

ARCTIC

Long Live My Beloved North

My northland is both great and unique. For 300,000 people representing more than 30 ethnically different native peoples, the North is their ancient environment, without which their life is unthinkable. These peoples have a history that covers many centuries and an ancient culture. They are a part of world civilization. The North has become the native region for millions of people of diverse nationalities who came here at different times from all parts of the country.

I believe in my northland and in its tomorrow. At the same time, I should and must state clearly that today it is in dire need of help and support from majority peoples. The current situation, to put it bluntly, is tragic. An intensive and barbaric industrial development of the North, aimed merely at short-term profit and directed by gluttonous ministries and government agencies, is destroying it.

Industrial "development" touches on the problem of international relations since it intrudes on the holy of holies for northern ethnic minorities - the very foundation of their traditional way of life. Millions of hectares of reindeer grazing land and hunting and trapping grounds are being destroyed. Wherever the reindeer moss is trampled, the reindeer disappear. Once the reindeer have gone, gone also will be the traditional way of life of northerners that has been carefully guarded for centuries. The same can also be said for hunting, which for northerners represents life, food and clothing. Without their traditional way of life they lose their national traditions, their identity and self-worth. They become nothing. This has already been a tragedy for entire peoples, and it is also a fact of current reality.