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Sovetskaya Rossiya
10 October 1990
Page 5 (full text)

ENVIRONMENT

Industrial Pollution Brings Karelian Region to
Brink of Environmental Disaster

A large group of specialists has arrived from Moscow to study the most ecologically disadvantaged region of Karelia - near the cities of Segozha and Medvoitsy. Industrial emissions, especially from the local pulp and

ANTARCTIC

Flying Laboratory Leaves for the Antarctic

An Il-18D aircraft, which left yesterday from Pulkovo airport, will be making a transcontinental flight to the Molodezhnaya Antarctic station along the route Leningrad - Aden - Maputu. The plane is delivering a new polar team and mail to the frozen continent. This flight marks the beginning of the 36th Soviet Antarctic Expedition. The main task of the present program is to study the sub-glacial relief in shore areas of the Antarctic from Molodezhnaya to the area of the Novolazarevskaya station. The Il-18D will be used as a kind of flying laboratory. Since American scientists will be carrying out observations together with Soviet researchers, in late October the plane will fly to the American station McMurdo. Operating from there, scientists from the two countries will conduct a number of flights over the Ross Ice Shelf and Trans-Antarctic mountains.

Following completion of its research program the aircraft will return to Leningrad in the second half of November.

Sovetskaya Rossiya

10 October 1990

Page 5 (full text)

ENVIRONMENT

Industrial Pollution Brings Karelian Region to
Brink of Environmental Disaster

A large group of specialists has arrived from Moscow to study the most ecologically disadvantaged region of Karelia - near the cities of Segezha and Nadvoitsy. Industrial emissions, especially from the local pulp and

paper combine and the Nadvoitsy aluminum plant, have brought the region to the brink of environmental disaster. Comprehensive studies to analyze the water, atmosphere and soil are planned for an area of 1200 square kilometres.

Vodnyi transport
13 October 1990
page 1 (full text)

City of Archangel Declared a Nuclear-Free Zone

A session of the city soviet has decided to declare Archangel a nuclear free zone. From now on, all enterprises, organizations and citizens are forbidden to manufacture, import, transport or place any goods or materials containing radioactive elements within the limits of the city without permission from the Archangel Council of People's Deputies. All existing sources of radioactive radiation are subject to compulsory registration with the Committee on Nature Protection.

Gudok
25 October 1990
Page 1 (full text)

Dumping of Chemical Wastes at Krasnyi Bor Potentially Hazardous to Leningrad and Nearby Communities

The Leningrad television program "From Knowledgeable Sources" (Iz kompetentnykh istochnikov) showed the hitherto secret Krasnyi Bor range, which is the dumping site for all sorts of toxic wastes.

The range has no facilities at all. Without any permit system and without any provision for accounting trucks loaded with mercury, lead and various other chemical wastes and poisons drive onto the site in broad daylight and simply pile all of the stuff together.

Nobody knows what chemical reaction might occur there or how it might endanger not only the nearby villages and towns but also the multi-million population of Leningrad. And meanwhile, the range is giving off poisonous vapours. In the village of Krasnyi Bor, which is only 2 kilometres from the site, poultry are dying and children are becoming ill.

Gudok

30 October 1990

Page 1 (full text)

Details of a Nuclear Test In the Novaya Zemlya Area

Of course, I would prefer to report that the wish had come true which all of us who participated in one experiment to monitor underground nuclear blasts had written on the seismogram that captured the underground echo of an event half way round the world from us: "Let's hope it's the last."

This was in 1986 at the Northern Kazakhstan Seismographic Station. I have kept this document all this time, even though our hopes have not been fully realized. This year alone the USA has already tested seven new types of nuclear weapons; France has tested four, and China two. Up to this time the Soviet Union has not tested any.

Let's be frank, however awkward that may seem. To go on being "silent" under these conditions would mean falling behind in the modern level of armaments and would place the security of the country at risk. But it is also easy to predict that the reaction to this event, both abroad and in our own country, will be mixed. And, as has become normal of late, it will give rise to all sorts of conjectures and rumours. For that reason, basing myself on the increasingly strong principles of "glasnost", I requested permission to witness the blast, if possible, so that I could report honestly on everything that I saw and heard.

On this first occasion the closest I could get to the event was the office of Vice-Admiral G. Zolotukhin, head of one of the naval administrations. Also present besides my host, was a group of specialists who had prepared the test. For it was here that all of the data were to come in concerning events on the Novaya Zemlya nuclear testing range. In the period before "zero hour" my new acquaintances were not particularly talkative.

It's easy to understand why: their attention is focused on that deep, tightly sealed shaft under the mountain where "the product" is now resting quietly; on the numerous instruments of the "Splav" automatic system surrounding it which are supposed to give the experimenters information on pressure, radiation, direction of air current, and other results of the blast; and on the external remote automated radiation monitoring system known as "Tunets" (tunny-fish). And, of course, on their comrades - the theoretical physicists, the people who designed "the product", and the range personnel - who are now on Novaya Zemlya. With the approach of "zero hour" helicopters lift lightly off the ground and ships are on full alert; for if anything happens the people must be evacuated immediately. A weapon is a weapon, and an experimental one all the more so. And it has already been in the shaft a long time for various reasons, including waiting for the weather at sea. The wind must carry a radioactive cloud out to sea if it should suddenly develop.

