

Anyone who has had occasion to fly over the oil and gas fields at night will probably never in his life forget the fantastic spectacle of an alarming crimson glow coming from all directions. It's like a scene from hell... At night the flares give off this glow over enormous distances. In Tyumen Oblast the flares burn off every year approximately 18 billion cubic metres of so-called "by-product" gas or condensate. But this product is even more valuable than the "black gold" itself. Nature, as if helping humans, itself has perfected the process of distilling oil in producing the volatile condensate: it's all there just for the taking...

We are not merely lighting bonfires made of hard currency, but are destroying in the process an even more valuable resource - oxygen. The air in the Siberian taiga has now grown suffocating.

We should have exercised real stewardship a long time ago to halt development of deposits until we had perfected a comprehensive system for obtaining oil and gas. But it seems that the country is unable to live without this. And nature cannot withstand these monstrous construction projects.

"At the same time, without developing the refinery sectors our oblast has no future," says V. Chertishchev. "Petrochemicals are an energy consuming industry. But we in the oblast have an overabundance of electrical energy as well as sufficient water. We feel that we have now found a genuine solution. We will be building in the oblast plants and integrated facilities of small to medium capacity oriented toward specific deposits. This has a number of advantages: construction time is sharply reduced, and we can quickly get the product and recover its cost. Such enterprises do not require gigantic purification