TRUTH OR MYTH?

Read the 10 most popular myths of the Chernobyl disaster and find out yourself!

As with every disaster, myths and conspiracy theories occur almost immediately. The Chernobyl nuclear power plant catastrophe occurred more than 30 years ago and so numerous myths have arisen since then.

Some of them were brought to such perfection that one cannot tell the difference between truth and myth.

Can you?

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PRIPYAT IS A GHOST TOWN AND THE WHOLE EXCLUSION ZONE IS UNINHABITED

Lots of the people still believe that the whole Chernobyl exclusion zone, including Pripyat, is a piece of dead landscape. Pripyat ("Прип'ять"), one of the most famous cities on Earth, well known as a ‘Ghost Town’ ("Місто-привид"), was evacuated on April 27, 1986. The villages within the zone were also evacuated shortly after. The number of evacuated Pripyat inhabitants was about 50,000, the total number reaching more than 150,000.

The truth is that people are not only working, but also living (under special conditions) in some areas of the Chernobyl zone. Despite the nickname that was bestowed on the city, it has not been abandoned completely - ever. There was always a reason for keeping the city alive. After the disaster at the nuclear power plant, a few buildings remained in full operational service. One of these was a factory called Jupiter ("Юпитер") (we will discuss the myth of Jupiter in a separate article). This factory remained in service until 1996 when it was finally closed. There was also a swimming pool, one of the most popular places in Pripyat that was in full use until 1996 as well. It served as a wellness centre for those working in the Exclusion Zone and at the power plant itself.

Currently, there are still a couple of buildings occupied and used for the needs of the zone. One of them is the truck and machinery garage, used mainly to keep themachines working in this strict zone. The other is the laundry, a decontamination station where clothes and other equipment of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant staff are cleaned and decontaminated. There is also a small workshop next to the laundry that paints radiation warning signs which are deployed inside the zone.

Throughout the zone there are several other villages, whose population is composed mainly of elderly people who were evacuated after the accident, but were allowed to return back at their own risk. These so-called ‘self-settlers’ ("самосели") are living in the exclusion zone, located no less than 10 kilometers from the nuclear power plant. And the city of Chernobyl ("Чорноби́ль") is even busier. There are about 4000 people temporarily living there. They are mostly soldiers, firefighters, staff for the zone and construction workers of the New Safe Confinement (New Sarcophagus). There are four shops, three dining rooms, three bars, a bus station and a post office in Chernobyl to keep the zone functioning.
Pripyat nor the zone have ever been completely uninhabited, and are actually more vital than ever (mainly because of the tourists).
The Sarcophagus is not safe

The Sarcophagus ("Саркофаг") is probably the second most renowned object of the exclusion zone. The explosion at the reactor of the 4th block of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant on 26th April 1986 demolished a large part of the building. The damaged reactor block had to be covered somehow. Soviet engineers, with unimaginable speed, designed a huge reinforced concrete cover named "Concealment" ("Укриття"), the object we now know as the Sarcophagus.

The construction led by Lev Bocharov ("Лев Бочаров") began shortly after the accident, in May 1986, and was finished in a record time of 7 months, in November of the same year. The government of the Soviet Union issued a report on 14th December, stating that the destroyed 4th reactor was no longer a source of dangerous radioactive contamination. The building was presented as a hermetic cover with no possible radiation leaks.

The Sarcophagus was truly a construction miracle, however, not a perfect one. In fact, it has never totally been a hermetic enclosure. There were many reasons why the object was imperfectly built. Firstly, mankind was facing such a catastrophe for the first time in history. No one precisely knew how to solve the numerous problems that emerged before and during such a complex and dangerous construction process. Secondly, workers and engineers had to work under huge pressure, with very little time, and in very dangerous conditions. Given the extremely high radioactive environment there was a huge ‘flow’ of people. At some places, only a few seconds of work could mean a death sentence. And so, the engineers came up with the idea of workers - later called Liquidators ("ліквідатори") - working only a minute at a time, at some places even less. Thus, 1 hour of work for one person suddenly needed sixty workers! The whole of the construction became a nightmare for all those working on it. Today, 14th December is the Ukrainian national day of Liquidators.

