

Problems of Social Assistance to the Chernobyl Sufferers in Russia

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1. Assistance to the Chernobyl sufferers from the government

1.1. In the period of the USSR

By the time of the world's largest civil nuclear accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power station (ChNPS) in April, 1986 NOT A SINGLE legislative act existed in the USSR that could protect victims of possible nuclear accidents and incidents. Such was the Soviet Union despite of the fact that it was literally stuffed with both nuclear weapons and nuclear reactors for military industry, as well as with hundreds of research reactors all over the country. Thus, when the accident at the ChNPS happened, the government of the USSR had no available legislative base to provide assistance for sufferers — personnel of ChNPS, volunteer-liquidators, and the population affected by the accident. During the first five years after the accident the Supreme Soviet of the USSR had made no attempts to adopt any laws to protect the citizens affected by the accident at ChNPS and to give them rights for certain benefits and compensations. How can we understand this situation? The Soviet communist regime could not allow to disclose the scale and contamination levels of the accident, as well as the number of affected persons. During the first five years after the accident, various decrees of the Central Committee of the CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union), which were directed to republican and regional party organs for execution, functioned the role of "laws". Quite often they were issued, as joint decrees both of the Central Committee of the CPSU and of the government of the USSR. As a matter of course, they were secret. When these decrees appeared in open documents, they had no concrete information on the number of sufferers, their needs.

The first actions by the authorities to rescue lives of the ChNPS personnel and fire-fighters were of emergent nature without preparation. Coordination of liquidation work was not effective because the authorities were not ready for such a large-scale nuclear accident. This is indicated by the fact that medics did not carried out iodine prophylactics in due time (within the first eight days after the accident). Although a large amount of chemical and engineering corps, special military materiel and transport equipment of the Ministry of Defence of the USSR and Civil Defence forces were mobilized in dosimetric and

decontamination activities, the authorities did not manage to carry out quick and effective evacuation of 116 thousand people from the 30-km zone around Chernobyl. Without doubt, the reason of such failure was related with the deep secretiveness of the communist regime which did not need open the truths about the accident at all. The party and government leaders discussed the tragedy only behind closed doors.

Evacuation of residents from the villages in the 30-km zone was executed without detailed planning. Nothing definite was explained, except that people had to leave their villages for some time, for two-three weeks, and then would come back again. Nevertheless, some executives of the contaminated districts recall having a feeling, that these residents would never return to their homes (see A.Yaroshinskaya. "Chernobyl. Top Secret", Moscow. 1992).

In 1989 the author of this article was elected a People's Deputy of the USSR from one of the most affected regions — the Zhitomir region. She came to Moscow and visited the Bureau for Fuel and Energy Resources at the Council of Ministers of the USSR with documents proving the necessity of resettlement from the Narodich and Lugin districts of the Zhitomir region. The Bureau was involved in the problems of liquidation of the Chernobyl accident consequences at that time. Notwithstanding this fact, the leaders of the Bureau refused even to hear about any resettlement. However, after the author had reported these facts at the First Congress of the People's Deputies of the USSR, a decision was made immediately to resettle 12 villages. This points to only one fact that until 1989 there was no scientifically developed government programme to aid the people affected by the ChNPS accident. This was not due to lack of scientific brain-power necessary for its elaboration. This is related with *glasnost*. A closed society and *glasnost* of the Chernobyl events were ideologically incompatible each other.

During the first five years after the Chernobyl accident the co-ordination of measures to liquidate the accident consequences and aid to the population was subject to the strict command system of administration. For this purpose a special operative group was established in the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CPSU and it continued to function in the course of several years. At first the group meeting was held daily, but afterwards more and more infrequently. The operative group received reports from republics, the

government, Ministries of Defence and Health, gave hearings to operative group members' reports, and immediately took decisions on ALL problems: hospitalisation, discharge from hospital, increase in the maximum acceptable doses for vegetables and fruit consumption in the affected territories, population resettlement, aid to personnel of the ChNPS, introduction of benefits for compensation payments to the population, medical assistance to the affected persons, etc.

The secrecy and uncoordinated character of the actions by the authoritative bodies on different levels led at times to misuse of authority power. For instance, in the Narodich district of the Zhitomir region, officials who were distributing flats for the resettled people in Kiev, L'vov, Zhitomir, etc. were taking several flats for their own, disallowing them to the people in real need.

