

30 to 58 megatons were conducted on Novaya Zemlya, and they could not have been without consequences. The military doesn't hide the fact that there are contaminated zones on Novaya Zemlya, but there's no precise map showing this contamination, or if there is, then it's being kept top secret. I feel strongly that the public should know this information.

"In short, I don't believe that all of this activity is perfectly safe. The question should probably be put this way: do the benefits outweigh the harm? The benefits are essentially for military purposes: the military makes progress in perfecting its weapons. But the harm still exists, however much it is concealed. First of all, there are the seismic waves (this primarily concerns the Semipalatinsk test range). Secondly, no one has proven that the radioactivity that remains in the underground blast chambers will not one day leak through cracks into the environment. If we had access to complete data (on environmental aspects, of course, not military aspects) then the benefits and the harm could at least be compared in general terms.

"Up to now everyone has pointed to the necessity of maintaining military parity, but no one is willing to say openly - even at a closed session of parliament - where we lag behind. Is it the reliability of nuclear weapons that is being tested or are they being improved? There are so many problems that need to be discussed at sessions of the USSR Supreme Soviet's Committee on Defense and National Security! The Americans make public how much a nuclear blast costs and how much money has been allocated for these purposes for the following year. We know nothing. All we know is a mystical figure of 70 some odd billion roubles which is growing more suspect every day.

"If we had the necessary information, then there would probably be less reason for protest. In the meantime, everyone constructs his own theories. Olzhas Suleimenov in an article in Izvestiya analyzes the reduction in the number of our underground nuclear tests and the reaction of the Americans. This reduction prompted them to reduce the number of their own blasts. Perhaps it would be worth holding off on our October explosion until the upcoming talks in January 1991.

"It is my deep conviction that all questions concerning new tests, the development of atomic energy and the safe storage of radioactive wastes should be discussed openly. Otherwise, we will quickly encounter resistance wherever these activities are being organized. The Murmansk Steamship Lines will refuse to transport freight to the testing ground on Novaya Zemlya. And this half-glasnost we have today, in addition to the other harm it is causing, is creating a mistrust in tomorrow that one can hear in the reader's letter."

Vodnyi Transport

11 December 1990

Page 3