

TRANSPORT - WATER

Railway Bottlenecks and Administrative Bungling Cause
Drop in Cargo Deliveries Destined for the Northern
Sea Route

The arctic navigation season is in full swing, but reports coming in from base ports of the Far East indicate that 100,000 tons less freight have been delivered there in comparison with last year. The western freight sector - Murmansk, Arkhangelsk and Kandalaksha - is also suffering. Here the shortfall in deliveries is 30,000 tons. This is a huge transport artery supplying virtually all of the North and Northeast of the country.

"How are northerners going to live and supply themselves in the winter?" This is the question I put to N.P. Tsakh, Deputy Minister of the USSR Maritime Fleet.

"The situation is serious," says Nikolai Petrovich. "I can't understand what the suppliers have in mind. The freight was prepared on time for the beginning of the navigation season. What we are transporting at the moment was delivered to the ports and embarked as early as June. The USSR Gosstab (State Committee for Material and Technical Supply) has the habit of disappointing us and others who count on the assistance of the maritime fleet during the navigation season.

The arctic fleet is not spoiled with sunshine and good weather. It is prepared for anything unexpected. Loading and unloading operations sometimes have to be performed as much as ten miles from shore. If it isn't waves, it's ice. In these working conditions you have to make allowance for surprises. It is easy to understand how a muddle in supplies could introduce anxiety into the work of the fleet.