The efficiency of taken decisions was low for one more reason: at that time the foodstuffs in the USSR were in short supply not only in affected villages, but in big towns and cities as well. Thus, the decisions of the CPSU to improve the situation of foodstuffs supply to the ChNPS victims were practicably impossible. According to the party decision, residents in the affected zones were receiving 30 roubles (people called them "coffin money") for "clean" food. However, "clean" food was not found in village shops. The shops were practically empty. The sum itself was simply ridiculous. Three different programmes, which were not interconnected each other, for liquidation of the ChNPS accident consequences existed until 1989 — the Ukrainian and the Belorussian programmes, and the programme of liquidation of the consequences of the accident at the ChNPS in the Bryansk region (Russia) for the period of 1988 to 1990. In April 1990 a state-union programme of liquidation of the ChNPS accident consequences in RSFSR (Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republics) for 1990-1992 was made.

Only in 1990 were held THE FIRST open public parliament hearings on the Chernobyl accident. At these hearings the Supreme Soviet of the USSR adopted the first decree to liquidate the consequences of the accident at ChNPS and to elaborate a comprehensive state programme and a concept of living in the affected districts. A State Expert Commission at the Government of the USSR was also founded (the author of this report was a member of this commission as a People's Deputy of the USSR), which had to elaborate an all-union programme of liquidation of the consequences of the Chernobyl accident.

Three new programmes of the accident consequences liquidation were presented to the Expert Commission — the Ukrainian, the Belorussian and the programme for Bryansk region (RSFSR). Only the Belorussian programme had more or less integral and

compact contents with attempts of scientific approach. This programme contained the most important issues about the criteria of benefits to the population and residents in the affected territory — the issues that were not mentioned on the governmental level for years. The Ukrainian programme was not even signed. So, its author was unknown. It was evident that different "parts" of this programme were merged into a single document in a machine-like manner. The programme of the ChNPS accident consequences liquidation for RSFSR turned out to be the strangest. It involved only one region, the Bryansk region. However, at that time it was already known that other regions of Russia had been contaminated, for example, in the Orlov-Bryansk-Tula spot.

In April 1991, after numerous discussions in the parliament and the government, "Concept of Living in Districts Affected by the Accident at the Chernobyl NPS" was adopted at a session of the State Expert Commission. According to this concept, the main criterion to make decisions on protective measures, their scales and compensations for damages to the population had become irradiation dose induced by the Chernobyl accident. A dose of irradiation was considered acceptable if it resulted in an average annual effective equivalent dose not exceeding 0.1 rem (1 mSv). Persons living in "dirty" territories or having lived there for a defined minimal period, had the right for loss recovery by way of benefits, compensations, guarantees, and systems of social and medical assistance.

A system of social guarantees to Russian population was worked out only in May 1991 in the Law of RSFSR "On Social Protection of Citizens Exposed to Radiation as a Result of the Catastrophe at the Chernobyl NPS". As a matter of fact, in order to launch the mechanism of the Law, more than 40 normative bylaws were elaborated and adopted. Nevertheless, this law was inefficient, especially as compensation payments to the population were concerned. In June 1992 modifications and amendments were introduced to the Law.

Thus, if one was to sum up the government assistance to the population affected by the ChNPS accident within the Soviet period (1986-1991), not taking into account its quality and efficiency, the following directions of this assistance could be distinguished:

- recovery and decontamination measures, aimed at decrease in the radioactive contamination of territories;
- implementation of social protection of citizens living in the affected territories: resettlement from the contaminated to the "clean" territories, compensations for loss of housing, compensations for "clean" foodstuffs, medical assistance benefits.

At that time medical brigades visited the districts affected as a result of the accident at the ChNPS in order to perform in-depth examination of the population and determine the changes of health status. Unfortunately, all information was classified secret not only to the population, but (according to E.B.Burlakova) to some of Russian scientists.

During this period, however, the material and technical bases of local health care were significantly improved; a network of diagnostics and medical-recreation centres was established, advanced training of medical personnel was carried out, etc.

According to the data of the State Committee of the Russian Federation on Liquidation of the Consequences of the Accident at the ChNPS, medical observation of health status of the Russian population was performed both by local medical establishments and by 25 leading research institutes. A Russian state medical-dosimetric registry was established. Its database contains information on 137.6 thousand people affected by radiation effects as a result of the Chernobyl accident; 97 thousand of so-called liquidators, about 3 thousand of the people evacuated from the affected zone, more than 35 thousand of the people living in the affected zone, and more than 2.6 thousand of children born from participants of the accident consequences liquidation.

In the first years after the accident at the ChNPS the Government of the USSR allocated budget funds for housing construction for the resettled. However, even in such case ideology played its role as well. In order to conceal the scale of the accident a decision was taken to build new houses for the victims of the catastrophe even on contaminated territories. For example, about 200 million roubles (in prices of that time) were invested only in the Zhitomir region in construction of 50 apartment blocks in the "dirty" territory of the Narodich district. It should be noted that the resettled did not live there, knowing this was a deceit on the part of the authorities.

