

And he has the job of developing construction there - cities, quarries, recreation areas, roads... I still see no evidence that the government is heeding the urgent demands of the times. We asked the oblast committee of the CPSU for a favour, and now we are into our third hour creeping along a dirt road that would daunt the devil himself. Mikhail Lomonosov probably had it easier in his wagon trains hurrying to Arkhangelsk for the auctions. They creaked past these very woods, and it was about this same region that the coastal peasant and brilliant Russian scientist would write: "I have concluded that there is an abundance of natural wealth in the Earth's interior in the Far North." He roundly berated these who, as in our own time, asserted that diamonds could not be found under these geological conditions and there was no reason even to look for them here. The deposit we are travelling to is named for M.V. Lomonosov.

Astrologists say that we Russians came from the North Star. Personally, it does have a home-like glow about it for me that is somehow mysteriously beckoning. I am sure that in answering its call we will make many more discoveries in the North and that to the five diamond-bearing pipes of the Archangel region we will add the main ones, which the geologists are already groping for.

"We consider these the 'tail'. Further along we should find the mother lode," Luchnikov said to me. "So far we've just located the offspring."

At these words my heart was delighted. And suddenly I was seized by the thought: "Maybe we are holding back on this matter out of a concern about adding more on - there's no way we can cope with five pipes." Even if you don't see or sense the very real present-day concerns, you can't help but think about how we squander our riches. Shall we be selling raw diamonds again? And will others, outside the country, cut them and turn them into gems? It is as if we didn't know the value of precious stones.