In addition to that, workers were even encouraged to drink alcohol, namely vodka ("вodka"). Not for pure excitement but because it slows down the metabolism. The logic behind this myth is that once the radioactive atoms get into the digestive tract, the metabolism has to be slowed down in order to give one a better chance to survive. Everyone was given vodka and encouraged to drink a lot. Another, more probable reason for such widespread drinking, was that the officials wanted the workers and soldiers to be less aware of the situation and the risks; and to have more courage. Alcohol also has the ability to suppress the thyroid function, and therefore works as a iodine. No matter what the logic was behind the alcohol decision, the truth is that workers and soldiers were drinking heavily, which made the whole construction process even more complicated.

Taking into consideration all these facts, it is much easier to accept that the Sarcophagus was not hermetic and leaked radiation. Over time, there came to be a total of about 5000 square meters of holes through which the radioactive contamination constantly leaked out. Under the construction, there are still about 90 tons of nuclear fuel (enriched uranium).
Therefore, maintenance of the Sarcophagus was continuously carried out by professionals.

On the other hand, even though the Sarcophagus was not perfect, it did hold most of the danger inside. Moreover, the original expected life span for the Sarcophagus was only 20 years. Since 2006, the cover has been past its expiry date. The radiation inside is so high that it even penetrates through several meters of thick reinforced concrete walls and so the levels of radiation were still also high in the close vicinity. On 29th November 2016, a new cover was finally erected after years of construction. The NSC (New Safe Confinement) ("Укриття-2") was planned in 1992 but due to the complexity of its realisation and problems with financing, the construction didn’t officially begin till 2012. Twenty-nine countries contributed to the financing of this new Sarcophagus with the total cost of the construction estimated at 2.15€ billion (1.5€ billion for the Confinement itself). The NSC is a real hermetic cover with planned life span of 100 years.

A MYTH!

The Sarcophagus had holes and was imperfect, but still managed to keep most of the danger inside.
During that fateful night, on Saturday, 26th April 1986 at 1:24 am, some of the residents of Pripyat noticed something was wrong. Some were not yet sleeping, some awoke after hearing the explosion and their windows crack. Many of them came out into the night to find out what had happened. The Chernobyl nuclear power plant is located approximately 2km from Pripyat so there were very few people, if anyone, who actually went to the power plant.

One of the best places to see the nuclear power plant from a distance is the above mentioned bridge which connects Pripyat with the nuclear power plant and rest of the world. The bridge is located approximately two kilometers away from the nuclear power plant and is a bit higher than the terrain around which makes it a perfect viewpoint. Many curious inhabitants of Pripyat chose this bridge as their viewpoint without having any idea of how dangerous this decision would be.

When radioactivity measurements were done later, values of around 500 Rems per hour (5 million micro Sieverts) were measured on the bridge. For comparison, the lethal dose for humans is about 1000 Rems per hour (10 million micro Sieverts). Using simple math, one can work out that anyone standing on the bridge for two hours or more would get a lethal dose and have a very high chance of dying from radiation. Each person has an individual tolerance to radiation. Some can survive double the lethal dose, while for others only half of what is referred to as the lethal dose can be fatal. It would therefore not be right to say that everyone standing on the bridge for two hours later died. And it is even more inaccurate to say that people were dying on the bridge, as it takes time for the lethal dose of radiation to cause death.

There were two police patrols placed near the bridge after the evacuation. One patrolled on the side closer to the nuclear power plant, while the other was on the side closer to Pripyat. The one closer to the nuclear power plant got high doses of radiation and the policemen later died. Most of the policemen on the other side of the bridge lived for many more years.

No one died that night at the bridge. But the truth is that for many standing at this viewpoint did become fatal. The closer to the power plant, the worse radiation dose one would get, and so this bridge became a virtual border. Anyone who stood on or beyond this point was highly probable to be the walking dead. Anyone who stood before the bridge or even closer to Pripyat had a greater chance of survival. The place began to be called the Bridge of Death.

Even though we do not know how many people died because of standing on or beyond the bridge, as there are no specific statistics for this, it is widely agreed and very probable that the bridge itself was a border between life and death.
The evacuation was too late

As with every catastrophe, discussions about whether things could have been done differently arise. The most popular but also the most bizarre myths and stories may uncover whether the Chernobyl disaster was underestimated or not.