As far as the Russian Federation is concerned, decontamination of 412 settlements in the affected territories was carried out. About 13 thousand people were resettled from the zones of radioactive contamination in the Bryansk region, 5.5 thousand of them from the zone of obligatory resettlement. 18 settlements were entirely resettled. Until 1993 about 50 thousand people have been resettled or have voluntarily left the affected territories of the Russian Federation.

It is interesting to note that special agrochemical studies were conducted in the affected territories in order to decrease accumulation of radionuclides in agricultural production. In some districts of the Bryansk, Orlov, Tula, Kaluga regions, sowing of forage crops was extended, while grain crops were reduced; buckwheat and rape were not sown. As some

specialists (e.g. ex-Chairman of the State Committee on Liquidation of the ChNPS Accident Consequences V.Ya.Vozniyak) state, the taken measures resulted in improvement of soil fertility and a 1.5-4 times decrease in the radionuclide accumulation in plants. Personally, I strongly doubt such numbers, especially when such information comes from V.Ya.Vozniyak who himself took part in classifying the information about the Chernobyl accident during the Soviet period. The same doubts arise about the very necessity to plant something in fields that are known to be radioactive, as foodstuffs for people or even as forage for animals. I cannot perceive and accept such logic of a Moscow cabinet official who determined how the people had to live in a zone of permanent health risk.

1.2. After the collapse of the USSR

After the collapse of the USSR, every of the three most affected republics had to deal with its problems on one's own. At the time of the Commonwealth of Independent States foundation (late 1991) the area contaminated with caesium-137 as a result of the accident at the ChNPS with a density of 1 Ci/km² and higher has totalled in Russia, the Ukraine and Belarus more than 100 thousand square kilometres. The main problem of every newly formed state remained the same — social protection to victims of the ChNPS accident: resettlement from the so-called radioactive "B" zones (according to the Chernobyl laws of Russia, the Ukraine and Belarus) which are nominally areas with a contamination density of 15-40 Ci/km² or even higher.

Already 11 years passed since the accident at the ChNPS! A sad fact should be stated: neither the Soviet government nor the democratic governments have managed so far to provide their citizens with the minimum which is set by the Chernobyl laws adopted by their parliaments. Moreover, the state assistance to the resettled nowadays tends to decline. In 1993, for example, 4,410 persons were resettled from the zones of obligatory and guaranteed resettlement (Gomel and Mogilev region) in Belarus (according to A.Dumnov, E.Vos'mirko), and in 1995 — only 1,723. 2,790 persons were resettled in 1993 from the zones of obligatory and guaranteed resettlement (Bryansk, Kaluga, Tula and Orlov regions) in Russia, and in 1995 — only 1,370. The same picture is to be seen in the Ukraine.

According to preliminary data, 410.4 thousand people are living in the affected territory in the zones of obligatory and guaranteed resettlement in Russia (Bryansk, Kaluga, Tula regions) in early 1997, in Belarus — 323 thousand people, in the Ukraine — 673 thousand people (furthermore, 479 people are living in the restricted zone of the Kiev region). Simple mathematics shows that with the existing trend preserved, the resettlement of people from the zones of

obligatory and guaranteed resettlement in these countries may be prolonged for decades.

According to the Federal Law of Russia "On Social Aid to Citizens Subject to Effects of Radiation as a Result of the Catastrophe at the Chernobyl NPS", the status of such citizens is defined. In the Section 3 of the Law, 12 categories of citizens are defined, which can be used as bases of compensations and benefits by the Law. All benefit and compensation rates available to the victims of Chernobyl are described in detail in the mentioned law. Below are listed some of them:

1. Citizens who contracted radiation syndrome, other illnesses, and invalids as a result of the catastrophe are granted gratuitous medical treatment (hospital and ambulatory), gratuitous acquisition of medicines on a physician's prescription, gratuitous dentistry and construction of dentures, gratuitous annual sanatorium-resort therapy or payment at the average cost of the corresponding travel voucher, etc. Working invalids are granted disablement benefits up to four continuous months or up to five months within a calendar year with 100 percent payment of the average salary. A gratuitous one-time grant of house-room equipped with modern conveniences is provided, regardless of the period of residence in the given settlement, within three months from the submission of a corresponding application under the condition that the applicants are recognised to need improvement in the housing conditions or residing in shared apartments with an additional separate room. Also are granted 50-percent discounts in accommodation payments to the citizens named above, including members of their families residing together with them, as well as 50-percent discount in payments for telephone, radio, shared TV-aerials and their installation; 50-percent discount in payments for gas, heating, water and electricity; gratuitous travel on the territory of Russia on all types of urban and suburban passenger transportation, as well as once every year — all over Russia; relief from income-tax and all other types of taxes, etc.

