

"In assuming that this would be the case, we tried to structure the questionnaire in such a way as to ascertain the population's main sources of information and knowledge. It revealed that people rely first and foremost on the opinions of others, that the people of Murmansk place their greatest degree of trust in the mass media, particularly local sources (33.3 percent). All other sources lag well behind. It is now clear who is creating stereotypes and myths in people's minds."

True, Valery Fedorovich qualified what he said: that was an assumption only. You will undoubtedly agree that it is difficult to suspect the mass media of deliberately stirring up fear. It is more likely the other way around: unskillful propaganda in favour of atomic energy has precisely the opposite effect. Furthermore, we do not have a systematic and competent information dissemination system as is the case, say, in the United States and Canada. The nuclear societies which have been set up there (non-governmental associations of engineers and scientists) do not in any way embellish the potential effects of atomic energy but achieve impressive results with their explanations: 81 percent of Americans are convinced of the importance of atomic energy and 76 percent of the population are in favour of increasing the AEC's share in the production of electrical energy. By comparison, only 54.7 percent of the people of Murmansk recognize that there is a genuine requirement for an atomic fleet. Unfortunately, many add the proviso: "As long as it's not in Murmansk."

Conclusions still remain to be drawn from the first mass survey of the population. It has given food for thought to the town's governing bodies, the directors of the "Atomflot" technical maintenance enterprise, the people's deputies and the townsfolk themselves. The results will be interpreted by the very sociologists who carried out the study, which incidentally, was financed by "Atomflot" itself. Summing up my knowledge of the results of the survey, O. Veretennikov, a staff member of "RAZUM," formulated the following basic proposition: the people must be told the truth about the atomic fleet and thereby have their peace of mind and confidence in the future restored. In actual fact, the devil is not as frightening as he is made out to be.