

This is the so-called Building Site No 27. It is located near a city which was closed to the public until recently and which journalists have dubbed "Atomgrad". The main industry here is nuclear. Cooling water in the once-through nuclear reactors of the mining and chemical combine passes through a radioactive zone and is then discharged into the Enisei. For over 30 years this radioactive water, although treated according to standards, has been contaminating the river. Although specialists at the mining and chemical combine claim that the industrial effluents represent no serious danger for the Enisei and organisms in the river, gamma radiation in the river exceeds background levels by a factor of 6 to 8.

A little over 400 kilometers downstream on the Enisei radioactivity has been found to be up to 100 microroentgens per hour (the natural background radiation is 10 - 15 microroentgens). In the vicinity of Lesosibirsk and Eniseisk the background radiation exceeds normal background levels by 10 to 14-fold. In these same areas, and further downstream, radioactive unconsolidated silty deposits have been found to be widespread.

All of this was determined by two fact-finding expeditions involving specialists from Leningrad, the Krasnoyarsk Research Centre, and the State Committee for the Environment (Goskompriroda). The lower reaches of the Enisei have not been examined as yet.

Yes, production of nuclear charges at the mining and chemical combine has ended, and the facility has converted to production of fuel for nuclear power stations. Two industrial reactors must be withdrawn from service in 1995, and a third in the year 2000. And the operating levels of the reactors have been reduced by 20% of the capacity. But the silty deposits downstream in the Enisei are reaching radioactive levels of 600-800 microroentgens, and at times 1000 or more.

As early as 1972 an American ship found radionuclides inside the 12-mile zone of the Kara Sea. According to specialists, these fragmentary data lead one to conclude that radioactive sandy-silty sediments can be expected in the floodplain of the Enisei over a distance of more than 2500 kilometers. What is needed is extensive environmental study of the radioactivity in the entire Enisei River basin.