

Message on the aggravation of the situation in the Korosten branch of the Southwestern Railway in connection with the consequences of the Chernobyl accident

May 14, 1990

Secret

The KGB of the Ukrainian SSR is receiving information indicating increased social tension and destabilisation of public life on the Korosten branch of the Southwestern Railway due to the prolonged residence of railway workers in conditions of elevated radiation levels following the Chernobyl nuclear power plant accident.

49 railway stations and stopping points, home to over 20,000 people, are in the radiation contamination zone. Of the 8,522 households surveyed in Korosten, 966 were found by the Ukrainian Hydrometeorological Service (NPO Typhoon) to have gamma background levels exceeding 2 $\mu\text{Sv/hr}$, and the cesium-137 contamination density ranged from 74,000,000,000 to 10,286,000,000,000 Bq/km² [0.074-10.286 TBq/km²].

Due to the lack of standard measurement methods, the radiation survey results from various organisations vary significantly, creating additional anxiety and mistrust among the population. According to data from the aforementioned NPO Typhoon, the average contamination level in Korosten is 233,100,000,000 Bq/km² [233.1 GBq/km²], while according to measurements by the Volyn Geoexpedition, it is 429,200,000,000 Bq/km² [429.2 GBq/km²].

The lack of sound concepts for safe living in the radioactively contaminated zone, the low effectiveness of environmental measures, and the inadequate supply of clean food have led to the departure of 632 workers and employees from the Korosten branch of the railway this year. Currently, up to 10 families are leaving almost every day, and a mass exodus of specialists and their families is expected after the end of the school year.

In this regard, the departure of diesel locomotive drivers and their assistants, signalling and communications workers, cashiers, carriage conductors, and other categories of railway workers is particularly alarming. As of May 1st of this year, the shortage of track fitters compared to the planned number is 357 (compared to 300 as of April 1, 1990), 91 drivers and their assistants (80), 67 carriage conductors (60), and 32 carriage conductors (30).

These circumstances are having a negative impact on rail transport operations, primarily on the transportation process, and are complicating the situation in the republic's national economy as a whole.

According to available operational data, amid the escalating situation at the Korosten locomotive depot, certain extremist-minded members of the workforce planned to create a strike committee in April of this year. Only timely measures taken by Soviet-Party bodies and the administration, according to our information, prevented this. Meanwhile, a so-called "coordinating committee" has been organised to facilitate oversight of the implementation of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR's resolution on Chernobyl.

The administration of the Korosten branch and the Southwestern Railway, as well as the Ministry of Railways, are carrying out certain efforts to normalise the situation. On March 22 of this year, this issue was considered at the USSR Ministry of Railways Board, but no decision was made due to a lack of the necessary information. In this regard, on April 10-11 of this year, a commission headed by the head of the medical and sanitary department of the Ministry of Railways met at the railway branch. On April 28-29 of this year, Deputy Minister of Railways Comrade L.I. Pingarev visited Kiev.

During the commission's work and at a meeting with the head of the Southwestern Railway, the Korosten branch's enterprise managers assessed the current situation as catastrophic. The main factors included the departure of specialists, the lack of clean food products, benefits, dosimetric monitoring equipment, and other factors. The Southwestern Railway is unable to resolve these problems without assistance from the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR and the USSR Ministry of Railways.

Committee Chairman N. Golushko