"Silence," says the admiral. "Fire!"

And after several minutes have elapsed we hear the report:

"Test successful. Initial data indicate situation normal."

The admiral now busies himself with reports to "topside". People are telling me that on the testing range they are examining data from numerous sensors, that helicopters are circling above the mountain measuring atmospheric parameters, and, above them, a specially equipped aircraft is doing the same thing.

And now comes the detailed report. From all the data I choose that which is most important for the moment: the level of radioactivity is no higher than the natural background.

"Did you hear that?" the admiral asks. "That is a routine report. It hasn't been touched up for the press, as some people like to accuse us of doing. Clearly, of course, a military testing range is not a place to go for an evening stroll. We have some specially designated protected zones there which, incidentally, are mainly left over from above-ground tests. But I and other comrades here served on the range for several years and raised children here. You can't imagine that we are enemies to ourselves and would have kept silent if the radiation situation had got out of control."

"Yes, I understand the concern of the people in the areas closest to the testing range," he continues. "The environmental situation there is worrying. But you have to make a distinction, surely, between the effects of the testing range and careless economic activity. And finally, I'd like to say one more thing. The uninvited Greenpeace expedition to Novaya Zemlya - much to their own surprise, apparently - has confirmed our data about the level of radiation there."

"Now consider Los Angeles, a city of millions, which is located 500 kilometres from test sites in Nevada. The resort town of Las Vegas is only 100-160 kilometres away. Even so, this proximity doesn't cause the residents and tourists any concerns. Murmansk is 920 kilometres from our range. Archangel is 1100 kilometres away, and Naryan-Mar 620 kilometres away. And still they constantly suspect us of something..."

"So maybe the testing range should be opened to representatives from neighbouring regions? Let them see with their own eyes what the situation is like there?"

"We're doing just that. A group of people's deputies will be flying out there in the coming days. Do you want to fly along with us and examine the situation there following the test?"

Of course I want to. And so, the next report will be directly from Noyaya Zemlya.

Pravda

26 October 1990

Pages 1 and 6 (full text)

Loud Echo of a "Silent" Blast

As has become the custom since the "period of stagnation", within a matter of days the entire mass media published the following short news item transmitted through TASS channels. "On October 24, 1990, at 18:00 hours Moscow time, an underground nuclear test was conducted in the Soviet Union on a range in the Novaya Zemlya region. The explosion had a force of between 20 and 150 kilotonnes and was aimed at verifying the reliability and improving the safety of a nuclear weapon. The radiation situation in the area of the test is normal."

At the very least this last sentence raises a number of questions. To be frank, the public - which since Chernobyl has been suffering from an allergy to things nuclear - is skeptical.

Who set off the blast and how? Who monitored the explosion and the "situation" which has been termed "normal" without presenting any evidence, and how did they do it? These are some of the questions that soon began flooding into the editors.

A telegram was received at Izvestiya: "A nuclear explosion has been set off on the Novaya Zemlya range. The residents of the village of Amderma were warned about the explosion with admirable timeliness - a day and a half after it happened... Weather analyses indicate that underground nuclear explosions could result in fallout being carried to the Nentsy tundra, the Yugorskii Peninsula and the Yamal Peninsula... (Signed) - Ganchurin, weather forecaster, deputy of the village soviet."

The echo from this event has even reached the capital. Nikolai Vorontsov, Chairman of the USSR State Committee on the Environment (Goskompriroda), addressed a session of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet.

"As a matter of fact," he noted, "the Soviet Union has not officially declared any sort of moratorium. So this explosion does not constitute a violation, from the legal point of view. Over a period of 11 months the USSR did not test any nuclear weapons either on the Semipalatinsk or the Novaya Zemlya ranges. It is also known that local authorities in the Archangel Oblast have repeatedly expressed their protests against conducting tests on Novaya Zemlya."

After this followed a sensational admission by the official: "I wish to declare that the environmental protection agencies were given no advance notice of the impending nuclear weapon test and we did not monitor the situation in any way."

Mr. Vorontsov also expressed his opinion that such explosions could be dangerous for the environment.

"I hope," he said, "that there has been no substantial increase in the radiation level as a result of this test. We do know, however, that Novaya Zemlya has suffered substantial damage as result of a series of nuclear explosions... The governments of northern countries have appealed to us more than once not to conduct such tests there. Of course, we are hampered by the fact that the Americans continue to test nuclear weapons at the Nevada test site. This is a fact. But it is also a fact the tests in North America are being carried out with the agreement of local officials in the State of Nevada. As for Novaya Zemlya, there has been no such agreement from authorities in the Archangel Oblast or from the parliament or government of Russia."

What other threats do we face from these explosions? At the present time there are successful developments in cooperation between the USSR and northern countries, an agreement in principle has been reached on obtaining a highly favourable, virtually interest-free

credit for converting a number of large enterprises into environmentally clean facilities. To put it bluntly, we are talking about half a billion (!) dollars in investments in the industry of Murmansk Oblast.

"On Monday," Mr. Vorontsov noted with disappointment, "I am to meet, as the head of a Soviet delegation, with ministers of the environment of northern countries and bank representatives in Helsinki. We will be discussing there their environmental assistance in solving problems of the Baltic Sea and the North. You can just imagine how we are going to look at this meeting following a nuclear test."

