

In his presentation Professor Ch.M. Taksami, chairman of the congress organizing committee, noted that the ethnic minorities had made significant progress during the years of Soviet power. Many of these peoples have acquired their own written language and created a national intelligentsia. Nevertheless, in recent decades northern peoples have come up against serious difficulties connected primarily with a haphazard exploitation of natural resources. Opportunities for northern people to practice traditional pursuits - hunting, fishing and reindeer breeding - have diminished. Environmental conditions for all indigenous peoples have been spoiled. Due to a large influx of people from other regions they have become a minority on their own ancient lands.

It would be appropriate, the speaker feels, for the RSFSR Supreme Soviet to examine a package of draft legislation calling for the formation of new autonomous okrugs and national raions, of rural and village soviets, with simultaneous expansion of their rights; a guaranteed representation of northern peoples in local and higher legislative and executive bodies, including introducing quotas on deputy positions for the representatives of all ethnic groups; the creation of a two-chamber system in autonomous and okrug soviets; and the establishment in regions with mixed population of permanent commissions on inter-ethnic relations with veto power over decisions that contradict the national interests of northern ethnic minorities.

A.A. Khomyakov, deputy chairman of the RSFSR Council of Ministers and chairman of RSFSR Gosplan, presented a proposal for a comprehensive program of further economic and cultural development of northern minority peoples for the period 1991 - 1995 and up to the year 2005.