2. Citizens who are permanently residing (working) on the territory of the zone with the right for resettlement can receive monthly compensation depending upon the period of residence (in percent to the minimal salary defined by the Law):

- from 26th of April 1986 — at a rate of 40 percent;
- from 1st of January 1987 — at a rate of 30 percent;
- from 1st of January 1991 — at a rate of 20 percent.

Today the minimal salary in Russia constitutes 84,000 roubles per month. This means that the above citizens in this zone receive a compensation of 33,600 roubles, 25,200 roubles, 16,800 roubles respectively.

3. Citizens who are permanently residing on the territory of the zone of resettlement can receive a monthly compensation until resettlement to other

regions, depending on the duration of residence (in percent to the minimal salary defined by the law):

- from 26th of April 1986 — at a rate of 60 percent;
- from 1st of January 1987 — at a rate of 50 percent;
- from 1st of January 1991 — at a rate of 30 percent.

Thus the monthly compensation to the citizens residing (working) in the zone of resettlement until resettlement to other places constitutes from the 1st of January 1987, for example, 42,000 roubles.

The citizens of above-mentioned categories also have the right of monthly pension and benefits for unemployed pensioners, invalids and disabled children at higher rates depending on the duration of residence (in percent to the minimal salary defined by the law):

- from 26th of April 1986 — at a rate of 300 percent;
- from 1st of January 1987 — at a rate of 200 percent;
- from 1st of January 1991 — at a rate of 100 percent.

As well, fellowships are granted to 100-percent of postgraduate students and students of state primary, secondary and higher professional educational establishments on the territory of the zone of resettlement. The state scholarship to students of state higher educational establishments of Russia is the same as the minimal salary, 84,000 roubles. Thus, students of state higher educational establishments on the territory of the zone of resettlement receive a scholarship from the state at a rate of 168,000 roubles. Citizens of the named categories are also guaranteed other benefits by the Law.

The Law also makes a provision for compensations (Section 5) for the harm inflicted to health as a result of the Chernobyl catastrophe. For instance, invalids of the 1st and the 2nd group receive an annual compensation at a rate of five minimal monthly salaries, defined by the law. Thus, with a minimal monthly salary of 84,000 roubles invalids of the 1st and the 2nd group must receive an annual compensation of 420,000 roubles for loss of health.

The law also covers compensations to other categories of citizens, whose health has been harmed as a result of the accident at the ChNPS.

Due to the severe state of the economy, the payments and compensations to the citizens, who suffered as a result of the accident at the ChNPS, have been more and more often delayed by the state bodies.

An important indicator of the state care about the population living in the contaminated territories is a sum of special investment for construction of housing, social and cultural facilities for the resettled, as well as establishment of industrial facilities to employ them. The expenditures for liquidation of the consequences of the Chernobyl accident in the budget of each country is a separate item. However, in recent years these sums tended to shrink. The reason for such a phenomenon is general financial recession, inflation processes, the bulk of new transition-period problems in the economy

of the newly-independent states. Investment in the economy of every country has been recently dropping at a rate of 10-30 percent a year in comparable prices. The real amount of Chernobyl investment has dropped at an even bigger rate. The expenditures of Belarus for Chernobyl investment in dollar equivalent was last year (1996) 120 million dollars, of Russia — 60 million, and of the Ukraine — 185 million. The cutback in housing construction in the framework of the "Chernobyl" programmes in three states altogether constituted 40 percent in comparison to 1995. As compared with 1995, only 27 percent of housing were completed in Russia, in Belarus — 62 percent, and in the Ukraine — 75 percent (A.Dumnov, E.Vos'mirko).

After the commencement of the war in Chechnya, the construction of 150 houses in the Potchip district of the Bryansk region (settlement Moskovsky), run by the Moscow government, was withheld, leaving the houses unfinished. Practically no clinics, hospitals and secondary schools, which are very important elements of the infrastructure for residents and the resettled, have been put into service in Russia last year. Problems are accumulating with the people who had resettled to "clean" areas but could not find work places there. Nearly no jobs are created for the resettled. Quite often the resettled, being unable to adjust to new living conditions, return to their "dirty" homes and gardens. In this relation the Russian government adopted in January 1997 a decree on elaboration of a mechanism to reimburse funds allocated for housing for the resettled who had returned back.

Budget complications have affected not only the problems of adult population rehabilitation, but children rehabilitation as well. A special multipurpose presidential programme "Children of Russia" has been functioning in the Russian Federation for several years already. One of its divisions is called "Children of Chernobyl". Although the programme is a presidential one, it was not fully financed last year. Within 9 months of 1996, 24 billion 907.3 million roubles have been allocated for implementation of the programme "Children of Chernobyl". This investment for the programme has constituted only 13 percent of the annual plan.

