

Since the author's conclusions and proposals in the letter are based on the inaccurate premises cited above, the USSR Minsudprom would like to request that the editors publish an article which reports in an unbiased and well substantiated way about the reliability and safety of the "Sevmorput" barge carrier. Such an article could be prepared by associates of the Krylov Central Scientific Research Institute or by the 'Baltsudoproekt' Central Design Bureau."

And that was the lengthy response. But just how sound is this rebuttal of the newspaper story?

Let us begin with economics. In April of this year a conference under the chairmanship of I. Orlov, head of the Scientific and Technical Branch of USSR Minmorflot, was held in Vladivostok on the question of the development of the barge carrier system. A clear statement was made at the conference concerning the negative economic results from operation of the diesel-electric barge carrier "Aleksei Kosygin". And no less clear was the conclusion about future enormous losses from operation of the "Sevmorput".

It was noted at the conference that operation of the nuclear-powered barge carrier had revealed very substantial problems, of which three in particular must be mentioned. Firstly, the actual freight level under suitable applications of the nuclear-powered vessel has turned out to be less than that cited in the project estimate. Secondly, the natural navigation conditions of the Far Eastern Basin eliminate many ports from the barge carrier's operational system. Thirdly, due to its technical characteristics, the "Sevmorput" has proven to be less well suited for operation under the difficult