

World news

Nuclear fallout spreads; foreigners leave

MOSCOW (AP) — Up against a wall of Soviet secrecy, Western governments urged their citizens Wednesday to pull out of the stricken Ukraine, where a nuclear fire spewed more radiation across Europe and touched off a storm of world outrage.

The Kremlin claimed radiation levels were dropping at the devastated Chernobyl nuclear power plant. But a Soviet diplomat was quoted as saying the inferno was "out of control," and U.S. sources in Washington agreed.

The extent of Soviet casualties also remained uncertain.

The Soviet government said Tuesday two people had been killed, and Wednesday that 197 others had been hospitalized. But unofficial, unverified reports spoke of higher casualty tolls in history's worst nuclear disaster.

Some of Kiev's 2.4 million people were fleeing the Ukrainian capital for Moscow, 450 miles to the northeast, West German sources said.

Radioactive clouds, meanwhile, spread as far west as the Swiss Alps and Norway, borne on mile-high winds.

European health officials reassured the

public that radiation levels presented no major danger. But anger built up against the Soviets, who kept word of the deadly nuclear event from the rest of the world until Monday, three days after it happened.

"The Soviet Union has an obligation and duty to the international community to give the fullest possible explanation of what happened and why," Britain's foreign secretary, Sir Geoffrey Howe, said at a West European ministers' meeting in Italy.

His West German counterpart, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, called on Moscow to shut down all nuclear power stations similar to the crippled Chernobyl plant, which uses an unusual graphite-moderation process.

The Soviet government has thrown a wall of near-total secrecy around what happened last week at Chernobyl, a four-reactor complex 60 miles north of Kiev.

"I am not authorized to tell you anything," a Ukrainian Health Ministry official said Wednesday, in a typical comment. He was reached by telephone by Moscow.

Later, the official news media carried a 300-word statement by the Soviet Council

of Ministers saying remedial measures had reduced the radioactivity spilling from the damaged reactor, and "the radiation levels in the area of the atomic power station (had been) lowered."

It said the chain reaction had been shut down and specialists were cleaning up "polluted sections" around the plant.

Of the 197 people hospitalized, 49 were discharged after a checkup, it said. The statement also criticized Western news agencies for "spreading rumors" that thousands had been killed.

But, again, the Soviet statement offered little on the cause and effects of the accident. The most detailed such information came from intelligence and other U.S. sources in Washington, apparently obtained via U.S. surveillance satellites.

Harold Denton, a safety expert at the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, told reporters it was unclear what touched off the reactor fire last Friday, but by Saturday it had evolved into a meltdown — the burning up of the uranium fuel core, an extremely dangerous event — and by Sunday a chemical explosion occurred that ripped the reactor building apart.

Ruling lets prosecutors screen jurors by race

WASHINGTON (AP) — Prosecutors never may disqualify potential jurors based on their race, the Supreme Court ruled Wednesday.

The court's 7-2 decision curtailed dramatically the traditionally broad power of prosecutors to strike prospective jurors from trials by using "peremptory" or automatic challenges.

The justices said the exclusion of potential jurors from any criminal trial because of their race violates the equal-protection rights of defendants and of those people excluded.

In a separate decision focusing on the role of race in criminal prosecutions, the court said murder defendants facing a possible death sentence must be allowed to ask potential jurors about their racial views if the killing was interracial.

In a third ruling Wednesday, the court unanimously refused to reinstate an invalidated Illinois law regulating abortions, deciding that the case was not properly before it.

The court in 1965 had ruled that excluding blacks from juries because of their race is unconstitutional, but said defendants had no right to attack as racially discriminatory a prosecutor's use of peremptory challenges in any one case.

The 1965 ruling said prosecutors' tactics in a particular case were presumed legitimate unless shown to be part of a systematic exclusion of blacks in numerous cases.

Writing for the court Wednesday, Justice Lewis Powell said the 1965 ruling had placed "a crippling burden of proof" on defendants that no longer can be tolerated.

The court rejected arguments by Kentucky prosecutors and the Reagan administration that a juror's race can be a permissible consideration in a prosecutor's litigation strategy.

The decision was praised by defense lawyers and civil rights activists.

"It will mean black people have an opportunity to have a fairer jury and it will mean that racial discrimination is one step closer toward being eliminated in the courtroom," said Millard Farmer, an Atlanta defense lawyer.

Steve Raiston of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund said the ruling "will go far in finally eliminating all discriminatory practices and insuring that juries are truly representative of their communities."

The court threw out James Kirkland Batson's conviction on charges of second-degree burglary and receiving stolen property stemming from the theft of two purses in Jefferson County, Ky.

Laurel appeals to Reagan for aid in regaining assets

BALI, Indonesia (AP) — Philippine Vice President Salvador Laurel, on the eve of talks with President Reagan, appealed to the United States Wednesday to work harder to reclaim billions that Ferdinand Marcos is alleged to have stolen.

"The country is broke. Marcos took all the money with him," Laurel told reporters gathered here for Reagan's talks with officials of several Southeast Asian nations.

Laurel said he wants Reagan to remove any "cobwebs of doubt" over whether the United States supports the present Philippine government headed by Corazon Aquino and himself.

The meeting is among several Reagan has scheduled today with leaders of Southeast Asian nations, including Indonesia's President Suharto, and the foreign ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

It will mark the first meeting between Reagan and a representative of the new Philippine government since Aquino took power on Feb. 25 and Marcos, his wife Imelda and his relatives and associates fled the country on U.S. military aircraft. The Marcoses are living in Honolulu, and during a stopover on his 13-day trip last weekend, Reagan and his wife Nancy telephoned the Marcoses.

Laurel also said that Secretary of State George Shultz told him Wednesday that Reagan, in his call to Marcos, had urged the ousted Philippine leader against trying to make a

political comeback.

When he left the Philippines, Marcos took money and some assets with him, although the Philippine commission has not estimated the value of that. The panel, however, has said it estimates that the Marcoses hold between \$5 billion and \$10 billion in cash, gold and works of arts belonging to the Philippines.

Laurel said: "We really would appreciate more help from the United States government to help get some of that money back." He called for assistance in locating the money and in helping to allow the Philippines to get it back through the U.S. courts.

Shultz met with each of the ASEAN foreign ministers in advance of Reagan's talks. The association's members include the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Brunei.



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