

Chernobyl. Cooperation of this sort could be of great benefit to Canada in allowing our country to more fully assess the causes and consequences of Chernobyl, thereby contributing to better informed discussions and deliberations about the uses of nuclear power in our own country.

Chernobyl is by no means the only environmental issue in the Soviet Union. Indeed, as Joan de Bardeleben, Associate Professor of Political Science at McGill University, testified before the Committee in Ottawa in March, widespread destruction of the Soviet and East European environments—on a scale barely imaginable in the West—has spawned environmental movements that were and are among the most powerful driving forces for radical reform. One of the issues brought to our attention by Soviet environmentalists is of particular concern to Canada.

We were deeply disturbed to be told by experts at the Arctic and Antarctic Institute in Leningrad, that the Soviet Union was transferring all of its nuclear testing from the far east, near Semipalitinsk in the Kazakh SSR, to the high Arctic island of Novaya Zemlya. Subsequently we found that the island was the Soviet testing centre from 1958 to 1963, and that altogether it has been the site of some 84 explosions, 70 percent of them in the atmosphere. Since 1963 when the Partial Test Ban Treaty was signed, 36 underground tests have been conducted in the Arctic, the last two in 1988. While such testing is not supposed to vent radio-active waste into the atmosphere, venting frequently occurs with both USSR and U.S. tests. According to Sweden's National Defence Research Institute, the week after an August 1987 test at Novaya Semyla, fission products were detected all over Sweden. Northern peoples suffer to this day from atmospheric testing carried out in the Soviet and U.S. Arctic regions during the fifties and sixties. The other concern is that the long-term effects of underground explosions on permafrost conditions and the Arctic environment are likely to be negative.

This situation underscores the importance of Canada-Soviet relations and the need for a comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. The Soviets unilaterally declared a 19-month moratorium on nuclear tests which ended in February 1987, but it proved ineffective as a means of generating progress towards such a treaty. The United States and the USSR have pursued bilateral negotiations on the question but the Americans in particular have been loathe to prohibit testing, both for reasons of ensuring the reliability of their existing weapons and because they continue to seek ways of gaining superiority over the Soviet Union in new phases of military technology. In the absence of such an agreement, the Soviets have proceeded with their own testing program, despite growing internal opposition. When we asked about the politics of the Soviet debate on this matter, Mr. Suleimenov explained: "While Gorbachev and Shevardnadze are on our side and share our