The problem of consumption of "dirty" foodstuffs grown in private gardens by residents of contaminated areas is still acute. In the first place, it relates to milk and milk products, meat, wild-growing fruit, berries, and mushrooms. While at least some control of such products was performed in the first years after the accident, there is practically no control at present in these areas.

Also unresolved is the problem of clean foodstuffs supplies to the population living in the contaminated territories. For example, only 8-20 percent of "clean" milk, butter and vegetable oil, meat, vegetables, and

sugar have been supplied to these territories in the Ukraine in 1995 as compared with 1991. In comparison with 1994, supplies of vegetables, meat, vegetable oil and different cereals have decreased by a half, and supplies of milk and sugar — by more than two-thirds. The same relates to Russia and Belarus in a number of regions.

Considering the problems of state assistance to the Chernobyl victims, one cannot but touch upon misuse of authority, as well as corruption in this sphere. It is long known that in some districts subject to radiation effects as a result of the accident at the ChNPS, the budget money allocated to solve the problems of Chernobyl victims was spent for other purposes. For instance, in the Bryansk region of the Russian Federation the local authorities have used this money for construction of a local airport, in the Zhitomir region (the Ukraine) some money has been spent to build country-houses for officials. Several years ago in Kiev in the Ukraine a corruption was disclosed in connection with transfer of "Chernobyl" money from the state budget to a private foundation of top-ranking officials. This corruption involved members of the Cabinet of Ministers.

Thus, the state assistance to the people affected by the accident at the ChNPS over the last years in newly-independent states has been subject to new tests in the course of rebuilding of the socio-economic system, adjustment of economic policies and decisions of new national priorities. Due to these reasons many "Chernobyl" problems remain unsolved. The primary problems in the Russian Federation are:

- Comprehensive monitoring of contaminated settlements is not accomplished;
- Not all residents are provided with personal protection means and special clothes;
- Home-made "dirty" milk and milk products, as well as home-grown vegetables and fruit with increased radiation levels are still consumed;
- Inflation and price increase do not allow residents of contaminated territories to obtain "clean" foodstuffs and even essential goods;
- Due to general economic recession, many Chernobyl victims are deprived in recent years of their benefits provided by law — compensation payments and gratuitous acquisition of medicines in drugstores;
- 100-percent clinical observation of the adult population living in the affected territory is not achieved;
- Personnel is still scanty in medical establishments, especially in remote villages;
- Medical institutions are not fully equipped with all necessary medical facilities;
- Housing construction for the resettled has been withheld;
- Construction of social and cultural objects has been

brought to a halt;

- Jobs are not being created for the resettled.

A fact is evident — the governments are not able to tackle with even the most acute social problems related to resettlement of the population from the most dangerous radiocontamination zones during 11 years after the Chernobyl accident. It is also obvious that the tendency of the central governments to shrink the assistance is likely to remain. Apparently, the major burden of assistance to the victims of Chernobyl will be carried in future by local administrations and by the resettled themselves.

2. Public movement to assist the Chernobyl sufferers

The first official public action was the announcement of a "Chernobyl" account #904 some time after the accident. Citizens of the USSR were informed about this account by officials of the party and Soviet ruling circles. The account number and all account information were broadcast on all radio and television channels, and printed in all party, Soviet, trade-union and official newspapers. The authorities invited people to mercy. The Soviet citizens were proposed to send money to this account for victims of Chernobyl. Nothing else could have happened at that time. No one except the authorities had the right to set up a special account (no matter what kind of account, not even the "Chernobyl" one) in a bank. Citizens of the USSR had no accounts in ordinary banks, only in state savings-banks. Except for the central state bank, there were no other banks in Russia.

When the deputies of the USSR started to speak publicly about the Chernobyl problems in their first Congresses and Sessions of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, the USSR government asked so-called "independent" experts of WHO and IAEA to come to the Soviet Union and conduct so-called "independent" study of the Chernobyl NPS accident consequences. This commission was headed by a Japanese scientist, I. Shigematsu. The conclusion of this commission appeared perplexing to many: the Chernobyl accident had posed no danger to human health and no change in the health of people was found by the international experts. Soon it became known that the Soviet government had financed the visit of the international experts, their stay, the best hotel accommodation and everything else from the "Chernobyl" account #904 according to a direction of the Chairman of Council of Ministers of the USSR, N.I. Ryzhkov. That brought the first official public action of mercy towards the victims of the accident at the Chernobyl NPS to an inglorious end.