Firstly, the evacuation of Pripyat, the city of plant workers located only 2 kilometers away from the power plant, was a little strange. After the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, the authorities did not organise the evacuation until 36 hours after the accident. Some people claim that the communists deliberately lied to the inhabitants of the affected area and that they hid the seriousness of the situation. The biggest criticism is that the evacuation occurred too late and that it should have taken place immediately. Furthermore, people were told lies, such as, the evacuation would be only temporary (i.e. for only a few days). No one was informed about the release of the radiation either. The official statement was only about the fire.

The truth is, given the time during which the accident happened, it was practically impossible to do anything immediately, especially because in the first moments no one knew that something so serious had even happened. Only a few individuals from the nuclear power plant staff knew what was going on, but even they had no idea of the real seriousness of the situation. In addition to that, all those who tried to save the power plant from even further damage due to widespread fire, were in a bad condition, many of them already dying due to radiation. To put it bluntly, in the first hours after the accident people died before they could realise and communicate the seriousness of the problem.

The first profound monitoring of the situation started in the morning, when the army occupied the whole area. The army, in co-operation with professional nuclear physicists, was tasked to assess the situation. The first results took hours to come. The evacuation of Pripyat followed in the afternoon of 27th April, and that took several hours. The evacuation itself is today considered as extremely fast and successful. The evacuations of the inhabitants from villages in the most affected areas continued over the next few days. On the day of the evacuation, more than 4000 buses arrived in a queue, which was about 20 km long! Metaphorically speaking, when the first bus arrived in Pripyat, the last bus was not even in Chernobyl.
However, whatever was happening in Chernobyl, the Soviet Union did not provide an official statement for days. On April 27, 1986, Ukrainian radio informed inhabitants about ‘some kind’ of accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant and the government advised people to stay at home and do some cleaning. TV news in the evening announced that there was an accident in Chernobyl, but it was a small one and under control. The first who realised that something was wrong were the Swedes. Having very sensitive radioactivity gauges near their own nuclear power plants, they noticed that the amount of radioactivity was higher than usual. They first contacted France and the International Atomic Energy Agency, among others. No one knew where the problem was coming from until they contacted the Soviets.

Gorbachev ("Горбачов") admitted, after some time, that there actually was a problem, but that everything was under control and there was no great risk. The truth was, that if the fire could not be stopped and it spread to the other parts of the power plant, the disaster would not only be the problem of the Soviets but the problem of the whole of Europe.

For some, the late evacuation of Pripyat and the downplay of the situation by the Soviet government is proof enough. For others, this is not evidence of an underestimation, but rather of typical Soviet behavior. The Soviet Union never shared negative information with it’s own citizens, or, with other countries. The reason was simply not to get bad publicity. In addition, not properly informing people about the situation may have been a way of avoiding panic. However, what the most popular evidence of supporters of the underestimation is, is the fact that even Soviet elite physicists underestimated the situation. After arriving at the site of the accident they checked into the Pripyat hotel Polissya ("Полися"), worked, ate and slept there for weeks, not realising the threat they were facing. The decision to stay in Pripyat was not a proclamation of bravery and fellowship with the workers and soldiers, but a manifestation of stupidity.

Even though we cannot be 100% sure, there is a high chance that the government of the Soviet Union and elite physicists did not know how serious the situation was. The evacuation should have been immediate.
Pripyat is a popular city and pictures of it are everywhere. When browsing the Internet, one can easily find the pictures and even videos of the most popular places in the city. One of them is the famous Ferris wheel (“Оглядове колесо”), located on the big square. The people that grew up in a communist block, or the Soviet Union itself, remember that amusement parks were simply not the usual facilities that cities of that era had. Especially not in cities of 50,000 inhabitants and of low importance.

But Pripyat was not just one of many. It was meant to be the PERFECT one, a model showcase of communism. It had one of the best schools, its own swimming pool, theatre, cinema... and a nuclear power plant. The power plant produced lots of energy that in return made a lot of money for the state. And if everything worked well, then Pripyat would get benefits other cities in the Soviet Union could only dream of.

