

European countries attack Soviets about accident

COPENHAGEN, Denmark (AP) — North and West European countries, confronted with drifting radioactivity, on Wednesday sharply attacked Soviet secrecy about the nuclear reactor accident in the Ukraine.

"Soviet society is far too primitive to use such a sophisticated technique as nuclear power," wrote the daily Svenska Dagbladet newspaper in Stockholm, Sweden.

Radiation in Sweden from the accident at the Chernobyl reactor was disclosed hours before the Soviet Union admitted anything had gone wrong.

Svenska Dagbladet said Soviet authorities "showed a nonchalance bordering on the unbelievable" by failing to warn other countries.

"What kind of people govern the Soviet Union?" asked the conservative newspaper Die Welt in West Germany. "What happened in the Ukraine is not a tragedy. It is a crime."

West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich

Genscher, attending a meeting of ministers of seven West European nations in Venice, Italy, demanded that all similar Soviet power plants be closed until the cause of the Chernobyl accident was known.

"There is no question of national sovereignty in this field," said Foreign Minister Giulio Andreotti of Italy, who was at the same meeting. "There are no frontiers to stop atomic radiation."

Foreign Secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe of Britain said the meeting's participants "expressed deep concern at the Soviets' failure of giving early warning or intimation — a serious lapse in European good-neighborliness."

As winds shifted Wednesday, the radioactivity was reported to have stopped drifting into Scandinavia and to have begun appearing in Austria and Switzerland.

Switzerland's second-ranking Foreign Ministry official, Edouard Brunner, said it was astounding that the Soviets confirmed the accident only after Scandinavian

countries asked for information.

"The new reactor catastrophe demonstrates not only the weaknesses and deficiencies of the Soviet system, but also especially the incredible danger that arises from the isolation of a nation, especially a superpower," said the Zurich newspaper Tages Anzeiger.

In Austria, where some grocers were being told not to display vegetables and fruit outside, the conservative daily Die Presse complained that for "two unbelievable days the Soviet Union left the world in the dark about the mishap near Kiev."

Even in Finland, which has a delicate political relationship with the neighboring Soviet Union, newspapers criticized Moscow's handling of the accident.

Finland's biggest newspaper, the Helsingin Sanomat, said it was "likely the Soviet Union would have tried to keep quiet about the accident altogether if the radiation had not reached Scandinavia."

Trade deficit widens with imports surge

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States' foreign trade deficit widened to \$14.5 billion last month as cheaper oil prices were overwhelmed by a record-high level of imports of manufactured goods, the government reported Wednesday.

The trade deficit jumped 16.3 percent over the February imbalance of \$12.5 billion. The deficit with Japan was up 27.5 percent to an all-time high.

For the first three months of this year, the trade deficit totals \$43.5 billion, 39 percent higher than the pace set last year.

Despite this surge, the Reagan administration is maintaining that the deficit for all of 1986 will fall below last year's record \$148.5 billion imbalance. This forecast is based on a belief that the impact of a declining dollar and

lower oil prices will narrow the deficit in the second half of the year.

Treasury Secretary James Baker III recently predicted the trade deficit would decline to \$125 billion this year, with \$18 billion of the improvement coming from the dramatic plunge in oil prices.

The March report showed that America is already receiving substantial benefits from lower oil prices.

The cost of petroleum imports dropped by 13 percent last month despite the fact that the volume of imported oil rose by 11 percent. The difference was explained by the fact that each barrel of oil cost on average only \$19.45, 28 percent below the price at the beginning of the year.

U.S. reactors lacking necessary safety domes

WASHINGTON (AP) — Five large U.S. reactors used to produce nuclear weapons lack thick containment domes to trap escaping radiation if other safety systems fail in an accident, and one of them has been deteriorating for years, officials said Wednesday.

The absence of such a protective steel and concrete shell around the Chernobyl reactor believed to have melted down in the Soviet Union is blamed by U.S. officials for the release of massive amounts of radiation in the worst nuclear power accident in history.

In response to a suit from environmental groups, U.S. officials considered building a containment dome around one of four weapons reactors near Aiken, S.C., two years ago but concluded that — with a \$850 million price tag — it was unnecessary to do so.

The concrete and steel domes used at U.S. commercial plants are four feet thick.

In addition, according to Energy Department documents, officials have been concerned for years about the warping graphite core and embrittled and bowing process tubes in the N weapons reactor at Hanford, Wash. — the U.S. plant closest in design to the Soviet reactor where the accident occurred.

Like the Chernobyl plant, the N reactor is cooled with water and uses graphite to control the fission reaction inside but has no containment dome. Energy Department officials maintain that differences between the Washington and Soviet plants — the type fuel used, structural design and operating conditions — are sufficient to make any comparison unwarranted.

Nonetheless, James Vaughan, acting assistant energy secretary for nuclear programs, told a congressional hearing Tuesday that the Chernobyl accident "could have some bearing" on the future of the Hanford reactor and three senators called Wednesday for a thorough congressional review of the plant.

Rep. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., said the House Energy investigations subcommittee plans to expand an ongoing inquiry into the operation of the Hanford reactor to include the adequacy of its safeguards.

Dalkon Shield claim letters flood court

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — Mail flooded the office of a federal bankruptcy court Wednesday on the deadline for women to file claims against the maker of the Dalkon Shield birth control device.

The A.H. Robins Co., which sold the intrauterine device in the early 1970s, sought protection from creditors under Chapter 11 of the bankruptcy

code last Aug. 21 after settling about 9,450 of 15,000 lawsuits brought by women claiming injury from the Dalkon Shield.

The settlements had cost the company and its insurer \$520 million.

Under the order of U.S. District Judge Robert Merhige Jr., the Richmond-based pharmaceutical company began an international advertising cam-

paign in January to notify women who used the device of the April 30 deadline for filing claims.

Merhige stood outside the federal courthouse here Wednesday and shook his head as court clerk Michael Sheppard pushed another cart filled with mail from the adjacent Post Office to the special claims processing unit.

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