

more than 50 rivers here have been turned into sewer lines. The Monchegorsk lakes are dead. Outside such cities as Nikel, Zapolyarnyi and Kovdar one would be justified in posting signs that read: "Caution. Hazardous Area!" There's no air to breathe, and radiation levels are high. Environmental disaster is already encroaching on Lake Svyatoye, the pearl of the region. And on the floor of the Barents Sea, as was recently reported by western "voices", lie six sunken submarines with a full complement of nuclear warheads...

This and other matters were discussed at a press conference held at the All-Union Society for Nature Protection. The participants were members of a public environmental expedition to the Kola Peninsula. It was headed by journalist Aleksandr Vislyayev, a chemist and biologist by education.

Q. "How did the local population receive you? Does it support this initiative?"

A. "You couldn't say they were exactly thrilled. But that's understandable. After all, there are a lot of short-term employees there, people who come up for the money. Naturally, they aren't concerned about "our" problems. Many workers said as much to our face, saying 'we don't need your environment stuff, we need kindergardens, nurseries and other amenities'."

Q. "You've confirmed that the background radiation level is very high on the Kola Peninsula. What are the principal sources of contamination, in your view?"

A. "First of all, there's the nuclear test site on Novaya Zemlya, of course. Then there's the Kola Nuclear Power Station. Although it is considered one of the cleanest, we still have it 'under suspicion'."

Once upon a time someone came up with the idea of using the 'peaceful atom' to blast Apatity ores and make the miners' job easier. Radiation from this is inevitable, and at rather high levels, too.