One of the benefits was the amusement park located in the middle of the city. The amusement park has become one of the icons of Pripyat as well as the Chernobyl zone itself. This is perhaps because of the irony of its destiny. The place, which was supposed to be the centre of entertainment and fun is now empty and has merged into the ubiquitous silence.

There is a myth that this Ferris wheel has never been used that is partially true. The whole fairground was supposed to be officially opened on May 1st 1986 as a part of Labor Day (“День міжнародної солідарності трудящих”) celebrations, one of the most important days of the year in the Soviet era. But because of the accident at the nuclear power plant and the following evacuation, the official opening never happened. Nevertheless, several contemporary photographs taken by inhabitants of Pripyat prove that the Ferris wheel did rotate with people on it. One of the oldest photographs taken was in the winter of Feb.1986. Today, we know that the fairground operated in a test mode even before the accident.

One last thing that the visitors of the Chernobyl zone wonder about, is why the cabins on the wheel are still yellow. The colour should fade away like the other numerous objects in Pripyat. The truth is that the cabins are made of yellow plastic. In other words, the colour is not painted on. This makes the Ferris wheel one of the very few colourful things Pripyat.

The famous Ferris wheel has never been turned on!

Despite the fact it was never officially opened, it did serve the inhabitants a few times, even though it was only in test mode.
On the outskirts of Pripyat there is a building complex that used to be the Jupiter (“IOnirep”) factory. This factory was no secret at all. It was actually pretty well known as it was one of the biggest employers in the area as well as the power plant. Jupiter officially produced radios. Unofficially, enriched plutonium used for nuclear ballistic intercontinental missiles. At least that is what many believe it used to produce.

Jupiter was a branch of Kiev’s factory Majak, who started operating in 1980. Officially, tape recorders and various electronic components were produced there. When arriving at the gates of the factory, one can still see the watchtowers built around the factory. They served as high viewpoints for the military guards. It seemed to be a very heavily protected radio factory.

For many, it was a top secret military project where production of special parts for military equipment was carried out. Some say that even robotic systems were developed there. The salaries of the workers in the factory were five times the average Soviet salary at the time. People in Pripyat, as already mentioned, lived in a prestigious city, a communist showcase. But normally they did not earn five times the average salary, not even the power plant workers. What makes the myth even more interesting is the fact that the factory was kept operational even after the accident. The operation of the factory was interrupted for a while of some say that even robotic systems were developed there. The salaries of the workers in the factory were five times the average Soviet salary at the time. People in Pripyat, as already mentioned, lived in a prestigious city, a communist showcase. But normally they did not earn five times the average salary, not even the power plant workers. What makes the myth even more interesting is the fact that the factory was kept operational even after the accident.

In the years following the accident, the building came under the administration of the Ministry of Nuclear Energy of the former Soviet Union and served as a dosimetry laboratory and a research centre for various deactivation and decontamination techniques. Apart from that, special robots were manufactured there for work inside the Sarcophagus. The factory remained in service until 1996 when it was finally closed and abandoned.

What supports the myth is that the Chernobyl nuclear power plant was about to become the biggest nuclear power plant in the world at that time. It had 4 reactors at the time of the accident, with a planned number of 12. Some even say that the final number of reactors was supposed to be 16. One would say, why not? Nuclear power plants generate money and produce some of the cleanest energy. The fact is however, that the 4 existing blocks were already enough. There was enough electricity for the Kiev region and some of the electricity was even exported to former Czechoslovakia and even Poland as surplus energy. Building another 4 blocks would still make sense as the demand for energy rises in every society over time. However, building 12 more blocks is madness…
Unless you are a superpower that needs to keep it’s nuclear arsenal stocks high. One of the by-products of the Chernobyl power plant was plutonium. There are different types of nuclear reactors of which some are only for electricity production. However, most nuclear reactors built in the period of the cold war (1947-1991) served as military industrial objects. A nuclear power plant during the time of the cold war was therefore an ideal bulwark for nuclear weapon production. All four blocks in the Chernobyl nuclear power plant were the types of ‘multifunctional’ nuclear reactors. During the cold war, there was a predominance of these type of reactors in the Soviet Union as well as in the United States. As many believe, the Soviet government would be silly not to take advantage of it’s nuclear power plant plutonium ‘waste’. So, in case the plutonium was to be viable, a factory had to be built not far away from the power plant. And Jupiter seemed to be the choice.

