



**RESPONSE TO FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (FOIA) REQUEST**

NRC-2021-000112

1

RESPONSE TYPE  INTERIM  FINAL

**REQUESTER:**

John Greenewald

**DATE:**

04/06/2021

**DESCRIPTION OF REQUESTED RECORDS:**

Report SECY-78-305 - Information on Nuclear Accident in U.S.S.R. in Late 1950's

**PART I. -- INFORMATION RELEASED**

- The NRC has made some, or all, of the requested records publicly available through one or more of the following means: (1) <https://www.nrc.gov>; (2) public ADAMS, <https://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html>; (3) microfiche available in the NRC Public Document Room; or FOIA Online, <https://foiaonline.regulations.gov/foia/action/public/home>.
- Agency records subject to the request are enclosed.
- Records subject to the request that contain information originated by or of interest to another Federal agency have been referred to that agency (See Part I.D -- Comments) for a disclosure determination and direct response to you.
- We are continuing to process your request.
- See Part I.D -- Comments.

**PART I.A -- FEES**

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;"><b>AMOUNT</b></p> <p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;"><b>\$0.00</b></p> | <input type="checkbox"/> You will be billed by NRC for the amount indicated.<br><input type="checkbox"/> You will receive a refund for the amount indicated.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fees waived. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Since the minimum fee threshold was not met, you will not be charged fees.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Due to our delayed response, you will not be charged search and/or duplication fees that would otherwise be applicable to your request. |
|---|---|--|

**PART I.B -- INFORMATION NOT LOCATED OR WITHHELD FROM DISCLOSURE**

- We did not locate any agency records responsive to your request. *Note:* Agencies may treat three discrete categories of law enforcement and national security records as not subject to the FOIA ("exclusions"). See 5 U.S.C. 552(c). This is a standard notification given to all requesters; it should not be taken to mean that any excluded records do, or do not, exist.
- We have withheld certain information pursuant to the FOIA exemptions described, and for the reasons stated, in Part II.
- Because this is an interim response to your request, you may not appeal at this time. We will notify you of your right to appeal any of the responses we have issued in response to your request when we issue our final determination.
- You may appeal this final determination within 90 calendar days of the date of this response. If you submit an appeal by mail, address it to the FOIA Officer, at U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Mail Stop T-2 F43, Washington, D.C. 20555-0001. You may submit an appeal by e-mail to [FOIA.resource@nrc.gov](mailto:FOIA.resource@nrc.gov). You may fax an appeal to (301) 415-5130. Or you may submit an appeal through FOIA Online, <https://foiaonline.regulations.gov/foia/action/public/home>. Please be sure to include on your submission that it is a "FOIA Appeal."

**PART I.C -- REFERENCES AND POINTS OF CONTACT**

You have the right to seek assistance from the NRC's FOIA Public Liaison by submitting your inquiry at <https://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/foia/contact-foia.html>, or by calling the FOIA Public Liaison at (301) 415-1276.

If we have denied your request, you have the right to seek dispute resolution services from the NRC's Public Liaison or the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS). To seek dispute resolution services from OGIS, you may e-mail OGIS at [ogis@nara.gov](mailto:ogis@nara.gov), send a fax to (202) 741-5789, or send a letter to: Office of Government Information Services, National Archives and Records Administration, 8601 Adelphi Road, College Park, MD 20740-6001. For additional information about OGIS, please visit the OGIS website at <https://www.archives.gov/ogis>.



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## PART I.D -- COMMENTS

Please note:

SECY-78-305 – The NRC received a FOIA request for this record in 1986 (FOIA-86-336) and made it publicly available (please see below).

This is the best available copy.

ADAMS Properties ML20214M981

(Response to Commissioner Bradford 780504 request for info on reported nuclear accident in Soviet Union in late 1950s. Discusses possible occurrence of nuclear waste explosion. CIA repts, WK Benson 770209 memo & DD Myers 781927, letter encl.)

Records with a ML Accession Number are publicly available in the NRC's Public Electronic Reading Room at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm.html>. If you need assistance in obtaining these records, please contact the NRC's Public Documents Room (PDR) at 301-415-4737 or 1-800-397-4209, or by Email to [PDR.Resource@nrc.gov](mailto:PDR.Resource@nrc.gov).


Signature - Freedom of Information Act Officer or Designee

**Stephanie A. Blaney**

Digitally signed by Stephanie A. Blaney  
Date: 2021.04.06 06:00:27 -04'00'

This document is made available through the declassification efforts  
and research of John Greenewald, Jr., creator of:

# The Black Vault



The Black Vault is the largest online Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) document clearinghouse in the world. The research efforts here are responsible for the declassification of hundreds of thousands of pages released by the U.S. Government & Military.

**Discover the Truth** at: <http://www.theblackvault.com>

UNITED STATES  
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20555

*1 Ch Bennett  
called Bennett  
6/15 95  
SECY-78-305*

June 12, 1978

**INFORMATION REPORT**

For: The Commissioners

From: James R. Shea, Director  
Office of International Programs *L. J. Dachs*

Thru: *f* Lee V. Gossick, Executive Director for Operations

Subject: INFORMATION ON NUCLEAR ACCIDENT IN U.S.S.R. IN LATE 1950's

Purpose: To respond to Commissioner Bradford's request of May 4 for information on the reported nuclear accident in the Soviet Union in the late 1950's and to provide whatever information is available on an unclassified basis within the USG regarding this incident.