In conclusion, the Chairman of Goskompriroda stated: "I am absolutely convinced that this nuclear test is just one more attack on the President from the military-industrial complex. I don't envy Mikhail Sergeevich, who is supposed to receive the Nobel Prize for Peace in Oslo in December. How will he look at this meeting now that these tests have been conducted?"

Unfortunately, we can give no clear answer to this question. But the parliamentarians of Russia have prepared their response, the essence of which is a ban on the practice of "silent" explosions.

Izvestiya
26 October 1990
Page 2 (full text)

In the Central Arctic a Mounting Wave of Public Protests
Over All Forms of Radioactivity

At a recent meeting in Dudinka someone was heard to say: "All of these ships, aircraft and helicopters are potential carriers of radioactive contamination."

Residents of this arctic port city were protesting against the existence of a nuclear testing range on Novaya Zemlya.

The Atomic Spectre of Novaya Zemlya. In October 1989 Dudinka and Norilsk were suddenly swamped with rumours that radioactive potatoes were being unloaded from the motor vessel "Yurii Arshenevskii", which was currently docked in Dudinka. The reason for this was said to be that the ship has passed close to Novaya Zemlya while nuclear tests were being conducted there and had received a heavy dose of radiation. Local newspaper people and personnel from the okrug sanitation and epidemiological station conducted a joint check: dosimeters showed a normal radioactive level.

But as it turned out, the rumours were not unfounded. The "Yurii Arshenevskii" had indeed encountered radioactive fallout following a nuclear blast on the Novaya Zemlya nuclear testing range, but this had happened a year earlier. Still, these explosions are continuing and it cannot be excluded that radioactive contamination could be "delivered" by ships, planes or helicopters to Dudinka, Norilsk, Dikson and to towns of the Taimyr.

Novaya Zemlya was converted into a nuclear test range in 1954. The archipelago's aboriginal inhabitants - the Nentsy - were not consulted. It is true, of course, that the famous Nenets Tyko Vylka, "President of Novaya Zemlya", signed a paper giving approval in the name of the town soviet, but everyone understands how these things were done in those days. The nuclear testing range occupies 90,200 square kilometres, of which 55,000 are on land (the entire archipelago occupies an area of 83,000 square kilometres). More than a hundred tests have been conducted there.

Now, as a result of sharp public protests it is being proposed that some of the nuclear explosions be transferred from the Semipalatinsk test site to Novaya Zemlya. The Ministry of Defence is seeking to calm the protesting inhabitants of the Nentsy Autonomous Okrug and adjoining arctic regions with assurances about the safety of the Novaya Zemlya range and with promises about additional measures to protect the public. In response there has sprung up the broad-based popular movement "For a Nuclear Free North", and in Archangel the committee "Novaya Zemlya - Nevada" has been created. Protest meetings have been held in Archangel, Salekhard, Naryan-Mar, Dudinka, Norilsk and other populated centres.

Residents of the Scandinavian countries are also alarmed. The Norwegians, for example, are speaking about the possibility of a complete break in relations with the Soviet Union if there are more nuclear tests on Novaya Zemlya.

In November, 1989, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR commissioned the Council of Ministers to examine the question of the impact of Novaya Zemlya nuclear tests on neighbouring regions and to produce, by the end of 1990, draft legislation on the Use of Atomic Energy and Nuclear Safety.

Barge Carrier - "The Flying Dutchman". In the summer of last year the residents of Dudinka strongly objected to a visit to their port by the new nuclear powered icebreaker "Taimyr", which was designed for operation on the river portion of the Murmansk - Dudinka line. This came as a complete surprise to the directors of the Murmansk Maritime Steamship Line and the Ministry of the Maritime Fleet, who had learned nothing from their recent unpleasant experience with the first nuclear powered transport vessel, the "Sevmorput".

This nuclear powered barge carrier has a triple protective shield around the nuclear reactor which is capable of withstanding direct ramming by a large ship, colliding with submerged rocks, or being struck by a "Boeing" type airplane. It has ingenious "fail-safe devices." The nuclear installation shuts itself off in the event "something" should happen.

None of this was known to the residents of Vladivostok, Nakhodka and Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskii when early in 1989 the barge carrier, after transporting cargo from Odessa to Vietnam, headed in their direction. Being strongly affected by the Chernobyl tragedy, they demanded that the "Sevmorput" be prohibited from entering their ports. It was also refused entry to the Chukotka port of Egvekinot. The losses, which amounted to hundreds of thousands of rubles, were mounting when they simply invited journalists and representatives of the public to come aboard, who became convinced that the ship was safe and ecologically sound.

The Taimyr Against the "Taimyr". Nuclear powered icebreakers have been visiting Dikson seaport for 30 years and there hasn't been a single accident during this time. But this fact did not convince the inhabitants of the Taimyr Autonomous Okrug, who were quick to dub the nuclear powered "Taimyr" a "floating Chernobyl". The people were assured that the icebreaker was safe: that the physics and design of its reactor totally precluded a Chernobyl type accident. And how will a transport link be assured between villages on the two shores of the river, which are separated by an icebreaker channel in winter? Agriculture in the obrug is suffering millions of rubles in losses every year as a result of this.

