

smell and an unnatural frightening silence reigns over everything. There are no mosquitoes, no small birds. Just a dead forest....

For a long time anything that was connected with chemical treatment was a "forbidden subject" for us journalists. Departmental scientific experts helped prove that chemical treatment did no harm whatsoever to the environment and certainly presented no danger to human health. There were, of course, some completely contrary scientific studies, but these were not considered. Many organizations gave the "go ahead" for carrying out chemical treatment, including the USSR Ministry of Health. All these "favours" protected the forestry sector like a shield.

Those who attempted to criticize the use of toxic chemicals in our forests were overruled by yet another argument - by reference to objective economic difficulties. Here is a typical example of this type of discussion. First of all, the replacement of conifer forests with soft-wooded broadleaved stands is not in the interests of the national economy. Furthermore, the young stands have to be tended on vast areas but there is no specially adapted technology for this type of operation and there is not enough manpower available. In short, the only solution is to use chemicals...

There were, of course, certain limitations on the use of chemicals. Chemical agents were banned in all forests of the first group, in second- and third-group forests located close to populated areas, heavily travelled roads and reservoirs, and in areas frequented by the public. Toxic chemicals had to be used primarily in underpopulated regions of the taiga.