

### Murmansk: Safety of Radioactive Waste Storage

It seems that, in the aftermath of the wave of protest against construction of a temporary storage depot for spent nuclear fuel, the public in Murmansk has come to a consensus, as it is now fashionable to say. By decision of the Oblast Council of People's Deputies they created an independent interagency commission to conduct expert examinations of installations for radiation safety. For six months specialists and deputies and representatives of the public studied in detail various projects, technical solutions and prospects for burying wastes at the "Atomflot" RTE. And a special expert environmental review was conducted to determine the advisability of continuing construction of the temporary storage site. One of the chief opponents was invited to participate in this work - V. Perovskii, a leading expert from one of the principal scientific research institutes of the Ministry of Atomic Energy and Industry, and a member of the USSR Nuclear Society. It was Perovskii's article in the oblast newspaper Polyarnaya Pravda that set off the storm of protests. Then, three days before an affirmative decision was to be issued on the advisability of continuing the construction, events took an unforeseeable turn. A session of the Leninskii Raion Soviet of Murmansk adopted a categorical demand: stop the construction!

They either forgot or did not wish to invite specialists to this session. Only two members of the commission, V. Garin and Yu. Maevskii, fisherman by profession (a ship's captain and boatswain) attended the session without notifying their fellow commission members and levelled the full fury of their protests at the raion deputies. And passions got out of control... The above-named commission members could hardly find time to participate in the businesslike discussion of the review committee's findings that went on for an entire week. They appeared from time to time for an hour or two and, to the embarrassment of those present, asked questions such as how the nuclear fuel is passed through the pipes - demonstrating a complete lack of understanding of the issue - and then disappeared. One need only add that, as serious an issued as radiation safety is, even it can be turned into a reckless game...

Clearly, there can be some doubt about the legitimacy of the decision to ban construction. First of all, the land on which the "Atomflot" RET is located is not under the jurisdiction of the raion soviet but belongs to the Northern Fleet. Secondly, the deputies of the oblast soviet brought up the following point: they had proceeded calmly, they had given independent experts an opportunity to participate in a serious way in the debate. (It should be pointed out, however, that their deliberations did not include representatives of either Minmorflot (Ministry of the Maritime Fleet), the steamship line or even of the RTE base itself.) Finally, in the process of study, only a single alternative could not be found: transfer the base to the "Nerpa" ship