orthopaedic Physician; and representatives of the Fire Department—the Head of the Vilcha Railway Station, Comrade S.V. Viselsky; Track Foreman A.F. Moshkovsky; and Redchits inspected a section of the railway track located in the urban-type settlement of Vilcha to determine the radiation contamination of its surface.

To more accurately determine the radiation contamination, measurements were taken using three KRB-1–815 instruments (beta decay per minute per cm²).

The measurements yielded the following results:

- on tracks 1, 2, and 3, from 100 to 1,000 CPM/cm², and in some places from 7.5–10 to 10,000 CPM/cm²;
- on tracks 5, 6, 7 and 8, from 100 to 1,000 CPM/cm², in some places from 2.5 to 3,000 CPM/cm²;
- at turnouts, from 500 to 30,000 CPM/cm²;
- at marshalling scales, up to 1,000 CPM/cm²;
- on the tracks of the Vilcha railway station, there are 25 manually operated switches, 15 of which are manual. Their contamination rate ranges from 100 to 10,000 CPM/cm² on average, including at switches No. 9 from 600 to 1,000 CPM/cm², No. 11 from 1,000 to 10,500 CPM/cm², No. 37 up to 1,100,00 CPM/cm².

Since the majority of railway workers at Vilcha station live in the urban-type settlement of Vilcha, the above information was disseminated to most of the settlement's residents.

Since 1988, the Selkhozkhimiya republican base has been located in the urban-type settlement of Vilcha. It stores mineral fertilisers and pesticides intended for supplying the Selkhozkhimiya regional association and four districts: Polesky, Ivankovsky, Vyshgorodsky, and Borodyansky.

The Selkhozkhimiya bases in the latter two districts have been closed. The main route for fertilisers and pesticides from the republican base to the aforementioned districts passes through the central streets of Vilcha—Pionerskaya and Shevchenko Streets.

Because the trucks are not covered with tarps and are poorly sealed, some of the fertiliser falls onto the road and sidewalks during transport and flies into the faces of passers-by, including children.

Vilcha residents have repeatedly raised the issue with the Polesie District Executive Committee about building a bypass road for fertiliser transportation around Vilcha or closing the base, but the issue remains unresolved.

Based on the above facts, some residents of Vilcha are calling for:

- to arbitrarily close access along Pionerskaya Street to vehicles of the Selkhozkhimiya association;
- to write a collective letter to the country's governing bodies, as well as to central newspapers;

- due to the lack of concrete measures to improve the environmental situation in the urban-type settlement of Vilcha, not to participate in the elections for People's Deputies of the USSR on March 26, 1989.

We verbally informed the First Secretary of the Polesie District Communist Party of Ukraine, Comrade N.I. Priymachenko, who is a candidate for People's Deputy from the Ivankovsky Electoral District, about the developing operational situation in the Polesie District on the eve of the elections.

Detective Officer of the Polesie District Department of the Ukrainian State Security Committee of the Ukrainian SSR for the City of Kiev and the Kiev Region,
Lieutenant D.I. Danilenko