Until 1989 no public association or organisation was allowed in the former USSR except the communist ones. Thus, any public movement for assistance to the

victims of Chernobyl was out of question. Only the liquidation of Article 6 of the USSR Constitution by the People's Deputies of the USSR, abolition of the communist party monopoly, adoption of a new article on a multiparty system and public organisations, adoption of the law in 1990 on public organisations and movements thrust the establishment of different civil movements and organisations, including those aimed at assistance to victims of Chernobyl.

It should be specially noted that the unofficial "green" movement in the former USSR emerged in different aspects owing to many publications about the consequences of the Chernobyl accident, appearing in press in late 80's after the first, more or less, free elections of the People's Deputies of the USSR. The elections gave a rise to real liberalisation of political life in the country. According to some data, 38 non-government ecological organisations (and all of them were without doubt controlled by the line of the CPSU) existed in the country in 1987. In 1991 the number of newly-formed non-government ecological organisations increased by more than 5 times and their total number exceeded 1,000 organisations.

The first non-registered (i.e. illegal) non-government public organisations (at that time, the registration system under the condition of the CPSU monopoly did not yet exist) concerned in the consequences of the Chernobyl accident emerged in late 1986 — early 1987. In particular, the non-registered (illegal) political club "*Perestroika*" founded by the editor of journalist agency "*Novosti Zhitomirshchiny*", Yakov Zaiko and the author of this report in the town Zhitomir. One of the tasks of the club was to spread by all possible means true information about the life of the people in the affected territories. Because of the taboo on such information in the official communist press, it had to be printed on a type-writer and illegally distributed among the population. Since 1988 the club "*Perestroika*" had been illegally publishing using primitive equipment the newspaper "*Stenogramma*" (Shorthand) with a circulation of 100 copies. The newspaper critically touched upon political topics and the situation in the northern districts of the Zhitomir region affected by the Chernobyl accident. At that moment *glasnost* was the most important task: nobody in the country knew about the real developments in the fourth reactor of the Chernobyl NPS, and about the scale of the accident consequences. Besides, the people who remained in the affected territory found themselves in a total information blockade — no one knew about them, their sufferings, ailments, deaths. Thus no help could be rendered to these people.

In 1988 the author of this report had the first chance to publicly talk at a meeting with workers of the plant "*Promavtomatika*" on what was going on in the "Chernobyl" territories. Further, with democratisation

of life in the USSR, the first meetings in support of the rights of the people affected by the Chernobyl accident have been organised by the "National Front of Assistance to *Perestroika*". This Front had "grown" out of the small club "*Perestroika*" and was officially registered by local authorities by that time. Thousands of people came to these meetings. People of Zhitomir expressed their solidarity with the victims of Chernobyl, demanded resignation of the government of the Ukraine, truth about the consequences of the accident at the Chernobyl NNP, and efficient help of the authorities to the affected. A wave of meetings against stifling of *glasnost* about the consequences of the Chernobyl accident had moved over all districts of the Zhitomir region affected by radiation, as well as in Belarus (e.g. a "crusade" rally of people from the affected territories to Minsk in 1990).

This is how started the public movement of citizens for truth about the consequences of the Chernobyl accident and for assistance to the victims. Only in 1991 appeared the first non-government organisations that were officially registered and acknowledged by the authorities and the society. The major purpose of these organisations were to help the immediate victims of Chernobyl, especially children. They emerged at first in Kiev, Minsk and Moscow, and acquired the status of all-union and republican organisations. At that time the "Chernobyl" 24 hours TV charity was popular and efficient as a means to collect money for the affected.

In 1989 dozens of foreign journalists gained access to the affected territories. Articles about the complicated situation of the affected appeared in the Western press. As a result, hundreds of organisations for assistance to the victims of Chernobyl emerged in the West, Japan and the United States. Domestic non-government organisations began to associate with the Western ones, thus merging into international non-government organisations. In order to overcome the bureaucratic barriers on the way of humanitarian aid to the Chernobyl victims from Western and Japan, it was better to work together. The enormous humanitarian aid, generosity and heartiness of the Japanese towards the people affected by the Chernobyl accident should be especially noted.

The years of 1989-1991 were the peak of the "Chernobyl" movement in the USSR and abroad. With the collapse of the USSR the "Chernobyl" movement of mercy and aid to the victims of peaceful atom significantly weakened. The problems of Chernobyl were thrust aside by problems of building up the independent states and solution of national problems. According to the data of the present author, there are currently more than 50 non-government anti-nuclear domestic organisations in Russia that in one way or the other, directly or indirectly, render help to the people affected by Chernobyl. There are several international

non-government organisations (in co-operation with Russian organisations) as well.