Discussion: In approving SECY 78-11, "Exchange of Visits with the U.S.S.R. on Nuclear Safety," Commissioner Bradford commented, "I would be interested in anything we might learn regarding recent reports of a major radioactive explosion or exposure in the Soviet Union in the late 1950's." The U.S. team, during its meetings in the U.S.S.R., asked about these reports on several occasions, showing the Soviets a copy of the New York Times article on this subject. In each case, the Soviet officials, including the host for the visit, L. M. Voronin, answered that they knew nothing of such incidents and that their agencies had no responsibilities for activities other than peaceful nuclear power plants, which were never involved in any such incidents. Later, after the return of the U.S. team, IP contacted Mr. W. K. Benson, Division of International Security Affairs, Department of Energy, and requested information on this matter. In response, he has sent NRC the following items: A memo by Benson dated February 9, 1977, "Comments on a Nuclear Accident in the Soviet Union" (Enclosure 1); a letter to Rep. Morris K. Udall from DOE Under Secretary Dale Myers dated January 27, 1978, describing the subject accident (Enclosure 2); and a set of CIA reports, made public in November 1977 under an FOIA request, which describe a nuclear accident that occurred in the Ural Mountains area of the U.S.S.R. in the late 1950's (Enclosure 3). In general, Mr. Benson summarized the CIA reports

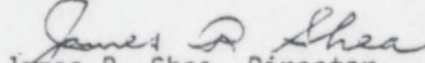
*FOIA-86-336  
A/13*

Contact: J. D. Lafleur, Jr., IP  
492-7131

as not revealing any new information except that people in the Soviet Union were injured by a nuclear accident there in the late 1950's. He stated that the original Washington Post article was inaccurate and the recent Esquire article contained some facts interspersed with a lot of speculation.

At present, DOE cannot confirm that there was a waste accident. The DOE waste handling people believe there was a nuclear accident but not a waste explosion. They feel the latter could not have happened; this is reflected in the Myers-Udall letter.

*1/24/78 concurs?*

  
James R. Shea, Director  
Office of International Programs

Enclosures:

1. Memo from Benson to Cannon dated 2/9/77
2. Letter from Under Secretary Myers to Rep. Udall dated 1/27/78
3. List of CIA reports

DISTRIBUTION:

Commissioners  
Commission Staff Offices  
Exec. Dir. for Opers.  
Secretariat

ENCLOSURE 1

MEMO FROM BENSON TO CANNON DATED 2/9/77



UNITED STATES  
ENERGY RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20545

Enclosure 1

FEB 9 1977

J. S. Cannon, CPA

COMMENTS ON A NUCLEAR ACCIDENT IN THE SOVIET UNION

The following information is provided relative to the nuclear accident in the Soviet Union first reported last fall by Zhores Medvedev.

Background

Zhores Medvedev, a Soviet refugee biochemist and geneticist now living in England, reported that for many years, atomic reactor waste had been buried in a deserted area a few dozen miles from the town of Blagoveshensk in the Ural Mountains. In 1958, the waste overheated within the shallow burial facility and erupted "like a violent volcano." Strong winds blew the resulting radioactive clouds hundreds of miles away, and no one was evacuated from the affected area until after symptoms of radiation sickness were evident. The incident resulted in the deaths of hundreds of people, and thousands suffered from radiation sickness.

Comments

ERDA has no information relating to Soviet atomic energy activities or installations near the town of Blagoveshensk, which is to the west of the Ural Mountain range. Some oil stimulation activity (PHEs) took place some 250-300 km to the south, but this activity did not begin until the mid 1950's.

It is possible Medvedev is not certain of the location. He never stated that he had personally been in the area. Disasters in the Soviet Union do not receive the extensive, factual publicity given to them in the West. Additionally, because of the extreme secrecy surrounding the military atomic energy program, we would expect little more than rumors concerning a major accident that might have occurred. In fact, there were several rumor-like reports of a nuclear accident in the Urals area in the mid-to-late 1950's; all were very vague as to details or specifics.



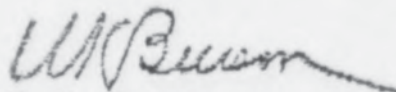
FEB 9 1977

An example of such a report comes from a Soviet refugee in Germany in 1963. He heard that in the spring of 1959, a large accidental atomic explosion occurred in Chelyabinsk Province. Many were killed; many others received overdoses of radiation and were evacuated. Victims were given periodic medical examinations. Some time later, he met a woman who had been affected by the radiation; she had red, eczema-like markings on her face. He was never in the area himself.

