

In these zones industrial activity will be sharply curtailed and the protected forests, rivers, meadows and moss glades will begin to serve the native peoples of the Tyumen Northland.

Efforts to designate these zones and prepare their status have been underway in the autonomous okrugs for a long time. Representatives of local soviets and the associations "Spasenie Yugry" (Save the Yugra) and "Yamal-potomkam" (Yamal for our Descendants) held round table discussions more than once with the heads of various agencies in the spheres of petroleum, geology, natural gas and forestry. Each section of these zones was discussed in detail and, despite the differing interests, it was possible more often than not to find a mutually acceptable compromise.

Nevertheless, the oblast executive committee meeting at which the decision was taken was stormy. In principle, everyone was for these special zones, which afford the native residents of the north the opportunity to practise their traditional pursuits - hunting, fishing and reindeer breeding. Industrial intrusion on the taiga and tundra has severely exacerbated the ecological situation. Seventeen million hectares of hunting ground alone have been taken out of use, and the local residents forced to move to the outermost limits of the okrugs.

Within these zones, however, are oil and gas deposits and large tracts of forest. Industry officials, of course, did not want to lose these resources. The representatives of the soviets explained to the agency officials that it was a question of the survival of the indigenous peoples of the North.

There were even arguments over terminology. One proposal was to call these areas zones of "traditional" rather than "precedential" nature use, or even "survival zones for indigenous inhabitants of the North."