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JAPAN TIMES 9/26/69

Japanese Fishermen Worried Over N-Test

The U.S. Atomic Energy Commission's announcement that an underground nuclear test explosion is scheduled for Oct. 3 on Amchitka Island in the Aleutians has touched off a flurry of protests from Japanese fishing circles and scientists.

The Maritime Safety Agency has already warned Japanese ships not to enter the sea within 93 kilometers (60 nautical miles) of the island between Thursday and Oct. 15.

The coming test will have an explosive power of about 1.2 megatons, the equivalent of 24 times the power of the Hiroshima atomic bomb.

If the result of the test should prove favorable, the AEC would conduct tests of greater magnitude on the island.

In that event, the Japanese fishing industry would suffer a blow because of restriction of operations in one of the world's best three fishing grounds and possible contamination of sea water and catch.

According to the Fishery Agency, the Aleutians are actually the tops of a chain of volcanoes jutting out of the sea surface and sea water containing abundant nutrients rises from depths of 3,000 to 6,000 meters to the surface along the submarine parts of the volcanoes, creating an ideal habitat for plankton.

The sea abounds with codfish, flatfish, halibut, salmon, trout and others.

At present, about 100 fishing boats from Japan, the Soviet Union and other countries are operating in the area, according to Taiyo Fishery Co.

The Japanese fishing circles are concerned if shocks from the detonation might frighten away fish, as did the Alaska earthquake of 1964.

They are further concerned about possible radioactive contamination of the fish.

The test will be carried out inside a well, more than one kilometer deep, on the island, 65 kilometers long and five kilometers wide.

Under the circumstances, the possibility of radioactivity coming from the explosion seeping through weak volcanic layers to contaminate sea water has been raised by even U.S. scientists.

Meteorological Agency officials are afraid underground [illegible] directly connected to sea water.

Prof. Tsuneji Rikitake at the Earthquake Research Institute of the University of Tokyo said a nuclear test on the quake-prone islands will certainly induce small tremors although a large one may not necessarily ensue.

A spokesman for the Japanese Atomic Energy Commission said the coming test is clearly part of the U.S. policy for nuclear supremacy being intended for development of such nuclear weapons as AEM and MIRV.

The spokesman said the test, although an underground one, does not eliminate chance of radioactivity coming out in the open.

He said the commission was afraid the test might cause an accident similar to the No. 5 Fukuryu Maru incident of 1954 in which a Japanese fishing boat was showered with radioactive dust in a hydrogen bomb test on the Bikini Atoll.

WATER ON THE ISLAND MIGHT BE