

that will enable us to accomplish our program of developing the timber-industry within the very short time frame envisaged."

Q: "Mikhail Ivanovich, the USSR Ministry of the Timber Industry is often criticized for ecological violations. You have been personally reproached for this. What can you, as Minister, say about the possibilities of resolving some particularly urgent ecological problem?"

A: "How could anyone think that I, as a citizen of my homeland, could remain indifferent to the fate of our forests, lakes Baikal and Ladoga, or any other lakes and rivers? However, my wishes alone unfortunately cannot solve the problems that have accumulated over many decades. It is unfair to accuse our Ministry alone of all our misfortunes. The decisions to build many of the enterprises without a well thought-out nature conservation program were not the Ministry's alone. It was said that the interests of the State came first, that Nature had more than enough resources and would withstand the pressures. But it has not withstood them.

"How did this happen? First of all, nature conservation is costly. Over the past twenty years (from 1966 to 1985), the portion of the capital investments allocated for nature conservation amounted to about one billion roubles. Naturally, this is not enough. So, to some extent, I am glad of the criticism, for it has helped to direct public attention to our problems. In 1989, 261,300,000 roubles will be spent on nature conservation. This is substantially more than was spent during any of the preceding years. Secondly, there is another problem that cannot be glossed over. For years, we