In bilateral talks, the Soviets have been very reluctant to discuss details of high-level radioactive waste storage or disposal except in the most general terms. Locations have never been specified, nor was there ever any mention of an accident such as described by Medvedev. Waste disposal discussions have centered on low level waste, including visits to such facilities at nuclear power plants and reactor research centers. No visits to reprocessing plants have occurred, probably because most of them are also used in the weapons program, which is surrounded with extreme secrecy.

Note

The above information is essentially what has been supplied in response to an F.O.I. request for information that ERDA might hold relative to the Medvedev article.



W. K. Benson  
Office of the Assistant Director  
for Intelligence  
Division of International  
Security Affairs



ENCLOSURE 2  
LETTER FROM UNDER SECRETARY MYERS  
TO REP. UDALL DATED 1/27/78



Department of Energy  
Washington, D.C. 20585

January 27, 1978

The Honorable Morris K. Udall, Chairman  
Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs  
House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This is in response to your letter of December 19, 1977, to Secretary Schlesinger in which you called his attention to CIA reports, recently made public, which described an unspecified nuclear accident that occurred in the Ural Mountains region of the Soviet Union in the late 1950's. On the possible assumption that the accident derived from the mismanagement of radioactive waste, you requested information on that accident, its waste management implication and a comparative assessment of USSR and United States waste management practices of the late 1950's. We are pleased to discuss this subject with you.

We have the CIA reports that you cited and would be pleased to provide you with copies of them. The accident reported in those documents had been known to us for sometime prior to its public release and the reports themselves carefully reviewed.

There is nothing in those CIA reports which either identifies or rules out any number of possible causes for the widespread radioactive contamination reported. There is no basis whatsoever to conclude from the cited CIA reports that the accident could have been caused by the mismanagement of radioactive wastes. As a matter of related interest, in conducting safety analyses of our radioactive waste management practices, we have been unable to conceive of a credible accident caused by the explosion of radioactive wastes.

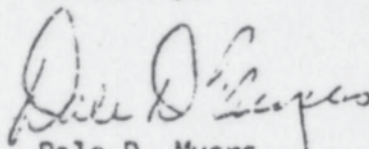
We have no concrete information on Soviet radioactive waste management practices of the late 1950's. We would assume, however, that their waste management practices then were generally similar to ours, to the extent that they used shallow land burial for low-level radioactive waste and modern steel tankage for the storage of high-level liquid radioactive waste.

The Honorable Morris Udall

- 2 -

If we can be of further assistance, please let us know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Dale D. Myers".

Dale D. Myers  
Under Secretary

ENCLOSURE 3

LIST OF CIA REPORTS

BENSON

Enclosure 3

Enclosures to letter dated 11 Nov 1977 to RBP,  
P.O. Box 1538:

1. CS-3/389,785, 4 March 59
2. CSK 3/465,141, 16 Feb 61
3. OIA/TSD 282/76, 27 Dec 76
4. TDCS-3/356,555233 May 58
5. CS-3/407,678 5 Aug 59
6. 3,202,034 5 Dec 61
7. 3,204,092 21 Dec 61
8. 323 20537 76, 20 Sept 76
9. 324/01015 77, 24 Jan 77
10. 321/0664577, 25 March 1977
11. Plant Summary 491,? (not clear number)

(NEWSPAPER CLIPPING, FBIS item of 11 Nov 76 and FBIS item of  
same date - not included - these are listed on first page  
of letter as enclosures)

The above has been declassified to "UNCLASSIFIED"

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

11 NOV 1977

Mr. Richard E. Pollock, Director  
The Citizens' Movement for Safe and Efficient Energy  
(Critical Mass)  
P.O. Box 1538  
Washington, DC 20013

Dear Mr. Pollock:

This is in reply to your letter of 2 September requesting, under the Freedom of Information Act, all information in our files relating to a nuclear disaster alleged to have occurred in the Ural Mountains in the Soviet Union in 1958. This reply also will cover documents forwarded to us by the Energy Research and Development Administration on 23 September 1977. These CIA documents were found in ERDA files while they were processing a similar FOI request you had levied on them.

We have reviewed all the items concerned and I am enclosing copies of 14 of them for your retention. The first three, sent in their entirety, are:

1. Newsclipping, Christian Science Monitor, dated 12 January 1977.
2. Foreign Broadcast Information Service item, dated 11 November 1976.
3. Foreign Broadcast Information Service item, dated 11 November 1976.

You will note in each of the remaining items portions have been deleted under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act. I am listing the items below, and alongside each is the appropriate exemption from the Freedom of Information Act which explains why the deletion had to be made. An explanation of the exemptions follows later in this letter.

<u>Documents</u>	<u>Exemptions</u>
4. CS-3/389,785, dated 4 March 1959.	(b) (1), (b) (3)
5. CS-K-3/465,141, dated 16 February 1961.	(b) (1), (b) (3)
6. Memorandum, dated 27 December 1976.	(b) (3), (b) (6)
7. TDCS-3/356,555, dated 21 May 1958.	(b) (1), (b) (3)
8. CS-3/407,678, dated 5 August 1959.	(b) (1), (b) (3)
9. 00-B-3,202,034, dated 5 December 1961.	(b) (1), (b) (3), (b) (6)
10. 00-B-3,204,092, dated 21 December 1961.	(b) (1), (b) (3), (b) (6)
11. 00-K-323/20537-76, dated 20 September 1976.	(b) (1), (b) (3), (b) (6)
12. 00-E-324/01015, dated 24 January 1977.	(b) (1), (b) (3)
13. 00-B-321/06645-77, dated 25 March 1977.	(b) (1), (b) (3), (b) (6)
14. Plant Summary, undated.	(b) (1), (b) (3)

There were also a number of documents which could not be released, even with deletions. I am listing them below, and alongside each is the number of the appropriate exemption from the Act which gives the reason why the item could not be released.

