

The echo from this event has even reached the capital. Nikolai Vorontsov, Chairman of the USSR State Committee on the Environment (Goskompriroda), addressed a session of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet.

"As a matter of fact," he noted, "the Soviet Union has not officially declared any sort of moratorium. So this explosion does not constitute a violation, from the legal point of view. Over a period of 11 months the USSR did not test any nuclear weapons either on the Semipalatinsk or the Novaya Zemlya ranges. It is also known that local authorities in the Archangel Oblast have repeatedly expressed their protests against conducting tests on Novaya Zemlya."

After this followed a sensational admission by the official: "I wish to declare that the environmental protection agencies were given no advance notice of the impending nuclear weapon test and we did not monitor the situation in any way."

Mr. Vorontsov also expressed his opinion that such explosions could be dangerous for the environment.

"I hope," he said, "that there has been no substantial increase in the radiation level as a result of this test. We do know, however, that Novaya Zemlya has suffered substantial damage as result of a series of nuclear explosions... The governments of northern countries have appealed to us more than once not to conduct such tests there. Of course, we are hampered by the fact that the Americans continue to test nuclear weapons at the Nevada test site. This is a fact. But it is also a fact the tests in North America are being carried out with the agreement of local officials in the State of Nevada. As for Novaya Zemlya, there has been no such agreement from authorities in the Archangel Oblast or from the parliament or government of Russia."

What other threats do we face from these explosions? At the present time there are successful developments in cooperation between the USSR and northern countries, an agreement in principle has been reached on obtaining a highly favourable, virtually interest-free