



## International Commemorations of 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Chernobyl

On April 26 in Kyiv, tens of thousands wept, prayed and marched to mark the 10th anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, which unleashed a lethal radioactive cloud over Europe and blighted millions of lives. World leaders paid tribute to the army of workers who battled to contain the fire that broke out when Chernobyl's fourth reactor exploded on April 26, 1986.

Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma said the disaster was a lesson to the world to ensure the safe use of nuclear technology. "The main lesson of Chernobyl is that the nuclear burden on the planet has to be reduced," he told an official gathering of deputies and veterans of the Chernobyl cleanup operation. Ukraine, he said, has "set a good example" by agreeing to close down Chernobyl's two working reactors.



R. WORONOWYCZ, UKRAINIAN WEEKLY

*"Chernobyl was not an accident. It was an act of desecration," stated well-known Ukrainian-American actor and Academy Award winner Jack Palance, at a fundraising dinner in New Jersey for the Children of Chernobyl Relief Fund.*

U.S. President Bill Clinton sent a letter of support to Kuchma, saying his pledge to shut the plant was "a goal of the highest order". In a statement read by Karl Frederick Inderfurth, assistant U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, President Clinton commended the work of humanitarian relief organizations and "the courageous individuals who have cared for the innocent victims of this calamity." He reasserted the U.S. commitment to "help Ukraine develop a more vibrant, self-sustaining energy sector that will advance its prosperity as a sovereign nation in new Europe."

A statement was also read on behalf of United Nations Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali by Under Secretary General Samir Sanbar expressing continued UN concern for the crisis. Commemorations were held in all European capitals.

At 1:24 am, the moment when Chernobyl staff lost control of the reactor 10 years ago, thousands stood in tribute with candles in Slavutych, the new town built 15 kilometres east of the plant to rehouse its work force. At the plant itself, 145 kilometres north of Kyiv, hundreds stood in silence to remember their dead colleagues.

Solemn music was replaced by the ticking of a clock as children, then soldiers in uniform filed past the portraits of "liquidators" who died after the explosion blew the roof off the reactor and sent a cloud of radiation over Europe. Ukraine says 4,300 people died as a direct result of the accident and many of its 600,000 cleanup workers are now ill. Millions were affected, mostly in Ukraine, Belarus and Russia.

### In Canada

Ukrainian communities from Victoria to Montreal remembered Chernobyl with numerous memorial services and commemorative programs on, or near the April 26 anniversary. The purpose was to raise consciousness about the disaster and funds for victims of the tragedy through such agencies as the Children of Chernobyl Canadian Fund.

The largest program was held in Toronto, where 1,500 people attended a candlelight procession, and 2,000 a commemorative concert. Numerous events were coordinated by the Toronto Chapter of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Children of Chernobyl Fund, and Ukrainian Documentation Centre, including an academic conference, with keynote speaker Dr. David Marples; a conference on the medical effects of Chernobyl; an information exhibit at the University of Toronto; photo displays at Toronto City Hall; masses and concerts, with a special Massey Hall gala concert featuring Ukrainian opera and symphony.

In Ottawa, 500 people gathered in front of Parliament Hill, where Prime Minister Chrétien's statement acknowledged the many Canadians who reached out to the victims of the Chernobyl disaster in a spirit of common humanity. Guest speakers included the Ukrainian Ambassador Volodymyr Furkalo, Ukrainian Canadian Congress President Oleh Romaniw, Senator Marcel Prud'homme, and Joanna Survilla, president of the Canadian Relief Fund for Chernobyl Victims in Belarus. At the ceremonial mass, candles were lit in the outline of a cross. Ottawa's mayor declared April 26 as Chernobyl Commemoration Day, and an exhibition of photos and art by members of the clean up crew and children was displayed at the Regional Municipality gallery.

Many Ukrainian communities across Ontario and Quebec held special events to commemorate Chernobyl programs. In Montreal, a seminar at McGill University attracted students and academics. Special church services, video showings, and candlelight vigils were also organized in Hamilton,

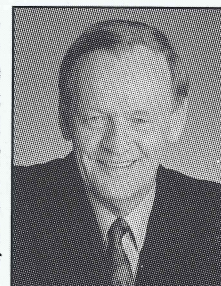
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## PRIME MINISTER MARKS 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF CHORNOBYL

"Ten years ago, the world was horrified by the terrible human tragedy at Chernobyl," said Prime Minister Chrétien. "We continue to see the horrible price paid in the suffering of thousands of people in that region, particularly children. I know many Canadians have reached out to the victims of the Chernobyl disaster in a spirit of common humanity. Canada is working with the countries of the region to help ensure that such a disaster will never occur again."



The Canadian government has provided substantial bilateral technical, financial and humanitarian assistance to deal with the aftermath of the accident and to improve the safety of nuclear power plants. Referring to the recent Moscow Summit on Nuclear Safety and Security, the Prime Minister noted that G-7 leaders and Ukraine reaffirmed their commitment to close Chernobyl by the year 2000.

"We will work to help Ukraine overcome the lingering impact of Chernobyl and to improve the quality of life of its population. That is the best way to help victims and to honour the memory of those who lost their lives," added the Prime Minister.

London, Windsor, Sudbury and Thunder Bay.

In Western Canada, major Ukrainian centres coordinated their activities: British Columbia (Victoria, Vancouver and Vernon), Alberta (Edmonton and Calgary), Saskatchewan (Regina, Canora and Yorkton) and Manitoba (Winnipeg). In hundreds of smaller towns, local churches held special services dedicated to Chernobyl.

As the Prime Minister noted, it was fitting that Canadians should join with the people of Ukraine and, indeed, with the citizens of the global community in remembering the victims of Chernobyl.