A TRUTH!

There is far too much evidence, such as high salaries, military control of the area, and the planned growth of the power plant, to believe that the factory produced only radios.
As in every tragedy, when people find themselves in challenging situations some of them turn to God. The Chernobyl tragedy was no exception. And, some have even found a reference to Chernobyl in the Bible. More specifically in biblical prophecies about the end of the world, in Revelation 8:2 of the Bible that states:

“Seven angels standing in front of God were given seven trumpets. Then the third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star burning like a torch fell from heaven and landed on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters turned bitter like wormwood oil, and many people died from the bitter waters. Then the fourth angel sounded his trumpet, and a third of the sun and moon and stars were struck. A third of the stars were darkened, a third of the day was without light, and a third of the night as well. And as I observed, I heard an eagle flying overhead, calling in a loud voice, “Woe! Woe! Woe to those who dwell on the earth, because of the trumpet blasts about to be sounded by the remaining three angels!”

The name of the herb ‘wormwood’ translated into Ukrainian is ‘Chornobyl’. Many believe that the fourth angel symbolises the fourth reactor, the one that exploded. Approximately one third of the territory of Ukraine was affected by radioactive fallout, mainly cesium-137 (\(^\text{137}\text{Cs}\)). Many people living in the affected areas have died or still suffer from the consequences of the Chernobyl nuclear accident.

Today, a big metal statue of an angel with a trumpet can be seen in Chernobyl. It is located in the ‘Wormwood Memorial Complex’ as a symbol of this prophecy. There is also a Chernobyl icon that originated after the accident, named ‘Our Savior of Chernobyl’, which is located inside the Chernobyl church. The Icon is depicted as Jesus Christ, the Mother of God and Archangel Michael in heaven, but also the Liquidators who fought the disaster: firemen, doctors, soldiers and the nuclear power station staff. Furthermore, there is a falling star, power station and Chernobyl pine tree in the shape of a cross that stood, until recently, near the power station. This tree has become a monument of the accident. Some people believe that God chose this tree to be the place where the prophecy is fulfilled.

Your call. One can believe.
**DUGA: THE GIANT RADAR THAT NEVER WORKED**

Chernobyl-2 ("Чорнобиль-2") is a small village in the exclusion zone. It was marked on maps as a children’s camp in the past, during its active and operational times. In fact, it was the location of the largest of the three Soviet ‘over the horizon’ radar stations. The purpose of these systems was to detect enemy attacks of ballistic missiles. The other two radar structures do not exist anymore and so Duga ("Дуга"), as it is called, remains the last of its kind.

The development of the system began in the 1950’s during the cold war. The first experimental devices of this type began to be constructed in the 1960’s. They were, however, beset by a number of technical problems and were unable to detect any dangers. The first fully functional systems were successfully designed at the end of the 1960’s. The first experimental system Duga-1 was constructed near the town Mikolaiv (Миколаїв) in Ukraine and could successfully detect rocket launches from cosmodrome Bajkonur ("Байконур"), over 2500 km away. This system was followed by a second prototype Duga-2, built at the same place. After another success, works on Duga started. It was nicknamed ‘The Moscow Eye’ and was supposed to the monitoring of space in Europe as well as potential enemy targets in North America. Soviets started to build the radar station with a small military town called Chernobyl-2 in 1970. The following construction of a power plant in the nearby city of Chernobyl was no coincidence. When fully operational the consumption of energy by this radar system was supplied directly by the Chernobyl power plant and was enormous. The highest estimates are that the radar was supplied by the full capacity of one of the four Chernobyl reactors.

