

Half of the Archangel diamonds are of gem quality (a great rarity). Selling them abroad as raw diamonds would be criminal. If we were to produce the (finished) gems it would ease the hard currency situation: even the smallest stones are 200 to 300 times more valuable than an equal weight of gold. And the largest are hundreds of thousands of times more valuable. Why can't we cut them ourselves? For the diamond, if one pays attention to its magical properties, sharpens the wits. I think that foreign partners could also be found for this business. The alternative is to continue to trudge along this road paved not with concrete and asphalt but with potholes. And that we continue to indulge merely in cerebral contemplation of our projects: "On this lake we will build a recreation centre for diamond miners." Levchenko drew a brave picture of the future, but my vision of this future was dimmed by the issues, unresolved by the government, which are keeping the wagon at a standstill.

Archangel is striving to have its own independent diamond works. True, many people are talking about this, but the specialists are not attracted. Nobody wants to live in a suitcase for along period of time, but we are no closer to getting away from the system whereby people are dislodged and deprived of what is in the end of the most important thing - a secure and permanent corner they can call their own. Hospitals, shacks, tents, railroad cars... Clearly, these diamonds have been something of a calamity for local authorities. Construction of an ore-dressing combine will be disruptive to the ecology and this worries the local population. What particularly concerns the coastal residents is the fate of the salmon in the Zolotitsa and of the pine forests which approach the White Sea. In an effort to save the river, it is to be diverted somewhat along a short section through an earthwork canal. Plans have also been drawn up for a fish hatchery. New diamond mining technology, it was explained to me, eliminates all chemicals, but I say to myself that the "Greens", who are zealously engaged in saving the fragile northern ecology, need to keep a sharp lookout and demand that the Main Administration of the Diamond and Gold Industry (Glavalmazoloto), operate with complete openness.