Under pressure from the public, the Okrug Party Committee and the Okrug Executive Committee took the decision not to permit the "Taimyr" to penetrate inside the Taimyr region without comprehensive scientific study of the possible consequences. A high-level delegation of specialists from the Taimyr region and Krasnoyarsk were dispatched to Murmansk and conducted an environmental assessment of the vessel. They signed a protocol about studying the possible consequences of operating the "Taimyr" on the Enisei and about studies, financed by the Ministry of the Maritime Fleet and the concern "Norilskii Nikel", on the winter navigation season and its impact on the environment and economy of the Taimyr Autonomous Okrug. In December permission was given for the icebreaker to make one trial run to Dudinka, where a large number of residents were allowed to come aboard and tour the ship. Permission was then given for the "Taimyr" to make test runs on the Enisei.

Shortly thereafter, however, under the prevailing difficult ice conditions in the Kara Sea, the nuclear powered icebreakers "Sibir" and "Taimyr" collided, although their operational state was not affected. And then, early in 1990 the Taimyr residents forwarded a demand to the USSR Supreme Soviet: although the design of the nuclear powered vessel limits the chances of an accident to one in a million, such an accident could happen - there being no guarantees to the contrary - and for that reason it was necessary to ban the use of nuclear powered ships on the Enisei until the results of comprehensive, authoritative and independent studies had been received.

Four Minutes of Nuclear Danger. The fears of the Taimyr residents were not, it appears, without foundation. On November 11, 1988, an error by the chief physicist aboard the nuclear powered icebreaker "Rossiya" while docked in the port of Murmansk resulted in a serious breach of reactor operational safety standards which might have led to a nuclear accident. The nuclear threat lasted four minutes.

The principal cause was human error. In the atomic fleet the human factor is extremely important. At the same time, poor working and living conditions, pay and social services result in a high turnover in skilled personnel. In June 1990 this led to a two-hour warning strike within the nuclear fleet. The ship-board strike committees were not dismissed. On September 6, 1990, the nuclear powered icebreakers again came to a halt on the Northern Sea Route. This time the seamen, who had long demanded adjustments in the pay system (the issuing of cheques in hard currency), declared a day-long work stoppage and threatened to shut down the reactors the next day if the government did not meet their demands. Only then was an order signed satisfying the seamen's demands.

Willy-nilly, ice reconnaissance helicopter crews from Murmansk who operate from nuclear powered ships were also among the strikers.

While it is acknowledged that further exploitation of the Northern Sea Route is unthinkable without nuclear powered icebreakers, the design and construction of these ships fall short of modern engineering standards. The Ministry of the Maritime Fleet has acknowledged that nuclear ships are being placed in service which are obsolescent even before construction is complete.

X-rays of the Enisei. 'Glasnost' has enabled the residents of Krasnoyarsk to suddenly discover that construction was underway nearby on a subterranean storage site for liquid radioactive wastes (in the form of a tunnel beneath the Enisei) and on a chemical isotope plant for reprocessing spent nuclear reactor slugs. In response to stormy public protests construction was halted, and then cancelled in 1989.

This is the so-called Building Site No 27. It is located near a city which was closed to the public until recently and which journalists have dubbed "Atomgrad". The main industry here is nuclear. Cooling water in the once-through nuclear reactors of the mining and chemical combine passes through a radioactive zone and is then discharged into the Enisei. For over 30 years this radioactive water, although treated according to standards, has been contaminating the river. Although specialists at the mining and chemical combine claim that the industrial effluents represent no serious danger for the Enisei and organisms in the river, gamma radiation in the river exceeds background levels by a factor of 6 to 8.

A little over 400 kilometers downstream on the Enisei radioactivity has been found to be up to 100 microroentgens per hour (the natural background radiation is 10 - 15 microroentgens). In the vicinity of Lesosibirsk and Eniseisk the background radiation exceeds normal background levels by 10 to 14-fold. In these same areas, and further downstream, radioactive unconsolidated silty deposits have been found to be widespread.

All of this was determined by two fact-finding expeditions involving specialists from Leningrad, the Krasnoyarsk Research Centre, and the State Committee for the Environment (Goskompriroda). The lower reaches of the Enisei have not been examined as yet.

Yes, production of nuclear charges at the mining and chemical combine has ended, and the facility has converted to production of fuel for nuclear power stations. Two industrial reactors must be withdrawn from service in 1995, and a third in the year 2000. And the operating levels of the reactors have been reduced by 20% of the capacity. But the silty deposits downstream in the Enisei are reaching radioactive levels of 600-800 microroentgens, and at times 1000 or more.

As early as 1972 an American ship found radionuclides inside the 12-mile zone of the Kara Sea. According to specialists, these fragmentary data lead one to conclude that radioactive sandy-silty sediments can be expected in the floodplain of the Enisei over a distance of more than 2500 kilometers. What is needed is extensive environmental study of the radioactivity in the entire Enisei River basin.

The residents of the Krasnoyarsk northland are in the nature of hostages of two unseen nuclear monsters. In the foreground we have the ostensibly safe nuclear powered icebreakers and actual nuclear blasts on the Novaya Zemlya testing range. Behind is the remote Atomgrad near Krasnoyarsk, whose radioactive industrial wastes are being carried by the Enisei all the way to the Kara Sea.

