

of this activity demanded of Nature an inevitable "détente" (lessening of tension) in the form of earthquakes that are, for the time being, small.

In any case, all of the foregoing is a result of the "wild" development of Tyumen' mineral resources during the past decades with no thought to, or forecasting of, the ecological situation. About twenty years ago, scientists predicted the onset of a period of minor, and then major, disasters. And they spoke then of the coming 15 to 20 years, calling them a critical time. Now, these years have passed, and the earthquakes have begun, provoked by human activity.

After all, the intensive recovery of oil and gas from the earth's interior without full compensation for the "cavities" left behind, will inevitably bring this interior out of its ancient repose, and even after the first 10 to 15 years' extraction, the accumulated unbalanced conditions are making themselves felt. The earth's interior is "groaning", creaking, somehow squeezing out and pressing through, pushing out piles and columns, warping buildings, and making its presence known by surface saggings that are at first minor and then catastrophic. We must not, however, await a disaster, but rather prevent it. We must not wait, let us say, until the pressure in the earth's interior falls by 50 to 70 atmospheres, but rather, when we have found that it has dropped by 10 to 15 atmospheres, we must remove the stress and provoke Nature to create small earthquakes in an attempt to head off a major disaster.

Yes, Western Siberia is seismically a quiet zone. But if earth movement begins to develop here,