<u>Documents</u>	<u>Exemptions</u>
15. 00-B-3/256,712, dated 5 April 1963.	(b) (1), (b) (3), (b) (6)
16. CS-K-3/507/314, dated 16 April 1962.	(b) (1), (b) (3)
17. Briefing, dated 8 December 1976.	(b) (1), (b) (3)
18. OSI-SD-SC/61-7, dated 3 April 1961.	(b) (3)
19. Weekly Surveyor, dated 14 May 1973.	(b) (3)
20. OSI-SD-KH/75-5, dated May 1975.	(b) (3)

21. TDCS-3/416,488, dated 26 October 1959. (b)(1), (b)(3)
22. TDCS-3/418,792, dated 18 November 1959. (b)(1), (b)(3)
23. CS-3/380,057, dated 4 December 1958. (b)(1), (b)(3)
24. CS-3/468,269, dated 23 March 1961. (b)(1), (b)(3)
25. CS-3/477,050, dated 14 June 1961. (b)(1), (b)(3)
26. CS-3/478,158, dated 17 June 1961. (b)(1), (b)(3)
27. CS-3/496,952, dated 26 December 1961. (b)(1), (b)(3)
28. CSLT-K-3/704,634, dated 2 December 1962. (b)(1), (b)(3)
29. CS-3/508,773, dated 27 April 1962. (b)(3)

The applicability of the Freedom of Information Act subsections cited is explained as follows:

(b)(1) applies to material which is properly classified pursuant to Section 1 of Executive Order 11652, and is exempt under Section 5(B) of the same Order;

(b)(3) applies to the Director's statutory obligations to protect from disclosure intelligence sources and methods, as well as the organization, functions, names, official titles, salaries or numbers of personnel employed by the Agency, in accord with the National Security Act of 1947 and the CIA Act of 1949, respectively; and,

(b)(6) applies to information release of which would constitute an unwarranted invasion of the personal privacy of other individuals.

As I mentioned in my letter of 30 September, we are waiving search fees for this request. We are also waiving copying fees of \$2.50 for the 25 pages enclosed.

There were also in our files documents pertaining to your request which originated in the Departments of State and Defense. I recommend that you contact them for copies of documents relating to the accident which they authored.

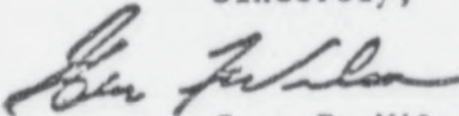


The CIA official responsible for the actions on items 4, 5, 15, and 16 was Mr. Charles A. Briggs, former DDO Information Review Officer; of the actions on item 18 through 20, was Dr. Herbert Rothenburg, Acting Director of the Office of Scientific Intelligence; of item 6, was Mr. Noel Firth, Director of the Office of Imagery Analysis; of item 17, was Mr. Philip A. Waggner, Deputy Director of Strategic Research; and of items 7-14 and 21-29 was Mr. Robert E. Owen, DDO Information Review Officer.

Under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act you have the right to appeal their actions to the CIA Information Review Committee. If you choose to do so, please write to me, stating in full the basis of your appeal.

I have decided to waive all fees normally charged for the processing of such requests.

Sincerely,



Gene F. Wilson  
Information and Privacy Coordinator

Enclosures

IPS/JOE/cb/31 Oct 77

Orig. - Adse.

- 1 - IPS Chrono
- 1 - IPS F-77-0765 GIP
- ① - IPS F-77-0664 GIP
- 1 - Dept. of Energy (ex-ERDA) (Attn: John A. Griffin,  
Dir. Div. of Classification)
- 1 - DDO
- 1 - OSI
- 1 - OIA

INFORMATION REPORT INFORMATION REPORT

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

4

Material contains information affecting the National Defense of the United States within the meaning of the Espionage Laws, Title U.S. Code, 793 and 794, the transmission or revelation of which in any manner to an unauthorized person is prohibited by law.

USSR

Accident at the Krasli Atomic Plant

REPORT NO. CS-3/389,785

DATE DISTR. 4 March 1959

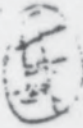
NO. PAGES 1

REFERENCES RD CS-3/380,057

1957-1958

SOURCE EVALUATIONS ARE DEFINITIVE APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE

In the winter of 1957, an unspecified accident occurred at the Krasli (N 55-54, E 60-48) atomic plant. All stores in Kamensk-Uralskiy which sold milk, meat, and other foodstuffs were closed as a precaution against radiation exposure, and new supplies were brought in two days later by train and truck. The food was sold directly from the vehicles, and the resulting queues were reminiscent of those during the worst shortages during World War II. The people in Kamensk-Uralskiy grew hysterical with fear, with an incidence of unknown "mysterious" diseases breaking out. A few leading citizens aroused the public anger by wearing small radiation counters which were not available to everyone.