The number of non-government organisations in Russia involved exclusively with "Chernobyl" matters is 25 (the list is supplemented). As a rule, their activities are aimed only at various help to the victims of the Chernobyl accident, from lobbying of necessary laws in the Council of the Russian Federation and scientific projects related to the consequences of the accident at the ChNPS, to assistance to concrete organisations, especially to children's homes, hospitals, families and people.

The author of this report is also the president of yet single in the Russian Federation private Charity Foundation with a statutory objective to render assistance to children-orphan victims of Chernobyl. The Foundation regularly helps 150 orphans living in two children's homes in the radiocontaminated territory (Russia), as well as to the children's hospital, the old, the invalids, the families with many children in the town Zhitomir and the village Bazar of the Narodich district of the Zhitomir region (the Ukraine) — so far as the customs barriers and the facilities of the Foundation allow. Humanitarian actions of mercy by the Charity Foundation include purchase and delivery of food, different mixtures, juices for destitute children-nurselings (unparented children live in children's homes from birth till the age of 12), as well as medicines, syringes, footwear, books, toys, candies, biscuits, colour-TV's, etc.

The Foundation addressed the Moscow mayor, Yu.M.Luzhkov requesting to assist in the construction of a new children's home in "clean" area in order to resettle both of the children's homes from "dirty" territory of the town Klinty. A location for the new children's home was found, the engineering data were prepared, and the design of the house was drawn. However, with the commencement of the war in Chechnya all work was brought to a standstill.

As far as the abilities allow, the Foundation renders help to a Zhitomir children's hospital which is treating the children from the affected territories, finances heart operations for children of families with low income living in the "dirty" areas, as well as allocates one-time money grants to the old and the invalids from the affected territories of the Zhitomir region (the Ukraine).

The Foundation has several holders of fellowship as well — it pays for education of gifted students from Zhitomir in higher educational establishments.

Additionally, the publishing department of the Foundation edits, publishes, and distributes ecological and antinuclear literature (free of charge for the people affected by the Chernobyl accident). All benefits are spent solely for the purposes to help the people affected by the Chernobyl accident. The Foundation carries

such authority that its staffs are invited to take part as jury-members in different national meetings and festivals of "green" and other organisations, as well as in different international conferences. The Foundation established a special prize and awards the participants of various international and national contests of "green" organisations and "green" press.

The Foundation has reliable partners in the West and Japan. Co-operation is especially close with the Japanese "Chernobyl" organisations headed by Akiko Wada (Tokyo) and Ikuo Kusaka (Ishinomaki). In recent years they and their organisations have several times provided via the Foundation significant support to two children's homes patronised by the Foundation, as well as to the old of Zhitomir. The Foundation also maintains close co-operation with Japanese scientists from the Research Reactor Institute of the Kyoto University, T.Imanaka, H.Koide and K.Kobayashi, who are members of the authors for a collective of a fundamental publication launched by the Foundation — the first "Nuclear Encyclopaedia" in the world.

One should mark among the "Chernobyl" non-government organisations the ones that comprise victims of the Chernobyl accident living in the affected territories, and struggling for their survival, as well as non-government organisations of the participants of liquidation of the accident who had as consequence became invalid. The association "Chernobyl — Moscow State University" and the Moscow State University Scientific Association of Chernobyl Invalids, officially registered in 1991 and 1994, respectively, have been more and more active lately.

The main objectives and tasks of the Moscow State University Scientific Association of Chernobyl Invalids are charity actions aimed at social-psychological, informational, legal, medical assistance and material support to persons affected as a result of the Chernobyl accident or exposed to radiation due to other reasons; material, medical and social assistance to people, their families, children, women, invalids, families of perished and deceased; arrangement of payment for travel and medical treatment for children, women and invalids, including medical treatment abroad; provision of work places to the association members by making new enterprises of the association; provision of measures (within the framework of international co-operation) on rehabilitation of territories affected by the catastrophe at the Chernobyl NNP; financial support of scientific studies related to different aspects of the consequences of the accident at the ChNPS (social-psychological, legal, medical, economic, ecological aspects), etc.

The research experience of these associations presents certain interest. Since 1991 they have performed research studies on almost 20 topics directly or indirectly touching the consequences of the accident

at the Chernobyl NNP. These topics include: "Radionuclide content in the forestry products in the conditions of radiation contamination", "New medical-biological criteria of life-standard influence on the health state of the people in radiocontaminated regions", "Development of methodology of immunological monitoring for examination of aviation specialists — liquidators of the consequences of accident at the Chernobyl NPS", "Development of technique to form resistance to stress factors" (within the framework of the programme "Children of Chernobyl").

