

ENVIRONMENT

Destruction of Northern Taiga Threatens Native Populations

Aboriginal tribes of hunters and fishermen have lived in the Primorskiy Kray (Maritime Province) since ancient times. Further development of the traditional way of life of the Udegeys, Nanays and other local populations has, however, now become impossible. The main reason for this can be found in the barbaric logging practices common to the Ussuri taiga.

Over recent years a considerable area of forest in the Krasnoarmeysk region, lying close to Iman Udegey settlement areas, fell to the axe. The native inhabitants were forced to leave their village of Ostrovnoe and, scattered throughout the region, ceased to exist as an ethnic group.

Today it is the Samarga Udegeys, living in the village of Agzu in the Terney region, who are threatened. The Samarga Udegeys constitute the only territorial group which has safeguarded its traditional culture in a pure form. It would appear that nothing could endanger them. They live in distant regions accessible only by helicopter. Problems first surfaced, however, in the Khabarovsk Kray where Cuban loggers were conducting clear felling operations in the Sukpay river basin. They then began to feel the effects of the "Primorsklesprom" Association's logging operations in the Primorskiy Kray.

The USSR Ministry of the Timber Industry signed an agreement with Cuba on 16 January 1987