

My electors in the Allaikha Raion in Yakutiya have written to me about the urgent need to resurrect the abandoned Even village of Oetung. I can't read the lines of these letters, written straight from the heart, and remain calm:

"In 1970 we Evens, the native residents of the former village of Oetung, Allaikha Raion, Yakut ASSR, were driven out from our native settlement where we had lived for centuries. The reason given: lack of long-term prospects. The lesser half of the residents of Oetung were transported, against their will, to the village of Olenegorsk, while the greater half were taken to the raion centre Chokurdakh... In their new locations some of the Evens failed to get work and housing, and this issue has not been fully resolved even today. The Oetung hunting grounds, reindeer pastures and fisheries, which served the Evens while they were living there, are not orphaned... During the 20 years of this terrible forced existence our fellow natives failed to find themselves a place for sustained existence. There was never a solution to the issue of providing housing and permanent work for the former reindeer herders, fishermen and hunters.

The Evens have started to forget their native language, their culture, their age-old traditions and good customs.

Without blaming anyone for our past suffering or stirring up the past, in April 1990 the Evens overcame mighty obstacles thrown up by the command bureaucracy and, themselves, organized a self-financing independent cooperative, the 'Oetung', at the Allaikhovskii Sovkhoz as a way of putting right the errors cited above. The Even population of the entire raion greeted the organization of the cooperative with great approval and with the hope of resurrecting their native village of Oetung and its historic past..."

I feel it is my duty to give my full and complete support to the Evens of Oetung. With the transition to a market system, Oetung should acquire the legal right to an independent existence and renewal of the people's traditional way of life.