

Of course I want to. And so, the next report will be directly from Noyaya Zemlya.

Pravda

26 October 1990

Pages 1 and 6 (full text)

Loud Echo of a "Silent" Blast

As has become the custom since the "period of stagnation", within a matter of days the entire mass media published the following short news item transmitted through TASS channels. "On October 24, 1990, at 18:00 hours Moscow time, an underground nuclear test was conducted in the Soviet Union on a range in the Novaya Zemlya region. The explosion had a force of between 20 and 150 kilotonnes and was aimed at verifying the reliability and improving the safety of a nuclear weapon. The radiation situation in the area of the test is normal."

At the very least this last sentence raises a number of questions. To be frank, the public - which since Chernobyl has been suffering from an allergy to things nuclear - is skeptical.

Who set off the blast and how? Who monitored the explosion and the "situation" which has been termed "normal" without presenting any evidence, and how did they do it? These are some of the questions that soon began flooding into the editors.

A telegram was received at Izvestiya: "A nuclear explosion has been set off on the Novaya Zemlya range. The residents of the village of Amderma were warned about the explosion with admirable timeliness - a day and a half after it happened... Weather analyses indicate that underground nuclear explosions could result in fallout being carried to the Nentsy tundra, the Yugorskii Peninsula and the Yamal Peninsula... (Signed) - Ganchurin, weather forecaster, deputy of the village soviet."