

approximately 4000 tonnes of fish were shipped out for sale, and the total catch used to be as much as 6000 tonnes. And nowadays? In 1986, only 22 tonnes were taken.

At "Komirybvod" (possibly "Komi Board of Fish Breeding") colourful posters hang on the walls with pictures of the Pechora's noble fish -- semga, nelma, pelyad, and white fish. I look at them and think: if we don't come to our senses, these pictures will end up in the Red Book. That's where things are headed, and this is confirmed by P. Cheberev, director of the 'Komirybprom' (Komi Commercial Fishing) Combine.

"Last year we delivered only 379 tonnes of fish," says Petr Vasil'yevich. "And that includes fish caught in distant tundra lakes ..."

The director is embarrassed and doesn't say much. The fact is that almost half of the combine's production consists of that same smoked capelin which I was served by the old Kolva fisherman. And so, what is happening to our "Mother" Pechora, which for us Komi people is like the Volga for Russians?

What is happening is that what once was the country's largest population of 'losos' is condemned to extinction. At the Ninth Party Congress, V. Melnikov, first secretary of the Komi Oblast Committee of the Communist Party, spoke with alarm about one of the causes. Here are his words: "Only here, in the Soviet Union, is it possible to stretch a metal net across several kilometers in the lower reaches of the Pechora River and claim that this was done in order to increase the number of fish."