

Poor aerial skidders! Suddenly they were discovered to have so many defects that they were rapidly withdrawn from the felling areas, and shortly afterwards, ceased to be manufactured at all. By a sweetheart deal between consumers (loggers), developers, designers and manufactures they were soon declared expendable. Meanwhile, to the applause of short-sighted specialists, their successful rival, having mastered the more abundant sectors, climbed higher and higher into the mountains, further still from the roads. Snaking their way around steep hairpin bends, the TT-4s climbed onto cliffs where as yet untouched trees stood. Now they were able to drag timber over distances of two or three kilometres. Expenses grew, output fell and it cost more to produce a "cubic". Only then did the Krasnodar timber people announce to the country that the felling sites were becoming exhausted. Kind uncles in Moscow verified the claim and reduced the logging volume. Thus, from 4 million cubic metres it fell initially to 2 million, with another drastic cut to follow. And again the lament: felling sites are becoming scarce.

But where were they becoming scarce? In the more accessible areas. Higher up, on the steep slopes, far removed from the roads, overmature giant trees are continuing to die while still standing, trees which might have yielded a further million cubic metres of excellent timber.

It was the Kuban' people who were the first to notice that for 10 to 15 years the mountain forests had been in a disastrous state, that irreparable damage had been inflicted on the environment of the Krasnodar Krai as a whole. Along the slit-like trenches formed by the treads of the TT-4s and along newly formed river beds, pouring