Vozdushnyi transport

4 October 1990

Page 3 (full text)

Scandinavian Countries Open Major Line of Credit
for Use in Atmospheric Clean Up on Kola Peninsula

Prime Minister Harri Holkeri of Finland has notified his colleagues - the heads of the governments of Norway and Sweden - about agreements reached in Helsinki with the Soviet Union in the sphere of environmental protection. It has been confirmed that these governments will give us a major joint credit worth up to 3 billion Finnish marks to clean up the air on the Kola Peninsula.

Environmental pollution is a problem which constantly clouds our relations with Finland and certain other northern countries. Various estimates indicate that a third of the forests in the vast expanses of Lapland could perish from harmful emissions from the Kola Peninsula. Not so long ago, when environmental "glasnost" was not in favour in our country, all of the specialists' arguments and the calls from politicians in this neighbouring country were met merely with optimistic assurances. In admitting the truth to the Finns, and then to the Norwegians and Swedes, we admitted it first and foremost to ourselves. We admitted it and were horrified. Over 500,000 tonnes of sulphur dioxides are discharged into the atmosphere every year by enterprises of Nikel and Monchegorsk alone. All of these death-dealing clouds are poisoning first of all our land, our people. A report

entitled "There Are No Boundaries in the Environment" (Izvestiya no. 233) spoke about unacceptable delays in practical implementation of environmental agreements signed during M.S. Gorbachev's visit to Finland last year.

Implementation of these agreements will require enormous financial resources. And these resources have now been found. Considering the serious environmental situation in our country and our own interests first of all (the environment truly does not know any boundaries!) Finland, Norway and Sweden will give us credits, as Mr. Holkeri stated, on extremely favourable terms. The premier promised to "open the parentheses" later when specialists begin implementing the decisions adopted at the political level.

One of the enterprises - "Pechenga-Nikel" (whose emissions total 270,000 to 280,000 tonnes of sulphur dioxides per year) - is to undergo radical reconstruction, based on technology developed by the Finnish firm "Outokumpu" which has been adopted in 36 countries, including Japan and the USA. The Soviet concern "Norilsk-Nikel" is a business partner of "Outokumpu". The favourable conditions involve using nickel - the finished product of the renovated combine - to repay the credits.

According to Olaf Urvas, director of the "Outokumpu" combine, there is a feeling of confidence that sulphur emissions at "Pechenga-Nikel" will be reduced by a factor of almost 15 by 1994, as planned.

The Finnish technology will also be implemented for a portion of the production in Monchegorsk, and the emissions there will be greatly reduced as a result.

Mr. Urvas emphasized that the firm used to merely supply equipment to the USSR and supervise installation. Now, reciprocal deliveries will bind the metallurgical workers of the two countries even more closely. The firm actively sought this order. But the dimensions of the work that lies ahead are a little daunting: how will all of this be managed?

"We know the foreign trade organizations of the USSR quite well," Mr. Urvas confided in me. "The negotiations that lie ahead will be very complicated. But we hope that the deal will nevertheless be mutually advantageous and profitable."

Something is appearing in Soviet-Finnish relations that we had started to forget about - a dimensionality in joint projects. For the Soviet part the agreement was signed at the intergovernmental level by V. Doguzhiev, chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers' State Commission on Emergency Situations. It was emphasized that the two sides had taken as their starting point the necessity of "an urgent cleanup" of the environment in the region of the Kola Peninsula.

Izvestiya

10 October 1990

Page 4 (full text)

OIL AND GAS

Novosibirsk Begins Receiving Gas Piped from Tyumen Fields

On the eve of winter the flow of gas to Novosibirsk has increased. Yesterday enterprises in the city received the first few million cubic meters of fuel through the natural gas pipeline which stretches from the northern deposits of Western Siberia to the industrial centres in the southern parts of the region. The underground line begins in Surgut and passes through Tyumen and Omsk. From Novosibirsk it will be extended to the Kuzbass.

It was not the fault of the gas field workers that the southern regions of Western Siberia were for many years under supplied with natural gas. Novosibirsk Oblast, for example, received only 10-15% of the "blue fuel" it needed. Rural residents, in particular, suffered from shortages of gas.

With the startup of the new pipeline the rate of gasification will pick up. Plans call for laying approximately 1500 kilometers of gas lines in rural areas and to bring the fuel to 250 populated centres.

Sovetskaya Russiya

9 October 1990

Page 4 (full text)

SOCIOLOGICAL ISSUES

Trade Union Conference on Socioeconomic Conditions in the North Beginning to Bear Fruit

The RSFSR Council of Ministers, in carrying out the decisions of the Murmansk Regional Trade Union Conference on Social and Economic Problems of the North, has adopted the decree: "On the Regulations for Compensating Citizens Living in the North."

In commenting on this event, V.I. Romanov, chairman of the commission which is monitoring implementation of the decisions of the Murmansk conference, deputy chairman of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia and People's Deputy of the USSR, stated: "This is one of the first concrete results of the constructive dialogue between the trade union centre and the government of Russia."

