

And now comes the detailed report. From all the data I choose that which is most important for the moment: the level of radioactivity is no higher than the natural background.

"Did you hear that?" the admiral asks. "That is a routine report. It hasn't been touched up for the press, as some people like to accuse us of doing. Clearly, of course, a military testing range is not a place to go for an evening stroll. We have some specially designated protected zones there which, incidentally, are mainly left over from above-ground tests. But I and other comrades here served on the range for several years and raised children here. You can't imagine that we are enemies to ourselves and would have kept silent if the radiation situation had got out of control."

"Yes, I understand the concern of the people in the areas closest to the testing range," he continues. "The environmental situation there is worrying. But you have to make a distinction, surely, between the effects of the testing range and careless economic activity. And finally, I'd like to say one more thing. The uninvited Greenpeace expedition to Novaya Zemlya - much to their own surprise, apparently - has confirmed our data about the level of radiation there."

"Now consider Los Angeles, a city of millions, which is located 500 kilometres from test sites in Nevada. The resort town of Las Vegas is only 100-160 kilometres away. Even so, this proximity doesn't cause the residents and tourists any concerns. Murmansk is 920 kilometres from our range. Archangel is 1100 kilometres away, and Naryan-Mar 620 kilometres away. And still they constantly suspect us of something..."

"So maybe the testing range should be opened to representatives from neighbouring regions? Let them see with their own eyes what the situation is like there?"

"We're doing just that. A group of people's deputies will be flying out there in the coming days. Do you want to fly along with us and examine the situation there following the test?"