

USSR in July 1954. I need not remind you of the complex situation at that time: the height of the "cold war," the politics of intimidation and the arms race it gave rise to. We started to build nuclear-missile weapons. To test and perfect them, a testing range was set up on Novaya Zemlya, among others.

It is 750 kilometres long and 150 wide. It occupies 90,200 square kilometres, 55,000 of which are on dry land. The area of the whole archipelago is 83,000 square kilometres. The northern of the two islands is a continuous glacier. In area it is the largest in the country. The southern island consists of arctic tundra.

I would add that the islands were practically uninhabited and hundreds of kilometres away from the nearest populated areas. Moreover, the test area almost ideally corresponded to the required geophysical, geological, meteorological, and technical and economic indices. Suffice it to say that even today, in relation to the wind rose - an extremely important parameter for the test personnel - it is one of the most stable regions in the Arctic.

The distance from the southern limits of the range to the town of Amderma is 280 kilometres, and to Vaigach Island, where several dozen people live in the settlement of Varnek, it is 180. Added to this is the fact that the geological structures of the lands making up the northern hemisphere are so distinctive that they rule out even the smallest seismic effect on the adjoining regions."

Q. "You spoke of the sparseness of population. However, the Nenets lived on Novaya Zemlya itself and ships of the Northern Fleet were based there... According to several specialists, these islands are rich in mineral deposits..."