

government levels. Two union ministries - the Ministry of Railroads (MPS) and the Ministry for Building Heavy Machinery (Mintyazhmash) - convened more than one joint conference, formed expert commissions, issued joint directives...

And this is understandable. After all, shifting northern lines to a new generation of locomotives was supposed, according to their developers' intentions, to confer an enormous economic advantage. By increasing the weight of rolling stock, transport directors could reduce the number of trains and eliminate quite a number of train crews. Estimates were done on the amount of fuel that would be saved, on the increased throughput of rail lines...

But now that tests have essentially been completed, the engines turn out to be unnecessary. But let's examine a letter written by people who spent all these years testing the locomotive.

"The Pechora depot of the Northern Railroad," the letter says, "is a unique testing ground for new locomotives. It was here that the TE10 model locomotives, which are now operating successfully both in the Soviet Union and abroad, were run in and that the first 2TE116's were tested. But today the depot, on which technological progress in the industry largely depends, is operating with obsolete equipment..."

Tests of the 2TE121 8000-horsepower locomotives began in Pechora in 1983. Prior to November 1988 scarcely anyone other than the enthusiasts involved themselves in this. The Vorkuta Sector and the Northern Railroad administration could not be bothered about it. It was only at the end of 1988 that a separate shop was created at the depot or, more accurately, a work brigade was assigned to maintain the new locomotives. But even it had only half the team of specialists required. Some of these were then seeing this engine for the first time.

Nevertheless, it didn't take long for everyone to be convinced that setting up the special unit had had a positive effect on 2TE121 operations. The quality of repair work improved significantly, the locomotives' monthly runs had increased. Simultaneously, the technical skills level of maintenance brigades also went up.