But this doesn't mean that the decree will solve all of the problems of the North. Work on these problems is continuing. For example, under the leadership of Yu. Skokov, First Deputy Chairman of the RSFSR Council of Ministers, the commission has virtually completed the work of preparing a draft of the RSFSR Council of Ministers' resolution: "On Measures to Regulate Economic and Social Relations in Northern Regions of the RSFSR during the period of the transition to a market." Among those active

in preparing this draft resolution were representatives of ministries and government agencies of Russia, members of the commission monitoring fulfillment of decisions of the Murmansk conference, trade union and Soviet workers, and specialists from Northern regions and the East. The draft is slated to be reviewed during the first days of November.

In addition, to continue work on solving problems of the North a decision has been taken to hold the second stage of an inter-regional trade union conference on social and economic problems of the North on November 21-22 in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskii.

Sovetskaya Rossiya

27 October 1990

Page 3 (full text)

TRANSPORT-RAIL

Some Details of the Abandoned Salekhard - Igarka Railroad Construction Project

When you look at it from a helicopter, it all seems real and up to date - rails, semaphores, stations, trackwalkers' houses. But once you have landed and come up close you see the devastation and ruin, you understand that there is no longer anything there. It's all in the past - a sinister past. For decades the Salekhard - Igarka Railroad lived a dual existence. It's as if it was there, but at the same time everybody tried to avoid mentioning it, speaking only of "construction site 501".

The idea of a northern trans-Siberian railroad was born in the minds of merchants and industrialists at the beginning of the century. But common sense told people that this grandiose scheme was still too big a bite for the incipient Russian bourgeoisie. But Stalin's government knew nothing of the doubts about the plan's feasibility from the standpoint of shortages of resources, builders and materials. The decision was made, and in 1947 political prisoners were deported to the arctic taiga and tundra.

The convicts worked under inhuman conditions - terrible cold of winter, midges and mosquitoes in the summer - they laid every kilometer of track at the cost of their lives. In good order the machine of repression delivered new batches of "enemies of the people", and the rails advanced. By 1953 trains were already travelling here from Salekhard to Nadya, and construction of the roadbed had been completed over the entire route.

After the death of our "leader and teacher" construction was halted and the camps were closed. And so stands to this day that monument to past years of cruelty and coercion. The rails have been eaten away by rust, the ties have rotted, buildings have collapsed, enormous quantities of national resources have been squandered.

But no amount of money can be weighed against the lives of those who died, nor can it heal the tens of thousands of broken destinies. Some sources indicate that nearly 100,000 prisoners worked on the construction project. How many died, no one knows for sure.

Photos depict a collapsed bridge, ruins of camp headquarters, and a camp guard tower.

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TRANSPORT - WATER

Norwegians Receive Training for Joint Operations on
Northern Sea Route

The day is not far off when foreign merchant ships, accompanied by Soviet nuclear-powered icebreakers, will be plying the Northern Sea Route. In September regulations were confirmed for foreign ships travelling this main arctic thoroughfare. Preparations for joint

operations are continuing. The instructors Jan Lorentsen and Norvald Cherstad from the maritime college in the Norwegian city of Tromso came to Murmansk and then travelled the route from Murmansk to Dikson and back aboard the motorships "Aleksandr Nevskii" and "Emelyan Pugachev".

This was the first voyage by foreign seamen on the western sector of the Northern Sea Route.

In Murmansk the Norwegian specialists learned about the organizing of freight operations in the port, the planning of shipping on the Northern Sea Route and the concept for its development. During the voyage itself they did duty on the bridge and in the engine room together with the Soviet sailors, studied the system of communications between transport ships, icebreakers and the shore, and familiarized themselves with navigational aids, the organization of rescue operations in the Arctic and many other issues essential for a full understanding of navigation on the Northern Sea Route.

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23 October 1990
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Finns Refuse to Accept the Nuclear Powered Icebreaker
"Vaigach" for Guaranteed Repairs

(Question)

"Recently you reported on a visit by the nuclear powered icebreaker 'Vaigach' to the Norwegian city of Tromso. But if our arctic nuclear powered vessels are so safe and harmless, why are they refusing to accept them for 'guaranteed' repairs in Finland, as was reported by the program '120 Minutes'?"

V. Mukhorkin, Semipalatinsk

At the request of the editors, the question is being answered by A. Nemchinov, sector head of the icebreaker fleet, Main Administration of Fleet Technical Operations and Ship Repair Plants of the Ministry of the Maritime Fleet:

First of all, I want to say that nobody has received an official reply from Finnish officials to the request of the Murmansk Maritime Steamship Line regarding a visit to Helsinki by a nuclear powered vessel of the "Taimyr" class, even though such a reply clearly would have been in the negative. Before making the request, serious preparatory work was carried out. Among those participating in this work was the Finnish Centre for Radiation Safety, the official mandate of which is to evaluate the safety of nuclear powered vessels while docked in suburbs of Helsinki. Specialists from the Centre familiarized themselves directly on board the "Vaigach" with the necessary documentation, held discussions with the crew, and examined the ship's design first hand. And, by the way, the Finns were fully satisfied with the spirit of the discussions and with the technical solutions. Overall, the findings of the Centre and of a number of other competent organizations also participating in the review were satisfactory. They found the procedures proposed for the docking of the nuclear powered vessel to be appropriate and acceptable.

But while no mention was made of technical factors as reasons for the refusal, the final decision was apparently affected by the lack of Finnish standards and regulations directly applicable to this particular situation. The problem is that Finnish law on nuclear energy does not extend to means of transportation.

