

"In my opinion, the question today concerning the consequences of the nuclear explosions at the Novaya Zemlya testing ground impinges on the problem of informing society about underground nuclear testing. As long as we do not have reliable information it is difficult to come up with any kind of predictions. Unfortunately, the shortage of this information is obvious, despite the grand claims for openness and glasnost. I'll give you an example from my own experience as a deputy to demonstrate how far apart word and deed are with our government.

"During the second congress of People's Deputies of the USSR, after the meeting with the Council of Ministers, we hoped that things would change for the better. The minutes of the meeting contained the following words: 'That it would be advisable to have the participation of scientists, deputies and representatives of the public in measuring radiation conditions during nuclear testing.' And in fact, in May of this year, I was given the opportunity, together with a group headed by I. Belousov, the deputy chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers, to visit the southern site of the Novaya Zemlya nuclear test range. After this trip I noticed how much easier it was to talk to people on the basis of personal impressions without having to rely on published sources, which are, principally foreign sources. Moreover, the openness with which military people spoke increased my trust in them. Unfortunately, this trust has started to dwindle since I learned about the upcoming explosion on the program 'Vremya'.

"Of course, security measures are taken when these explosions occur. The military people working at the testing grounds are not out to destroy themselves. I'm sure there haven't been any serious incidents during underground tests, but this doesn't mean there haven't been any consequences. Here's an example. The blast that occurred on December 4, 1988, was called a 'clean explosion' (since the preceding one in 1987 had been accompanied by radioactive fallout that set off protests in the countries of Northern Europe). This time everything supposedly went well, although two nuclear icebreakers in the vicinity of Novaya Zemlya sailed into a radioactive cloud, and this has been documented. On board the "Arktika", which was underway from the Straits of Karskie Vorota to the Yamal Peninsula, a radiation alert was in effect for several hours. Fortunately, no further measures were necessary since radioactive gases have a short half-life.

"This incident makes one think. Nuclear explosions are conducted according to the weather forecast: there must be a steady southerly wind so that potential emissions are carried into the atmosphere and, above all, do not reach the mainland. But the incident involving the nuclear icebreaker indicates that the wind was blowing in the ship's direction.

"Now, let's go back to events of many years ago before the 1963 agreement that prohibited all nuclear tests except underground ones. We know that up until 1963 extremely powerful atmospheric nuclear tests of