

Q. "Nevertheless, Gennady Evpat'evich, how can one reconcile the very existence of the nuclear testing range and the conduct of military tests there with the idea of a nuclear-free zone in Northern Europe which has been put forward by our government?"

A. "You know, I would break your question down into two separate ones. First, a nuclear test site is an institution and unit of the Ministry of Defence. Historically, the military exercise jurisdiction over it. But nuclear weapons are the property of the government of the country. Their inspection, improvement and testing are all planned by the government and are conducted in accordance with its decrees. And not only with a view to strengthening battle readiness, but also in the interests of basic scientific research. For the time being there are no other means of replicating the very intricate physical processes which take place in a nuclear explosion than in the conditions at the test site. It is no accident that at one time or another eminent Soviet physicists such as Yu. Izrael', E. Negin, M. Sadovsky, E. Fedorov and G. Tsytkov have visited and worked at Novaya Zemlya.

We fully support the proposal for a nuclear-free zone and are prepared to see it come about, although it will cost all of us very dearly. But I will say frankly that this is not entirely dependent on us or the countries of northern Europe, which are extremely interested in the idea. Other states must also refrain from carrying out nuclear tests--in particular, the United States of America--or at least agree with us to reduce them to the bare minimum in number and magnitude."

Q. "And how do things stand on the testing range today? What are its prospects for the future?"