To the best of my knowledge, the ship's owner, in view of the results that have been achieved, is intending to continue joint efforts with the Finns in the future to arrive at precise solutions relating to visits of nuclear powered icebreakers to Finland. There are plans to prepare a contract between the steamship Line and the "Masa Yards" firm for the servicing of the nuclear powered vessels. There are also discussions about the possibility of joint development and publication of information in English concerning the safety of nuclear powered vessels of the "Taimyr" class.

As for the guaranteed repairs, these will apparently be done in Murmansk.

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11 October 1990
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Tromso Greet the "Vaigach"

The new nuclear powered icebreaker "Vaigach", built by Finnish and Soviet shipbuilders, recently arrived in its port of registry in Murmansk. On September 3, during the course of a voyage from the Baltic around northern Europe, the vessel visited the Norwegian city of Tromso. This was the first-ever visit by a Soviet nuclear powered icebreaker to a foreign port. It was undertaken at the initiative of the Murmansk Maritime Steamship Line with the aid of the Norwegian fund "Artek". At the request of our correspondent, the head of the Murmansk Steamship Line, V. Beletskii, talks about the event.

"The main goal of the visit to Tromso by the representatives of the steamship line was, naturally, related to presentation of the nuclear powered icebreaker "Vaigach", and it is noteworthy that the local authorities responded well to the event. The ship was met by a representative of Norway's Atomic Energy Administration, Mr. Knut Bussgard. He came on board while the "Vaigach" was still at sea, and conducted measurements in the reactor section. He verified that the necessary documents certifying that the reactor had been shut down were on hand, following which he issued to the captain the official certificate of permission to enter the port. Plans have been made for the icebreaker to be guarded by local police for the entire time it is in port.

Immediately following its arrival, a press conference was held on board for Norwegian journalists and representatives from Finland, Britain and other countries. Subsequently, two receptions were held for business people and shipboard visits were organized for local residents. A

symposium entitled 'Problems of the Environment and Navigational Safety in the Arctic' was arranged for the following day.

At the beginning of the symposium the Soviet side was invited to speak. I spoke about the prospects for operations on the Northern Sea Route and about the status of the fleet. V. Shestopalov, Captain of the "Vaigach", spoke about the tactics of ice navigation and the organization of maritime operations in the Arctic. A. Sinyaev, deputy head of the steamship line and responsible for facilities, dealt with technical aspects of the use of nuclear powered ships."

"And what did people think of our nuclear powered fleet, especially the 'Vaigach', of course?"

"A representative of the Atomic Energy Administration emphasized that he had seen a high degree of organization and a technically advanced ship, as regards solutions to the nuclear problem. But other opinions were heard as well, including: 'No matter what, the icebreaker should not be permitted to come here.' But these were emotional opinions rather than expert evaluations.

It should be pointed out that one incident did occur that requires explanation. In a paper presented by some British people it was noted that, according to American intelligence, an accident occurred on the nuclear power icebreaker 'Lenin' in the 1960's with the loss of 30 lives, and that the ship was then taken out of service for several years. Mr. Sinyaev explained what had really happened. It was simply that scientists had by that time developed a more reliable reactor, and this was installed in place of the old one. This did not involve any accidents. A representative of the movement for nuclear free seas, Elsonor O. Handland, remarked that they had now received objective information firsthand and would include the explanation in their report.

And here's another point of view. At the docks where the nuclear powered vessel was moored there was a demonstration organized by local university youth organizations and school children under the banner of environmental protection. In an orderly fashion they chanted 'Go home!' We conferred among ourselves and,

together with the captain, decided to invite the demonstrators to come on board the icebreaker at the end of the meeting. As soon as this was explained to them, they threw down all of their signs and hurried onto the ship."

"Are you satisfied with this initial experience in the international presentation of the Soviet nuclear powered ship?"

"The main result is a new breakthrough, primarily in the public information field. For the first time the Norwegians saw a nuclear installation with their own eyes, took photographs of it and published them in the newspaper. They saw and come to realize that it was safe. People came aboard the nuclear powered ship in droves. And for certain, people would not have come if they had been fearful of some sort of contamination.

I feel that meetings of this kind with authorities, scientists and ordinary people of other countries remove the shroud of secrecy from our fleet and establish a sense of reliability, especially as regards radiation safety. We mustn't forget that it is precisely this factor that is now decisive for expanding the use of the nuclear fleet."

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2 October 1990

Page 1 (slightly abridged)

River Shipping on the Enisei: Freight Totals for 1990

The roadstead of the arctic port of Dudinka resounded with the long farewell horn blasts of the 17 river motor vessels which are closing the current summer navigation season.

"During this time," reported I. Bulav, deputy head of the Enisei Steamship line, "we delivered to northerners more than a million tonnes of domestic freight, approximately 200,000 tonnes of petroleum products, and over one and half million tonnes of non-metallic building materials. We took out approximately 700,000 tonnes of freight. Although the current navigation season ended at the usual time, weather conditions in the Taimyr would have allowed us to prolong it for a few days more, and that means getting additional income. But this wasn't done since power workers of the Krasnoyarsk State Electric station will soon be sharply reducing the flow of water out of the man-made sea into the Enisei River. As a result, we were forced to leave nine barges in Dudinka for the winter and rush our fleet to the south."