NEVER DISCLOSE TO ANY OTHER AGENCY OR INDIVIDUAL WITHOUT THE WRITTEN AUTHORIZATION OF THE OFFICIAL TO WHOM THIS DOCUMENT IS REFERRED

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

This material contains information affecting the National Defense of the United States within the meaning of the Espionage Laws, Title 18, U.S.C. Secs. 793 and 794, the transmission or revelation of which in any manner to an unauthorized person is prohibited by law.

~~SECRET~~

COUNTRY	USSR	REPORT NO.	1'CSK-3/465, 141
SUBJECT	Miscellaneous Information on Nuclear Installations in the USSR	DATE DISTR.	16 February 1961
		NO. PAGES	5
		REFERENCES	RD
DATE OF INFO.	1954 to 1960		
PLACE & DATE ACQ.	FIELD REPORT NO.		

THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION. SOURCE GRADINGS ARE DEFINITIVE. APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE.

SOURCE:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

*Attachment*

Kyshtym

3. In spring 1958, he heard from several people that large areas north of Chelyabinsk were contaminated by radioactive waste from a nuclear plant operating at an unknown site near Kyshtym, a town 70 kilometers northwest of Chelyabinsk on the Chelyabinsk-Sverdlovsk railroad line. It was general knowledge that the Chelyabinsk area had an abnormally high number of cancer cases. To go swimming in the numerous lakes and rivers in the vicinity was considered a health hazard by some people. Food brought by the peasants to the Chelyabinsk market (rynok) was checked by the municipal health authorities in a small house at the market entrance where the peasants also paid their sales tax. How radioactive food was destroyed was unknown to source. Food delivered to the plants, schools, etc., by the kolkhozy and sovkhozy was probably examined by the latter themselves. Until 1958 passengers were checked at the Kyshtym railway station, and nobody could enter the town without a special permit. By what authority the permit was issued and why the checking was discontinued in 1958, source was unable to say. In addition, some villages in the Kyshtym area had been contaminated and burned down, and the inhabitants moved into new ones built by the government. They were allowed to take with them only the clothes in which they were dressed.

4. The plant was probably processing radioactive deposits found in the Urals, among which were huge deposits of zirconium. Source was told this by a friend

who, in 1953-1954, had a job in the Kyshtym-Arztash area. He also told source that as early as 1954 that the water of the Techa River, running from Lake Kyzyltash and Lake Ulagach and emptying into the Isat River at Dalmatovo, had become highly radioactive.

5. In late August 1960, source with some 100 other office workers was sent for ten days to help harvest at the Bolshaya Taskina Sovkhoz south of Lake Kaldy, about 50 kilometers north of Chelyabinsk. At the Nadyrov Bridge which crossed the Techa River, he saw a few posters with the inscription: "Drinking strictly prohibited, water polluted" (Pit strogo vospreshchayetsya, voda zagryaznena). While working at the sovkhoz, he did not approach the Techa, because the river bank was a prohibited area. Some distance north of the river there was a continuous ditch about one meter deep and one meter wide, with posters: "No passage, polluted zone" (Prokhod vospreshchayetsya, zagryaznennaya zona). Source did not discuss pollution of the Techa with persons on the sovkhoz. In Chelyabinsk he mentioned it to a friend, and was told that according to his father who lived on the Techa somewhere in the Tyumen Oblast, the river was polluted on its lower course also.

6. Source vaguely remembered having heard that the Kyshtym area nuclear installation was known as the Post Box 40 installation. He knew that in 1960 the plant was managed by (fnu) Sorokin, whose daughter, Lyudmila, born in 1930, source had met at a 1960 New Year's party in Chelyabinsk. She was a graduate of an institute in Sverdlovsk and was working at the Chelyabinsk town planning (gorproyekt) institute.

7. In March 1958, an explosion wrecked part of the nuclear plant at Kyshtym. Whether the explosion was nuclear or chemical, source could not tell, nor did he have information on casualties. The matter was openly discussed among employees of the Urals Branch of the Academy of Construction and Architecture.
8. Source knew of one case in which work at the Kyshtym plant allegedly resulted in the sexual impotence of an engineer (name unknown) and subsequent divorce. The divorcee was Alina Loy (maiden name), an engineer with the trust Metal-lurgstroy at Chelyabinsk, who left her husband in 1956 or 1957 after a few months of married life. In summer 1960, she married (fnu) Chulkov, an officer with the combat engineers, who was transferred to Novaya Zemlya in August 1960.
9. While working at the Urals Branch of the Academy of Construction and Architecture, source heard that in 1957 its laboratory of reinforced-concrete construction (chief, [fnu] Farshtein) had investigated an accident, fall of a smokestack from a huge plant which was being built by the MVD Glavpromstroy or Ministry of Medium Machine Building in the Argayash area.
10. Source was not certain but thought that a second plant might also have been built in the Argayash area by the MVD Glavpromstroy or Ministry of Medium Machine Building.