In addition, the Moscow State University Scientific Association of Chernobyl Invalids takes part in the "1997 Comprehensive Target Programme of Social Assistance to Invalids, as well as Persons Injured as a Result of the Accident at the Chernobyl NPS", authorised by the government of Moscow.

One of the latest projects developed by the Moscow State University Scientific Association of Chernobyl Invalids is teaching children who came to Moscow from the affected zones and encounter difficulties in entering higher and secondary professional establishments. It is planned to provide additional help to 500 children of former "Chernobylers".

While analysing the question of public organisations of help to victims of Chernobyl, one cannot bypass another aspect of this problem. Sometimes organisations or people who hampered publishing of true information about the events at the ChNPS after the accident and intentionally published false information about the situation of the population in the contaminated territories, had started after the breakthrough of the *glasnost* to found organisations of assistance to victims of Chernobyl and declared themselves their best friends.

Such cynical case happened in Zhitomir in 1987. The editor of the newspaper "*Radyanska Zhitmorischina*", D.Panchuk had not permitted the author of this report (at that time a correspondent of the newspaper) to visit the affected villages of the Narodich district of the Zhitomir region. After the author had, nevertheless, travelled to these villages and written an authentic article — the editor had not published it. Instead, an untruthful article of another correspondent was published stating that everything was fine in the affected areas. However, when the Chernobyl topic became not dangerous to be written, D.Panchuk jointly with other journalists of such sort had quickly established within the regional organisation of journalists a foundation for assistance to victims of Chernobyl. A fact is striking such that this pseudo-foundation found connections in Japan. The Japanese people, not knowing with whom they were actually having contact, came to Zhitomir with humanitarian aid (many thanks for that), met those who

had been unhesitatingly implementing the party decisions on classifying of the events in the affected territories and who had been in real guilty of stresses, illnesses, and deaths of their fellow citizens. The people who admitted the classifying of Chernobyl were invited and visited Japan, met the Japanese public and told how bravely they were writing truth about Chernobyl, and gave interviews to the Japanese newspapers. A greater cynicism more than this story can not be imagined. The author of this report had to explain the real state of things twice in the all-union and the Ukrainian republican newspapers.

This Zhitomir story is, however, not alone. There are a lot of other similar examples that oppressors of the truth of Chernobyl had afterwards not only turned into "advocates" of this truth at the level of public organisations, but occupied the highest positions in the government of the independent states.

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List of Russian and International Non-government

public organisations in Russia that provide assistance to victims of Chernobyl

- 1."SOS" Chernobyl — Obninsk division of the international association. Obninsk. Moscow region.
- 2."Children of Chernobyl" — division of the Belorussian Committee. Moscow.
- 3.Public Association of Persons Affected as a Result of the Catastrophe at the Chernobyl NPS. Moscow.
- 4.Division of the International Foundation for Assistance to Victims of Chernobyl. Moscow.
- 5."Raduga-XXI" — division of the international non-government humanitarian organisation "Foundation "Chernobyl - help" of North America. Moscow.
- 6.Foundation "Social Protection and Medical Provision of the Chernobylers". Moscow.
- 7."Spec.Chernobyl" Foundation. Moscow.
- 8.Foundation of assistance and rehabilitation of invalids, orphans, refugees and victims of Chernobyl. Moscow
- 9."Chernobyl" — social protection foundation. Moscow.
- 10.Union "Chernobyl" of Russia. Moscow, with divisions over the country.
- 11."Chernobyl" — association of the Union. Moscow.
- 12."Chernobyl-Help" — the international humanitarian organisation. Moscow.
- 13."Chernobyl, Children of Chernobyl" — division of the international association. Ul'yanovsk.
- 14."Union of Chernobyl Workers" — Russian association. Voronezh region, settlement Ramon.
- 15."Chernobyl-Atom" — international association of unions. Moscow.
- 16."Chernobyl-Hospital" — foundation. Moscow.
- 17."Chernobyl-Hope" — foundation for assistance to invalids, injured, ill, overirradiated as a result of Chernobyl catastrophe. Moscow.
- 18.Chernobyl Safety Foundation. Moscow.
- 19."Chernobylenergozaschita" — association for social protection of citizens who took part in liquidation of the consequences of the accident at the Chernobyl NPS. Moscow.
- 20.Chernobyl Mission" — public organisation. Moscow.
- 21.Operative department at the Siberia regional division "Chernobyl". Novosibirsk.
- 22."Chernobyl" — public association of invalids of war and Chernobyl. Moscow.
- 23.Private Charity Foundation of Yaroshinskaya (assistance to people affected by the accident at the ChNPS). Moscow.
- 24.Association "Chernobyl — Moscow State University"
- 25.The Moscow State University Scientific Association of Chernobyl Invalids. Moscow.