

This is how the Director of the Freight and Commercial Operations Service of the Ob'-Irtysk River Steamship Line, B. Smolyakov, describes the situation:

"On October 29th, 1987, the State Supply Committee of the USSR Council of Ministers decreed that 1,085,000 tonnes of freight should be accumulated during the period between shipping seasons at the riverside agency centres alone. However, by the 1st May only slightly more than half this amount had been stockpiled. Among those who lagged behind in their deliveries to Tobol'sk, Labytnangi and Sergino were the Ministry of Oil and Gas Industry Construction Works and the Ministry of Ural and Siberian Construction Works. The USSR Ministry of Geology delivered only 65,000 tonnes of the the 225,000 tonnes of freight they were expected to ship to the rivermen."

The shipping season has begun in the Ob'-Irtysk basin. The rivermen are moving out the freight which built up over the winter, while rail shipments are hardly moving at all. So, are the ships supposed to set out empty? There is one solution: to put some financial pressure on the guilty parties. But that's been tried already. In the first quarter of the year the Sverdlovsk railway Administration had to pay out one hundred and one thousand roubles. However, this fining system did not eliminate the transport mess. The railway men quickly passed the cost of the fines on to the suppliers of the freight. And everyone is satisfied, except, of course, the rivermen. The freight has never arrived on time, after all, and it still doesn't.

Now it is the turn of the State Supply Committee of the USSR Council of Ministers. Incidentally, on the twelfth of May an urgent message was sent to the committee, to the Deputy Chairman, B. Yakovlev. He acted also in the name of the USSR Minister of Railways, N.