

# **TWG PARTICIPATION IN PUBLICIZING THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE CHORNOBYL TRAGEDY AND COMMEMORATING ITS VICTIMS**

**Please also see the Photo albums for the years 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, TWGCF-1996**

## **1.0 Introduction**

TWG and its members participated in a wide range of activities related to the Chornobyl tragedy:

1. Organizing forums for the analysis of the technical causes of Chornobyl nuclear facility meltdown and an assessment of the health consequences
2. Correcting misinformation in American media's description of the Chornobyl tragedy
3. Commemorating the Chornobyl tragedy
4. Providing a forum for activists from Ukraine to articulate the Chornobyl tragedy not only as a health issue but also as a political issue in Ukraine's drive to independence

## **2.0 Technical and Health Impact Analysis**

### **2.1 Interviews of Andrew Mostovych, a physicist at the Naval Research Laboratory and George Kuzmych, a nuclear engineer at the Department of Commerce (TWG NEWS May 1986)**

Dr. Andrew Mostovych and George Kuzmych provided a preliminary analysis of what likely happened at the Chornobyl nuclear power plant. Both believed that a reactor meltdown had occurred and suspected that some degree of human error was involved. The direct health consequences were likely to include damage to white blood cells and

thyroid cancer. There would likely be damage to water, food and milk supplies.

## **2.2 Presentation by Robert Gale, M.D., American physician who performed bone marrow transplants on Chernobyl victims (TWG NEWS December 1986)**

Dr. Robert Gale addressed the National Press Club, providing an assessment of the likely long-term health impact of the Chernobyl reactor meltdown and explosion. During the Q&A TWG members pressed without success for Dr. Gale to address the issue of whether the Soviet government provided adequate protection to Chernobyl clean-up workers (mostly Balts and Ukrainians).

## **2.3 TWG Sponsored Symposium on Chernobyl Tragedy (December 10, 1986 / TWG NEWS January 1987)**

TWG sponsored a Symposium on the Chernobyl tragedy.

Dr. David Marples, author of "Chernobyl & Nuclear Power in the U.S.S.R.," said the accident at Chernobyl was waiting to happen because of poor safety mechanisms. He quoted Vladimir Dolgikh, a candidate member of the Politburo, as pointing out a lack of skilled personnel, shoddy construction materials, chronic supply problems, and an outdated centralized planning system.

Ihor Masnyk, M.D. of the National Cancer Institute, detailed the medical implications of the Chernobyl tragedy. "Babies born to women between the eighth and 15<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy at the time of radiation exposure carry a risk of severe mental retardation and, in the less affected, lower mental performance."

## **2.4 Presentations by David Marples, expert on Soviet nuclear energy and a research associate at Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies at University of Alberta (December 10-11 / TWG NEWS January 1987)**

TWG arranged for presentations by David Marples with U.S. officials at the White House and the State Department, a discussion with scholars at the Kennan Institute of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, a luncheon with the editor of the Problems of Communism journal, a briefing at the National Press Club, an appearance on the U.S. Information Agency's WORLDNET live TV broadcast to Europe, and an interview with the Voice of America.

## **2.5 Symposium on Chernobyl Tragedy (April 21, 1987 / TWG NEWS May 1987)**

TWG sponsored a symposium on the Chernobyl tragedy. Symposium participants were: Dr. Oleksa Bilaniuk, a nuclear physicist at Swarthmore College, Robert Taylor, M.D., a bone marrow transplant specialist at the Medical College of Wisconsin, George Kuzmych, a nuclear engineer at the Commerce Department's Office of Technology and Policy Analysis, and Dr. David Marples. Dr. Bilaniuk described the "Seven Deadly Sins of Chernobyl" with the most prominent being human error, poor design, and bad policy.

## **2.6 David Marples in Washington (April 21-26, 1991 / TWG NEWS May 1991)**

TWG NEWS covered Dr. Marples' presentations to the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki Commission) and to the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). Dr. Marples was able to provide updated information on the Chernobyl tragedy in part because of the transfer of jurisdictional control over Chernobyl from the all-union state [Moscow control] to Ukrainian control.