What very few people know is that this huge and very expensive project never managed to fulfill it’s purpose. The radar was never deployed to it’s real full working potential. During examinable operations in the 1970’s and 80’s it was found that the problem of it disturbing frequencies needed to be solved first. In other words, while the radar was operating it interfered with radio frequencies, even beyond that of the Soviet Union area. Even western jet fighter pilots could hear the radar over their radios. Western radiologists therefore could very easily locate the position of the radar system. The result was devastating, one of the most secret Soviet projects was totally exposed. It was even nicknamed ‘The Russian Woodpecker’ for it’s distinctive loud noise.
Another complex task Soviet engineers had to solve was the problem of the concourse of working frequencies of Duga and civil air forces. However, by upgrading the system in 1985-1986 it was officially adopted as part of the air protection of the Soviet Union. However, it never worked very well. And when turned on, radio frequencies would still be disturbed. What proved to work with the former, smaller radars simply did not work with this much bigger version.

Shortly after though, the service of the radar was interrupted due to the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, but by the end of 1987 it was back in service again, even though only partially. Not much later, the radar was shut down completely and closed. Some important and expensive parts of the system were moved to the object Komsomolsk on Amur ("Комсомольск-на-Амур") and the radar was left abandoned.

While the West bet on satellites, the Soviets believed that the future was in ground radar. After many similar and complex, large, costly and poorly performing projects, they finally withdrew and started to use satellites exclusively. Their use was substantially more sophisticated and efficient.

Even though the radar system itself could be turned on, it never served its intended purpose and is now considered as one of the worst and most expensive Soviet projects.
THERE WERE MUTANTS IN THE ZONE

There are many productions from numerous film directors, screenwriters, creators of computer games, or authors of sci-fi who have attempted to attract viewers and readers by using the theme of the Chernobyl tragedy. Thus, some people actually believe that there really is some sort of mutated monsters or zombies running around the Chernobyl zone, even today. Realists take these rumours as a pile of nonsense. But did the radiation really have no such impact?

It is a proven fact that after the Chernobyl accident in 1986, the occurrence of mutations and malignant tumors increased, both in humans and animals. This increase in diseases caused by genetic mutations can be found particularly in the affected areas of Ukraine and Belarus. These areas received the most radioactive fallout. The biggest factor and cause of genetic mutations is the chemical element cesium-137 (\(^{137}\text{Cs}\)). There was a huge amount of radionuclide cesium-137 that polluted vast areas during the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. The problem lay in the fact that radionuclides (radioactive atoms) bound themselves to dust particles and later spontaneously, or with rain, stuck to the Earth’s surface. As heavier atoms, they began to be absorbed further into the ground until they were bound with water molecules, and were thus absorbed by plants and water. This uninterruptible process resulted in radionuclides gradually getting into the food chain of all animals and humans. They became components of cells of all the different organisms. Cesium is especially dangerous. When absorbed by the body it is stored in bones and bone marrow and its higher concentrations often have a direct negative impact on DNA. Increased concentrations of cesium in organisms resulted in a variety of cell strains, cell mutations, disorder of thyroids and other organs. In the years that followed the accident, there truly was a significant percentage increase of many radiation related diseases in the affected areas. These diseases were in many cases deadly and have become the subject of medical and scientific research.

But not everyone affected by the radioactive fallout, or by the ‘radioactive food’ has died. There were thousands of Liquidators and inhabitants that survived the accident and many of them are still living. Some have even moved back to the zone and live in the villages (the so called ‘self-settlers’). These people have been affected by the radiation, but only to the extent that their bodies were able to absorb, adjust and survive. But should we call these people mutants? Absolutely not, that would be a disgrace.

But who knows. There is a commune on Gavdos, Greece, consisting of very intelligent ex-Soviet scientists, whose main purpose is to search for immortality. Among them there are also Chernobyl survivors. The leader of the commune is in fact a scientist who survived a lethal dose of radiation during the Chernobyl disaster. Who knows what studies will show about how the effects of radiation can increase our chances of immortality?

A MYTH!

Anyone who survived the accident was, with high certainty, affected by the radiation on a genetic level. However, there are no mutated monsters or zombies running around the Chernobyl zone.
THE ACCIDENT WAS NOT AN ACCIDENT AT ALL

The disaster that began in Chernobyl reactor #4 was not an accident. There are many myths and conspiracy theories of what really happened. The fact that the disaster wasn’t an accident is one of the most popular conspiracy theories ever. Though one should ask, who would have the motive to blow up a nuclear power plant, kill thousands and endanger millions? According to these theories - anyone and everyone.

