



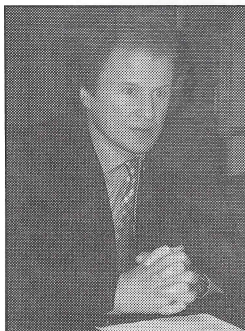
UKRAINE'S MINISTER YURIY KOSTENKO: Excerpts from an interview

After the signing of the G-7 MOU, the Minister for Environmental Protection and Nuclear Safety discussed the ramifications of the closure of Chornobyl with the Monitor.

After a series of long and complex negotiations, Ukraine and the G-7 countries have finally agreed to conditions that will both set the deadline for the closure of the Chornobyl power plant, and ensure the provision of assistance so that we can meet this deadline. We have included a clause in the Memorandum of Understanding, indicating that we intend to work towards the closing of the power plant by the year 2000, while stipulating that we can only hold up our end of the agreement if at least a minimum number of problems are addressed.

The first condition is the development of new power capacities. Minister Sheila Copps emphasized today that even for a country as efficient as Canada it would be hard to lose more than 5% of power capacities. For Ukraine, which is currently in the throws of an economic crisis, this would be an economic catastrophe. Other problems include the sarcophagus, social protection issues and the financing of the operations related to the closure of the power plant. Now all this has been taken under consideration in the Memorandum and has made the signing possible.

Ukraine gave the figure of \$4 billion it needed - this is the direct economic cost Ukraine will experience as a result of the early closure of the Chornobyl power plant. This is the actual cost of electricity which will not be generated or sold because of the early closure. The cost of projects dealing with the premature closure of the Chornobyl power plant will be much higher than 4 or 5 billion dollars, but they will be determined only when they are developed. Then we can talk about specific sums. Financing these projects will be based on the principles stated in the Memorandum: interest-bearing



credits and non-profit grants. It is still too early to talk about the total sum of money.

These two things are interdependent to a great extent. If new power capacities are not created, it is unrealistic to talk about the closure of Chornobyl. *I repeat that we are in a deep energy crisis.* We will simply ruin our economy if we stop these units without creating a replacement.

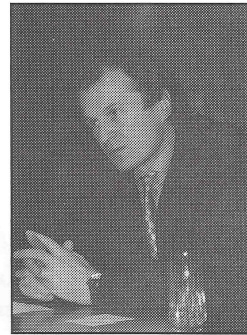
Again, I emphasized the contribution made by the G-7 working group. Everyone understood that if the negotiation process had continued much longer, the deadline of the year 2000 would have become unrealistic.

On this 10th anniversary of the Chornobyl tragedy, our goal is to gather all available information, because what we have now is very confusing. We need to create a mechanism for interaction between Ukraine and other countries, which would allow us to tackle these problems as well as to share our experience and data with all other countries currently using nuclear energy. Today, experts understand that nobody can guarantee the safety of nuclear power stations in any country. So the 10th anniversary of Chornobyl can become a kind of Rubicon for understanding.

Unlike 3 or 4 years ago, now there is presently no opposition in Ukraine to the continued operation of the Chornobyl power plant, because everybody knows what it means to live in a cold apartment without electricity. Therefore, it is vital to come to an understanding whereby the interests of both Ukraine and the West would be taken into account. If the 10th anniversary of Chornobyl helps us to find this compromise, this would be a great achievement and all parties would benefit. We are going in the right direction. In 1996 an international conference on the problems and after-effects of Chornobyl will be conducted in Ukraine under the aegis of the International Atomic Energy Agency, and this as well as other related activities will hopefully lead to positive results.

Accidents happen at nuclear power plants all around the world - reactors stop, automated systems turn on, etc. But anything that happens in Ukraine is immediately associated with Chornobyl. Therefore, even a minor problem elicits a stronger reaction than a serious accident at a western facility; for example a recent accident at a French power plant received almost no publicity whatsoever.

The Chornobyl disaster puts a moratorium on most nuclear programs, including those in the United States.



There is a big problem with all the reactors of the Chornobyl-type. Their construction defects makes it impossible to bring their safety standards up to internationally accepted levels because they lack one crucial component: there is no her-

metic cover over the reactor. This is the difference between the accidents in Chornobyl and in Three-Mile Island in the USA. In both cases the reactor got melted. However, in Three-Mile Island, all the radioactive nuclides stayed under the hermetic cover, while in Chornobyl they spread outside. This type of reactor has essential flaws in its design and it must be discontinued. There are similar reactors in Russia, but they are always overlooked. Why? Because everybody understands that it is impossible to close 15 reactors in Russia. Too much money is required and too much damage would result to the economy. The same is true for two Lithuanian units as well. They produce 80% of the electricity in that country. I emphasize that if there was a disaster at one of these plants, radioactive contamination would be a major catastrophe for Ukraine and Europe alike.

Ten years have passed, but the number of problems related to Chornobyl have not decreased. On the contrary, much to our regret, they are getting bigger. Contamination is spreading throughout Ukraine. Chornobyl projects eat up more and more money every year, whether they are to clean up Chornobyl, our environment, to provide social protection for victims, or to treat their health problems.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge the fact that Canada has been working with Ukraine for 2 years on the problems of the pollution of the Dnipro River. We rely on the Dnipro for two-thirds of all water consumed in Ukraine; Canada's commitment to this problem is a concrete example of why we have such a good relationship with Canada.

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