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

DIA/TSD 282/76  
27 December 1976  
Copy

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief,                      Division, OSI

SUBJECT:                      Nuclear Waste Burial Grounds near  
Blagoveshchensk, USSR

1. This memorandum is in response to your request  
nuclear waste burial ground in the western Ural mountains near the town  
of Blagoveshchensk, USSR.

2. No nuclear waste burial site                      was  
identified within the                      area.

complete.

This project is considered

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
TELETYPED INFORMATION REPORT

23 May 1958

Subject:

Accidental Atomic Explosion in Chalyabinskaya Oblast

Date of Information:

May 1958

1. Various Soviet employees and visitors to the Brussels Fair have stated, independently but consistently, that the occurrence of an accidental atomic explosion during the spring of 1958 was widely known throughout the USSR.

2. The site was identified as (being in) Chelyabinskaya Oblast.

3. Rumors are common that many people were killed; however, the generally accepted version is that only several score (individuals) died.

Approved for release

27 Sep 1977





(9)

~~CONFIDENTIAL - SECURITY INFORMATION~~

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WCT 17 JAN 1962

COUNTRY USSR *Kyshtym*

SUBJECT Mysterious Explosion in Chelyabinsk Oblast/Possible Radioactive Fallout Causing Destruction of Trees and Vegetation/Many People Burned as Result of Explosion

DATE OF O. Early Spring 61

PLACE & TIME ACQ. Yemanzhelinsk (Chelyabinsk Oblast) Nov 61

REPORT NO. YOOB-3,203,034

DATE DISTR. 5 Dec 61

NO. PAGES 2

REFERENCES

THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

SOURCE

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3. In talking with her she told me that in early May 1961 a terrific explosion ("vzriv") occurred somewhere in the Chelyabinsk Oblast. However, she did not see the explosion or any flash but said that the explosion was so terrific that the ground and buildings shook. A short time after this explosion occurred all the leaves on the trees in and around Yemanzhelinsk and surrounding areas were completely covered with a heavy layer of red dust (in Ukrainian it is called "ruba" and in Russian it is called "khrichnyaviv" - brown).

4. Very quickly all the leaves curled up and fell off the trees. (Trees in the Siberian region start blooming during the latter part of April.) She also added that all leafy green vegetables were covered with this same type of dust and curled up and died. However, nothing happened to the populace.

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STATE	ARMY	NAVY	AIR	FBI	AEC			
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~~CONFIDENTIAL - SECURITY INFORMATION~~

Announcements by the authorities also came over all the local radios after the blast occurred advising the people not to collect any rain water and not to use this water. However, they did not say why. Many people in this area collect rain water so they can wash their hair and clothes in soft water. However, nothing was mentioned as to water wells, streams or rivers.

had been in a hospital in Chelyabinsk for medical attention at the time of the explosion and she said that after this blast occurred she saw many people, both men and women, brought to this hospital for medical attention. The hospital was completely filled with victims of the explosion. said that some were bandaged and some were not. She said that the skin on their faces, heads and other exposed parts of the body was sloughing off. This is all she could tell me at this time.

She said the area in which the explosion occurred is a restricted area, open only to district Communist Party members.

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

10

COUNTRY	USSR	REPORT NO.	COB-3,204,092
SUBJECT	Mysterious Explosion in Chelyabinsk Oblast/Possible Radioactive Fallout Causing Destruction of Trees and Vegetation/Many People Burned as Result of Explosion/US Accused of Transmitting Poison Through the Air Causing People to be Burned and Destruction of Trees & Vegetation.	DATE DISTR.	21 Dec 61
DATE OF INFO.	May 60 - Yemashelinskaya/Chelyabinsk (Chelyabinsk Oblast)	NO. PAGES	2
PLACE & DATE ACQ	Kov 61	REFERENCES	Supplement to 3,202,034

THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

SOURCE

1.

In May 1960,

I mentioned to her that something unusual was occurring in Yemashelinskaya. I told her that all the leaves on the trees in and around Yemashelinskaya and surrounding areas were completely covered with a fine layer of red dust. Very quickly all the leaves on the poplar trees became extremely shiny brown, curled up and fell off. Leafy green vegetables were covered with this same type of dust and curled up and died.

2.

I also told her at that time that there were announcements over the radio and also through the newspaper media accusing the US of transmitting poison through the air which was carried by the rain falling all over the Chelyabinsk Oblast causing people to be burned and destroying trees and vegetation. The people were advised not to wash their clothes or hair in the rain water nor bathe in this water because they would be burned. The newspaper which I received in Yemashelinskaya was called the "Pravda". Water for the homes was supplied by pipe lines which came from Chelyabinsk.

3.

had been in this new hospital for approximately three months. She entered the hospital around May 1960 and was released in July 1960. I do not remember if this hospital had a name but it was new, four stories high, and as of July 1960 it was not completely constructed. The hospital was located on Zeleniy Magazin ulitsa (Green Magazine Street) which is in the southern section of Chelyabinsk.

