

Organisation: The Chernobyl Society Moldova¹ (Asociația Obștească Societatea Cernobîl Moldova)

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Since I could not identify any association in Romania, I wrote about one in Moldova. I came across an article about this association (in Romanian), so I decided to make further research. I thought it might be useful since nobody worked on Moldova, yet it was also part of the Soviet Union in 1986 and Moldovans worked as liquidators in Chernobyl. I know it is not exactly the type of association the assignment was referring to (since it shows the solidarity between the victims/ liquidators), but I believe these associations are also important for the remembrance of Chernobyl.

Approximately 3,500 Moldovans participated as liquidators in Chernobyl. Since 1986, 560 of them have died. The others suffer from a disease with a strange name: “work mutilation provoked by the accident in Chernobyl”. In their families, children were born with disabilities.²

The Chernobyl Society Moldova was constituted as an NGO in 1991, with the main purpose of defending the interests of those Moldovan citizens who suffered as a result of the Chernobyl catastrophe.³ Its membership was opened, besides the liquidators, to other categories affected by the negative effects of nuclear energy, such as soldiers who participated in the testing of nuclear weapons in the Soviet Army.⁴

The major aims of the association were the following: to provide adequate medical treatment for its members, to facilitate their rehabilitation, but also to inform the population about the danger represented by nuclear energy.⁵ A special law adopted by the government of the newly created Republic of Moldova reinforced the necessity of such an organization. The *Law regarding the Social Protection of Citizens Affected by the Chernobyl Catastrophe* was issued as early as 1992, referring particularly to the provision of adequate medical assistance and financial help, especially in the form of pensions.⁶

On the commemoration of 20 years, the Association published a book in which some of the members testify about their experiences in Chernobyl.⁷ They were doctors, engineers, and

¹ This paper is due to the help of my friend Anastasia Felcker from Chisinau, who provided me with a part of the primary sources and interviewed Mihai Oncea, the president of a local branch of the association.

² http://www.voceabasarabiei.net/index.php?Itemid=1477&id=8168&option=com_content&task=view

³ Statutul Asociației Obștești Societatea Cernobîl Moldova, Chișinău, 2006, 1.

⁴ Interview with Mihai Oncea, member of the Chernobyl Society Moldova and president of a local branch of the association. Interview taken by Anastasia Felcker, on March 21, 2011, in Chișinău.

⁵ Statutul Asociației Obștești Societatea Cernobîl Moldova, Chișinău, 2006, 1-2.

⁶ Legea privind protecția socială a cetățenilor afectați de catastrofa de la Cernobîl, published in *Monitorul Oficial* no. 080 from May 21, 2004, article 413.

⁷ Isidor Doctoreanu (ed.) *Sunt oameni ca noi, dar veșnici eroi. Cernobîl XX. Catastrofa a fost, dar dezastrul continuă* (They are human beings like us, but forever heroes. Chernobyl 20. The Catastrophe Was, but the Disaster Continues), Societatea Cernobîl, Chișinău, 2006.

workers who cleared the Chernobyl area in the following years, but also soldiers condemned to follow the orders, which were taken to the affected area without being informed about the meaning and the consequences of the nuclear accident. According to one of the informers, about 340,000 Soviet soldiers were mobilized for this operation.⁸

The main source of funding is the government, and thus the financial difficulties of one of the poorest countries in Europe are reflected upon the treatment of the Chernobyl victims. Every year, the Chernobyl Society in Moldova is commemorating the victims of the nuclear accident by marching in the city center and remembering people about their existence. A church and a monument will be constructed in their honor.⁹ This year, a commemorative medal will be released on the eve of the 25th anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster. All the 2418 surviving Moldovan liquidators will be awarded on this occasion.¹⁰

Yet, every year, 57 of the former liquidators in Moldova die.¹¹ The medical treatment is only partially covered by the government. For the state, they represent a “privileged category,”¹² since they benefit of special social rights. Unfortunately, shiny medals do not offer too much comfort for the victims of the Chernobyl accident from Moldova.

⁸ Isidor Doctoreanu (ed.) *Sunt oameni ca noi, dar ve□nici eroi*, 18.

⁹ http://www.voceabasarabiei.net/index.php?Itemid=1477&id=8168&option=com_content&task=view

¹⁰ http://www.vedomosti.md/news/U_Moldavskih_Chernobyiltsev_Budet_Sobstvennaya_Medal

¹¹ <http://www.tv7.md/?page=Society&id=18796&lang=ru&list=58>

¹² <http://www.europalibera.org/content/article/2025188.html>