

At the request of the editors, the question is being answered by A. Nemchinov, sector head of the icebreaker fleet, Main Administration of Fleet Technical Operations and Ship Repair Plants of the Ministry of the Maritime Fleet:

First of all, I want to say that nobody has received an official reply from Finnish officials to the request of the Murmansk Maritime Steamship Line regarding a visit to Helsinki by a nuclear powered vessel of the "Taimyr" class, even though such a reply clearly would have been in the negative. Before making the request, serious preparatory work was carried out. Among those participating in this work was the Finnish Centre for Radiation Safety, the official mandate of which is to evaluate the safety of nuclear powered vessels while docked in suburbs of Helsinki. Specialists from the Centre familiarized themselves directly on board the "Vaigach" with the necessary documentation, held discussions with the crew, and examined the ship's design first hand. And, by the way, the Finns were fully satisfied with the spirit of the discussions and with the technical solutions. Overall, the findings of the Centre and of a number of other competent organizations also participating in the review were satisfactory. They found the procedures proposed for the docking of the nuclear powered vessel to be appropriate and acceptable.

But while no mention was made of technical factors as reasons for the refusal, the final decision was apparently affected by the lack of Finnish standards and regulations directly applicable to this particular situation. The problem is that Finnish law on nuclear energy does not extend to means of transportation.

To the best of my knowledge, the ship's owner, in view of the results that have been achieved, is intending to continue joint efforts with the Finns in the future to arrive at precise solutions relating to visits of nuclear powered icebreakers to Finland. There are plans to prepare a contract between the steamship Line and the "Masa Yards" firm for the servicing of the nuclear powered vessels. There are also discussions about the possibility of joint development and publication of information in English concerning the safety of nuclear powered vessels of the "Taimyr" class.