4.

told me that in talking with other patients in the hospital, including the employees, she was advised that sometime in April 1960 a terrific explosion (blast) occurred somewhere in the Chelyabinsk Oblast. Unfortunately, no one knew where this blast occurred but there was talk

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STATE	ARMY	NAVY	AIR	FBI	ASC				
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that there was a "secret zone" approximately 50 to 60 kilometers from Galybinsk and where this explosion occurred. Also that this secret zone was supposed to be in dense woodlands and cleverly camouflaged. Unfortunately I have no idea as to what direction this zone is located from Galybinsk.

5. Both [redacted] and I saw some of the people in this hospital who we were told came from the area where the explosion had occurred. Some of them were bandaged and some were not. We could see the skin on their faces, hands and other exposed parts of the body to be sloughing off. These victims of the blast were brought into this hospital during the night. It was a horrible sight. From [redacted] room, which was on the fourth floor of the hospital, we were able to see these people walking around on the hospital grounds, some of whom were bandaged and some were not.

6. The victims of the blast were placed in one wing of the hospital. None of them were permitted to leave this wing or to talk with other patients. Other patients were not permitted to talk with these victims or even visit with them. Those who promenade around the hospital grounds were all by themselves and the area was sectioned off so no one could get near them.

7. Both [redacted] and I had no idea what the cause of the explosion was nor did we have any information or change to any facilities or town where the explosion may have occurred. I have no idea where this explosion occurred, nor what time of day or date, except that [redacted] told me that this blast occurred sometime in April 1960.

8. The prohibited zone where the explosion occurred is "only" open to the hard Communist Party members and workers who also lived there.



DIRECTORATE OF OPERATIONS

# Foreign Intelligence Information Report

(11)

COUNTRY	USSR	DCD REPORT NO.	{OOK-323/20537-7
SUBJECT	Nuclear Explosion at Chelyabinsk-40/	DATE DISTR.	20 September 1976
		NO. PAGES	2
		REFERENCES	
DATE OF INFO.	1956		

THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

SOURCE

1.0

2.0

APPROVED FOR RELEASE

SEP 1977

3. According to the prevailing opinion in Chelyabinsk, Chelyabinsk-40 was a production site for nuclear devices. Chelyabinsk-40 is actually located in Kyshtov, which is some one hundred kilometers northwest of Chelyabinsk. In about 1956 there was an explosion at Chelyabinsk-40; the explosion lighted up the sky for a great distance and the newspapers in Chelyabinsk made a flimsy attempt to proclaim the event an unusual occurrence of the northern lights. The chief evidence of the explosion was the tremendous number of casualties in the hospitals of Chelyabinsk. Many of the casualties were suffering from the effects of radiation. Shortly after the explosion a scientific research institute to study effects of radiation was established in Chelyabinsk, presumably as a result of the accident at Chelyabinsk-40. [Collector's comment: Source did not actually witness the explosion and could provide no details on its cause.]



12

# Foreign Intelligence Information Report

COUNTRY	USSR/	REPORT NO.	OCF-324/01015-77
SUBJECT	Soviet Detonation of 20 Megaton Device in 1950's in Above-Ground Test/ Possible Explanation for Recent News Reports on Nuclear Accident and "Vast Nothing" Area in Ural Mountains	DATE DISTR.	24 January 1977
		NO. PAGES	1
		REFERENCES	
DATE OF INFO.	1959 - 1960		

THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

## SOURCE

1. Recently there have been accounts in US newspapers concerning comments made by two former citizens of the USSR on a "vast nothing", an area within the USSR where it is speculated a nuclear accident occurred in the late 1950's. There was a top secret Soviet film which showed a nuclear test that had occurred in an unspecified region of the Ural Mountains. It is likely, although not certain, that the test occurred in the 1957-58 period, and this may account for the "vast nothing" mentioned in the news accounts.
2. According to the film, the USSR constructed a completely new city in a valley in the Ural Mountains region for the test. A subway was constructed under the village, and one of the major purposes of the test was to see if the subway could withstand a nuclear attack. The inhabitants of the village were goats and sheep, and the post-explosion photography showed the effects of a nuclear blast upon animal life as well as building materials. Military equipment was placed around the village, and the effects of the explosion upon armaments of war also were depicted in the film.
3. The bomb itself was described as a 20 megaton device which was dropped from an airplane. The flash of the explosion illuminated the mountains which surrounded the village. The city virtually was eliminated, but the subway survived the explosion. Because of the film's classification, those who saw it were instructed to treat the whole matter as highly classified.
4. Recent newspaper accounts quote two Soviet emigres, one in London and the other in Israel, who knew something about the "vast nothing". One of the emigres said a 60 square mile area in the Ural Mountains was desolate and still heavily radioactive in 1961. It is possible the "nuclear accident" of which the emigres spoke is the event recorded by a Soviet camera crew and shown as a top secret defense film.