And so, river navigation in the lower course of the Enisei has ended. But the Dudinka seaport is still in operation as motorships from Murmansk and Archangel arrive here as before along the Northern Sea Route. Winter navigation in the western region of the Arctic has begun.

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23 October 1990
Page 3 (full text)

Declining Profits of Murmansk Steamship Line
May Affect Building Program for Nuclear Powered Icebreakers

Recent events in Murmansk indicate that two problems in the development of the civilian nuclear fleet seem to be competing in urgency. Passions are still running high around the environmental safety of nuclear powered vessels and their support bases and, in parallel, voices are growing steadily louder about the economic justification for developing a nuclear fleet. A recent conference of the labour collective of the Murmansk Steamship Line (MSL) placed the latter issue at the centre of the debate. And the tone of the discussion was set by a report from V. Beletskii, head of the steamship line: "On Results of the Collective Agreement for the First Half of 1990."

Thus, the first six months of the current year showed that, despite successful achievement of goals for the basic points in the steamship line's plan of operations, the trend toward lower profits is intensifying. And the predictions are that, by the end of the year, the shortfall here could reach 22 million rubles. After all, it is profits which dictate wage levels for MSL workers, and here, too, the situation is gloomy. For the same six-month period the average earnings of the ships' crews have fallen by 11.6%, and those of shore workers by 14%.

There are, of course, a number of reasons for such an unsatisfactory outcome, but one should especially point to the situation with the nuclear fleet. Particularly alarming are the prospects for the future. Against a background of steadily declining levels in freight transport in the Arctic, the building program for nuclear powered ships remains unaltered. In short, the lack of cargo for transport on the Northern Sea Route could possibly lead to a situation in which not only the sailors but also the nuclear ships themselves are out of work.

38:8 is a figure that clearly does not bode well for the nuclear powered "Oktyabrskaya revolyutsiya", which is supposed to join the steamship line's fleet at the end of the year. What does this figure mean? Thirty-eight million rubles is the profit planned for the MSL for 1991: And eight million is what will remain from this if the new icebreaker is placed on the enterprise's books since, at this time, there is no foreseeable productive work for the ship in the Arctic. These prospects were cited by K. Pavlov, deputy head of the steamship line for economic matters, in his address to the conference. But even before him, sailors who had spoken and who, from their practical experience of the ice, know the situation, had mutually urged the conference to issue a resolution refusing to include the nuclear powered icebreaker "Oktyabrskaya revolyutsiya" in the MSL's fleet. And in the end the conference adopted this decision.

Of course, the new icebreaker, on construction of which 150 million rubles have been spent, cannot be written off so lightly. But in the final analysis the decision on

its fate, as well as on that of the even more powerful "Ural" that is still construction, lies not only with the steamship line collective but also with the Ministry of the Maritime Fleet and the State as a whole. In Murmansk two possible solutions to the problem are being looked at. Mr. Beletskii reported on these. The first solution is to transfer the nuclear fleet to the State budget, and the second is to raise the per-ton tax on cargo transported in the Arctic.

No sooner had these proposals been voiced than emotions heated up in the hall. I. Domakhin, a conference delegate from the nuclear powered "Arktika" pointed out angrily that the nuclear fleet is not the ballast of the steamship line but its greatest asset. Thanks to the "Arktika", a kind of economic Chernobyl was prevented in 1983 when 23 cargo ships were frozen in the ice on the Northern Sea Route and this threatened to shut down the gold fields and the ports of Eastern Siberia, and the very survival of cities and towns in this remote region was put at risk. Domakhin suggested a rapid opening of the Northern Sea Route to foreign ships and the earning of hard currency by having the foreigners pay for their ships to be escorted through the ice. Another opponent of the idea of transferring the nuclear fleet to the State budget was S. Fishov, a delegate from the nuclear powered "Sibir". His main argument was that the 2000 crew members of the nuclear fleet who would lose their jobs with the steamship line would be condemned to the poverty of government support. Just as in fact is happening in public education and public health. And under these conditions, where is the guarantee that the necessary safety of the nuclear fleet would be assured? On the other hand, there were also those who spoke in favour of transferring the nuclear fleet to the State. A. Chernov from the motorship "Kapitan Vodenko", for example, reminded the delegates that the economic might of the steamship line rests with the transport fleet, while all other ships, including the nuclear powered ones, play only a supporting role...

The opponents were definitely in agreement on one thing. Only through the economic autonomy of the steamship line is it possible to achieve a more rational solution to its financial and other problems, including those relating to the nuclear fleet. Beletskii, in particular, clarified the situation regarding opening the Northern Sea Route for

"foreigners". Rules have already been set down for foreign ships sailing on our national sea route escorted by icebreakers, so that having open routes is not so far fetched. However, a preliminary analysis indicates that the income for these services might amount to 37 million rubles a year, while the present cost of operating the nuclear fleet amounts to 57 million rubles. So that the question of sources to compensate these expenditures remains open. And the transfer of the nuclear fleet to budget financing could be viewed not as the removal of the icebreakers and their crews from the Murmansk Steamship Line but merely as a possibility for having the government grant sufficient monies to cover the losses.

Certainly, this is one way out, but there is clearly still a long way to go before a final decision is reached. The steamship line conference has only taken the first steps in this direction, and it has prepared some good information for further consideration by both the republican and union governments.

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