The first on the list are the engineers of the Duga radar system, which is located near the power plant. As mentioned in one of the previous articles, the radar was an enormous project that never worked properly. Even though it was officially adopted as a part of the air protection of the Soviet Union, it never fulfilled it’s potential. The project cost billions of Rubles but still, even after tremendous efforts, could not be finished. The inspectors from Moscow were getting more frustrated with every visit. Per available sources, the cost of the radar was about 7 billion Soviet Rubles. At the time, Ruble to Dollar was 1:1. The project itself would be considered expensive even now. Just to compare, the cost of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant with 4 reactors was about 4 billion Soviet Rubles. If we also take into consideration the fact that it produced no results and actually revealed itself with it’s notoriously famous sound, it was a catastrophe for the engineers. That is why many believe that they had no other choice but to sabotage the power plant. The engineers simply had to steer attention to a much bigger problem, and with a little luck get the Duga closed. The radar system needed a massive supply of electricity and could not work without a functioning power plant nearby. A successful mission one would say.

Another possible reason for the disaster is the Duga radar system itself, but with no help from the engineers. As already mentioned, the radar interfered with radio frequencies, which made it practically useless. One of the consequences of this engineering mistake may be that the Duga signal was interfering with the working setup of the power plant. Duga itself did not cause the explosion, but also did not prevent it (by interfering with the power plant circuits).

Not far behind in the popularity ratings is the theory according to which, a superpower prepared and executed the disaster, to make it look like an accident. The question is which one? Western countries, especially the United States, could have been trying to stop Duga from working. The declassified documents show that the western intelligence agencies knew about the radar and that they were very concerned about it’s intended purpose. The most probable reason for destroying it was that they did not want the Soviets to have such a powerful radar system. But there is also information that shows the western agencies were concerned about the sound Duga made. Some believed it could have been a psycho-active signal, a sort of experimental psychological Soviet weapon. The purpose of this weapon was unknown but some believed it was meant to turn other countries and the whole world to communism. One would ask, why not bomb the radar system then? Well, in order to prevent a 3rd World War, a more sophisticated solution, like shutting off the power, had to be found.
But there are theories that even the Soviet Union may have had its own reasons for destroying their own power plant. Some say that in Moscow the government knew where the regime was headed. The Soviet Union would not last for much longer, and in the end, could lose important parts of the country. One of them was Ukraine, a very fertile land important for its agriculture, but also for black coal and its manpower. Ukraine also served as a shield, a buffer zone between East and West. The logic behind destroying the power plant was that even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Chernobyl region would stay in the hands of the newly created Russian Federation, which would then repair the damage and profit from the power plant again. The population of the nearby areas would be evacuated and moved to areas with little population, such as Siberia. Sounds far-fetched? Well, the power plant itself remained active and produced electricity until 2000, but was run by Ukraine. And the regions of Siberia were truly ‘voluntarily’ inhabited by Crimean’s, for instance. This myth is not a myth at all for many Ukrainians, as even some Ukrainian teachers in the 1990s were teaching the history of Chernobyl in this alternative way.

**GONUS!**

Conspiracy theories. If any of the above conspiracy theories is true then we won’t find out for decades to come.
Pripyat (Ukrainian: Прип’ять, Pryp’yat’; Russian: Припять, Prípyat’, pronounced as Pripyat) is a ghost town in northern Ukraine, near the border with Belarus.

Named after the nearby Pripyat River, Pripyat was founded on 4 February 1970, as the ninth nuclear city (a type of closed city) in the Soviet Union, to serve the nearby Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant. It was officially proclaimed a city in 1979, and had grown to a population of 49,360 by the time it was evacuated, on the afternoon of April 27, 1986, the day after the Chernobyl disaster.
The Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant or The V.I. Lenin Nuclear Power Station (Ukrainian: Чорнобильська атомна електростанція; Russian: Чернобыльская АЭС им. В.И.Ленина,) is a nuclear power station under decommissioning near the city of Pripyat.

Named after one of the greatest soviets, The V.I. Lenin Nuclear Power Station was supposed to be one of the biggest nuclear power plants in the world. It has, however, become well-known for the disaster that occurred on early morning of April 26, 1986. The power plant is under decommissioning since 2000.