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Chernobyl's Legacy: Black Prophecies' Bubble

Human suffering, extensive spending and persistent discussion of nuclear safety and radiation hazards after the Fukushima accident (2011) justify reconsidering the consequences of the Chernobyl nuclear accident about 25 years earlier (1986). There 30 people died within several weeks, while the accident's scale was unprecedented — and probably about the largest theoretically possible. A lot of predictions were then made, with some of them being used till nowadays. Most of those predictions were *a priori* unobservable and therefore unscientific. Namely, according to the conservative (overestimating) linear no-threshold hypothesis (LNTH) of radiation carcinogenesis, the predicted cancer excess was below 1% — unobservable for the given 5% cancer rate variation due to socio-economic and other factors. *A posteriori*,

according to solid scientific data gained over the quarter of century, at most 15 cancer deaths may be directly attributed to the fallout radiation. Particularly, no conclusion can be drawn as to the presence of a radiation-related cancer excess among the recovery workers (“liquidators”), who received relatively high radiation doses which are well-documented. The number of radiation-related mutations (congenital malformations) is just zero.

Two popular myths challenge the above scientific evidence: (a) the raw medical data is filtered by local governments, (b) the data-analyzing agencies (IAEA, UNSCEAR and WHO) are pro-nuclear biased. Both arguments are, speaking politically-correct, alternatively convincing. Regarding (a) — just the opposite, all the affected countries are keenly interested in exaggerating the medical consequences, taking into account extensive Western

investment in the relief efforts and in dealing with the still-problematic reactor. Regarding (b), profoundly anti-nuclear circles (including but not limited to “green” parties) have significant influence in Europe —and would have challenged any pro-nuclear bias, if it really was there. Moreover, the mentioned above respected agencies promote LNTH to the discomfort of the nuclear industry.

The myths and misperceptions about the radiation hazards themselves caused enormous human suffering. In addition to the socio-economic problems associated with relocation (mostly unjustified), the mental health and psychosomatic problems proved to be grave. Similar problems should be avoided in future by means of putting radiological hazards in their actual proportion. For more details: www.AFNA-forum.org/Chernobyl.pdf ■