The following is an excerpt from TWG NEWS:

“Only 237 persons have been recorded as suffering from radiation sickness. In fact, 500,000 to 600,000 were involved in the clean-up effort and many of them suffered illnesses. The Ukrainian health authorities have expressed special concern for the 129,000 ‘liquidators’ who received high radiation doses. About 380,000 children have reportedly been affected by fallout from Chornobyl, directly or indirectly.”

### **3.0 Correcting Misinformation (TWG NEWS June 1986).**

In the aftermath of the Chornobyl nuclear reactor meltdown the American weekly *U.S. News and World Report* used the title “Nightmare in Russia” in on its cover. TWG NEWS covered the meeting of Eugene Iwanciw, Alvin Kapusta, Bohdan Futey, and R.L. Chomiak (all TWG members) with the editor of U.S. News and World Report David Gergen and his team. In what was described as a civilized discussion, the U.S. News and World Report team explained their rationale for using “Russia” instead of “Soviet Union” but generally conceded the validity of the Ukrainian - American perspective and made some amends.

## **4.0 Commemoration of the Chornobyl Tragedy**

### **4.1 Prayer Vigil (April 24, 1987 / TWG NEWS May 1987)**

A prayer vigil was led by the three priests of area Ukrainian churches, accompanied by the choir of St. Andrew’s Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Lafayette Park.

### **4.2 Commemorative Service (April 27, 1987 / TWG NEWS May 1987)**

A Commemorative service was held at Holy Family Ukrainian Catholic National Shrine. Ukrainian clergy from Holy Family, St. Andrew's, and Holy Trinity were joined by clergy representing the Interfaith Conference which joins Islamic, Jewish, Mormon, Protestant and Roman Catholic faiths. Also present were clergy from the Latvian Lutheran Church, Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church, Lithuanian Catholic Mission, and Memorial African Methodist Episcopal Church. They each read passages from their religious texts. David Marples delivered a speech on the human factor of the Chernobyl tragedy (Text of speech in section 6.2). Namysto, the Washington women's vocal ensemble, sang "The Beatitudes."

#### **4.3 Commemorative Events (TWG NEWS May 1991)**

TWG NEWS covered the extensive series of events commemorating the fifth anniversary of the Chornobyl tragedy. These events included a presentation by Natalia Preobrazhenska from Zeleny Svit, a screening of a film by filmmaker Heorhij Shkliarevsky documenting the consequences of the nuclear disaster, artists from Ukraine and the West participating in a memorial Chornobyl Art exhibit, and other events.

#### **4.4. Leontovych Benefit Concert (June 14, 1991 / Announcement in TWG NEWS May 1991)**

On June 14, 1991 a Chornobyl Benefit Concert was held featuring the Leontovych Quartet.

#### **4.5 Odessa Philharmonic Chornobyl Commemorative Concert (April 28, 1996 / TWG NEWS March-April 1996 / Video of the concert Video 1996-10)**

The Odessa Philharmonic marked the tenth Anniversary of the Chernobyl tragedy with a concert at the Kennedy Center. The performance was presented by the Washington Performing Arts Society, with TWG Cultural Fund Director, Laryssa Chopivsky, working through the Chernobyl Challenge '96 coalition to arrange the appearance.

## **5.0 Political Impact of Chernobyl Tragedy**

### **5.1 TWG Symposium on Chernobyl (December 1986 / TWG NEWS 1987)**

Paul Goble, an expert on Soviet nationalities at the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research made the following point:

“Chernobyl was in Ukraine, but bureaucratically and legally, it was under the control of the all-union ministries in Moscow, and the problems, if they existed, were problems of Moscow's own making.”

Paul Goble also pointed out large scale protest petitions in Poland and Yugoslavia. He also enumerated Russia, Uzbekistan, and Armenia as countries where popular voices were raised demanding a change of aspects of official policy.

### **5.2 Dr. Danylo Shmorhun in Kiev (TWG Forum August 18, 1989 / TWG NEWS September 1989 / Video 1989 – 90; Video 2)**

During a TWG Forum Dr. Shmorhun, a medical exchange participant, reported that Chernobyl was clearly a topic of intense interest in Kiev.