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DIRECTORATE OF  
OPERATIONS

# Foreign Intelligence Information Report

COUNTRY USSR      REPORT NO. [008-321/06645-77]

SUBJECT 1958 "Kyshtin Disaster"/Nuclear Accident Involving Plutonium Wastes from Military Nuclear Reactors      DATE DISTR. 25 March 1977

NO. PAGES 1

REFERENCES

DATE OF INFO June 1961

THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

SOURCE

as stated by the [redacted] this information is related in the first-person

1. In June 1961, I [redacted] near Chelyabinsk, an industrial town in the [redacted] a few hundred kilometers south of Sverdlovsk. [redacted] we headed north towards Sverdlovsk and Belcyarsk by car.
2. About 100 kilometers from Sverdlovsk, we crossed a strange, uninhabited and unfarmed area. Highway signs along the way warned drivers not to stop for the next 20 to 30 kilometers because of radiation. The land was empty. There were no villages, no towns, no people, no cultivated land; only the chimneys of destroyed houses remained. I asked the driver to stop because I wanted to drink water. The driver refused. "One doesn't stop here. You drive quickly and cross the area without any stops," he said.
3. In conversations with people in the area, I was told that the area was the site of the "Kyshtin Disaster," so called after a town about 200 kilometers south of Sverdlovsk and 250 km. east of Blagoveshensk. An accident had occurred three years earlier, that is, in 1958, that was caused by a blast at the storage site of nuclear waste from military nuclear reactors. I was told that the accident was caused by the negligent storage of plutonium wastes. Hundreds of people perished and the area became and will remain radioactive for many years. One of the current topics of conversation at the time was whether eating fish or eating crabs from the radioactive rivers of the area was more dangerous.

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PLANT SUMMARY1. Name

Atomic Energy Installation

2. Location

KYSHTYM 55 44 N 60 35 E

## a. Address

E/A

## b. Pinpoint

The restricted area of Kyshtym is approximately 60 km N/S and 45 km E/W. The railroad from Kasli to Karabash runs diagonally from the NE corner to the SW corner with Kyshtym in the center. It includes the installations at Techa (reactor) and Sungul (radiological institute).

3. History

A large atomic plant and a workers' settlement were established about 15 km NE of Kyshtym, probably at Techa or Ozero Irtyash, during the period 1945 to 1948. Approximately 70,000 inmates of 12 labor camps, participated in the construction. In the spring of 1948, the entire population, including all PWs and forced laborers had to evacuate the Kyshtym restricted area. The population was replaced by Communists and their dependents who came to Kyshtym from all over the USSR. They were reportedly never to leave the area again.

4. Physical Plant and Equipment

The restricted area covers 2700 sq. km containing eight small lakes with interconnecting watercourses. The atomic plant (reactor) is situated in a tunnel which extends beneath a river, with only a smoke stack visible above ground. One of the lakes was drained and a building of undetermined size was built on its bed with cement, rubber, and lead. Then the lake was refilled with water. A double tracked RR line was built to the area. The underground factory was 30 to 40 meters below the surface and were as follows:

8 small shops all the same size (approx. 50 by 25/28m). They had been blasted out from the slate rock. The vertical walls were coated with reinforced concrete up to a height of approx. 3 - 4 m. They supported a reinforced concrete three center arch roof 6 - 7 m high in the middle of the shop. The ceiling was more strongly armoured than the walls by the addition of cross board iron bars.

A large shop approx. 100 by 40 m was built in the same way as the smaller shops. The ceiling was supported in the middle of the room by 4 concrete pillars of 1,20 by 1,20 m cross section.

4. Physical Plant and Equipment (Continued)

Construction of the shops was finished and the building of machine foundations started a few days before informant left the camp; these foundations were 1 by 2 or 0,80 by 1,50 m.

All underground rooms were electrically lighted.

Steel brackets were cast in the walls of the large shop, which should possibly support the rails of cranes.

The thickness of the walls (consisting of the rock and concrete coating) between the shops was approx. 5 m.

5. Production

It is reported this plant contains atomic piles and supplies Sungul. Radiological Institute with radio-active materials. This plant has been reported to be manufacturing components for atomic weapons.

In the spring of 1958 hundreds of persons were exposed to radiation and injured as a result of an explosion at the Kyshtyn plant.

In early October 1959, an atomic test reportedly took place in Kyshtyn.

After the test, such foodstuffs as meat, fish and milk were removed from the retail stores in Sverdlovsk and Chelyabinsk and destroyed. Residents were ordered to turn in food stocks in their houses. Residents were warned against buying agricultural products from farmers.

6. Labor

In this area in 1956 there were military personnel from various army units and arms. With them 16 labor battalions of about 1,000 men each were activated. There were also 25,000 Soviet soldiers of General Vlasov, who had collaborated with the Germans. These men were actually considered as prisoners and were likewise organized into labor battalions. In addition, about 60,000 Soviet convicts of both sexes were employed in the project.

7. Key Personalities and Organization

N/A

8. Security

Strict security observed. Movement was restricted in the vicinity of the plant. The surrounding fences were considerably removed from the enterprise itself, but the entrances were under permanent military guards. Special passes required.

9. Visits by American and/or Western Observers

N/A

10. Photos Available

N/A