

We Won't Let Them Steal Our River

Thoughtless oilfield workers set the Ob'River "on fire"

This paper has already written about the fate of the northern river Sob', when we published the Urals diary of Sergei Solov'ev, the leader of the Sovets'aya Rossiya polar expedition. What has happened this summer compels us to return to the same theme.

On the seventh of June, 1988, a group of citizens met spontaneously at the settlement of Katrovozh in the Yamalo-Nenets Okrug (Tyumen' Olbast). It was hard to recognize the quiet, laconic residents of the settlement. In fact, Katrovozh was seething, boiling with emotion and with rage. Even shouts of "Hey, guys, grab your shotguns and go down to the river bank. We won't let anyone pass!" rang out.

The gathering decided on the following: "Between 1984 through 1988 the inhabitants of Katrovozh repeatedly appealed to various authorities, all the way up to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, proposing that the dredging of sand and gravel mix from the River Sob' be stopped. However, not a single authority replied to our appeals. Therefore, the inhabitants of the settlement henceforth reserve the right to block the passage of vessels arriving to collect gravel."

At the start of the shipping season, a group of ships from the river port of Salekhard sailed up the Ob' River to the Sob'. Not far from the mouth of the latter the ships had to cast anchor, for a boom barrier was stretched across the river. In the ripples along the banks boats full of children bobbed