The following is an excerpt from TWG NEWS:

“Shmorhun was in Kiev on the third anniversary of the disaster and witnessed a ceremony on this occasion with 30,000 people at Dynamo

Stadium. Protest signs could be seen throughout, such as, “Who is our enemy: the Geiger counter or those who deny it to us?” or, “The proud Ukrainian nation is not afraid even of radiation.””

### **5.3 1989 TWG Leadership Conference (TWG NEWS October 1989 and November 1989 / Video 1989-100 thru Video 1989-140)**

#### **5.3.1 Volodymyr Yavorivsky, a writer, head of Rukh’s Kiev Chapter, and a People’s Deputy of the U.S.S.R.**

During the 1989 TWG Leadership Conference Volodymyr Yavorivsky emphasized the extraordinary incompetence of the Communist leadership in Kyiv in handling the Chornobyl disaster. He made the point that Communist Party leaders spirited their children out of Kyiv right after the disaster and that special shelters were constructed for them while average Ukrainians can only shudder at the image of their descendants who may suffer.

#### **5.3.2 Sviatoslav Dudko, founding member and secretary of Zeleny Svit**

Sviatoslav Dudko of Zeleny Svit (Green World) said that Chornobyl created the space for the creation of a vast popular movement for environmental protection. This movement concerned itself not only with Chornobyl but challenged the lack of transparency in governmental decision making with respect to energy projects in USSR in general and in Ukraine in particular. Zeleny Svit provided a blueprint for the replacement of nuclear power with safer alternatives.

#### **5.3.3 David Marples, expert on Soviet Nuclear energy and a research associate at Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies at University of Alberta**

David Marples provided an overview of the ecological situation in Ukraine detailing both nuclear and non-nuclear pollution. He also addressed the health impacts on the population. The main emphasis of the presentation was the tremendous level of both popular and regional government engagement in ecological issues.

#### **5.4 Rostyslav Bratun', a representative from Lviv to the Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR (February 1990 / (TWG NEWS March 1990)**

Rostyslav Bratun' in a speech in Washington, D.C., said the following:

“The tragedy of Chernobyl made a profound impact on the Ukrainian people. We once again realized that we are stewards of our land. We will keep struggling until Ukraine is nuclear-free, including the entire dismantling of Chernobyl – the lurking hulk outside our capital city.”

#### **5.5 David Marples (April 21-25 / TWG NEWS May 1991)**

In April 21-25, 1991 on the fifth anniversary of the Chernobyl tragedy, Dr. David Marples, an honorary TWG member, briefed Congress on the latest information as to causes of the reactor meltdown and the political and economic fallout of the Chernobyl tragedy.

“The political variables of the equation, he said, are primarily the components of Rukh and the multi-political parameters within its organization, influences from the Soviet political arena, the Ukrainian Catholic Church, the student movement, and labor unions.

The economic variables are strongly dictated by the control of resources and production. Once a potential source of energy,



Chornobyl has become an overwhelming, complex, costly tragedy to be administered by a budding young republic, he noted."

### **5.6 Natalia Preobrazhenska, a biologist and environmental activist from Zeleny Svit (Green World) in Kiev (April 1991 /TWG NEWS May 1991)**

Natalia Preobrazhenska was one of the keynote plenary speakers at the National Conference for Nuclear Free 1990's and at a seminar in George Washington University. She was adamant in stating that "The Chornobyl disaster is not abating but continues to spread to the newborn and in nature. Therefore, especially now, Ukraine must control its own destiny by becoming an independent sovereign country and not dependent on Communist party bureaucrats with their cover-up operations."

## **6.0 Publications relating to Chornobyl Tragedy**

### **6.1 Chernobyl and Nuclear Power in the U.S.S.R. by David Marples**

### **6.2 Chernobyl and its Aftermath – A Selected Bibliography with Forward by David Marples**

Paste link in URL: <https://thewashingtongroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Chornobyl-Bibliography-1987.pdf>

### **6.3 Recent Books on Chornobyl reviewed by New York Review of Books**

Chernobyl: The History of a Nuclear Catastrophe by Serhii Plokyh

Midnight in Chernobyl: The Untold Story of the World's Greatest Nuclear Disaster by Adam Higginbotham

Manual for Survival: A Chernobyl Guide to the Future

by Kate Brown