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EXTRACTS FROM THE SOVIET PRESS ON USSR FORESTRY AND FOREST-BASED INDUSTRIES

DECEMBER 1989

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TIMBER AND WOODWORKING

Typical Problems on the Road to Independence

Already two years have elapsed since the sector went over to profit-and-loss accounting and self-financing. Every month we are steering it along a difficult economic path and are left wondering. The path that has been chosen is undoubtedly correct, but the successes are more and more isolated. When you analyse them, what comes to mind is the classic example of "the swan, the pike and the crab". The swan, of course, stands for radical reform: the intentions are good but the load is heavy and it has difficulty in getting airborne. The pike is perceived as a neutral force. But who is the crab? Who is it that is dragging us backwards? That is the question.

The image, of course, is not new. But its relevance to the present situation is obvious. In recent years both the economic reform and the ecological threat have dictated a shift in emphasis, away from overfellings in favour of waste-free processing of timber. Alas! contrary to scientifically validated methods, forest use norms are steadily increasing and no action is being taken to curb overfellings. In the current year, for example, the RSFSR Council of Ministers has authorized boosting them to 17.4 million cubic metres.. The objections expressed by the State Committee for Forests (Goskomles) were shoved aside. Moreover, USSR Gosplan (State Planning Commission) is proposing that the norms that were set in sluggish 1980 be retained until 1995.

It is because of this kind of economic "policy" on the part of USSR Gosplan (State Planning Commission) that all of our forests are languishing. In the Irkutsk Oblast, for instance, the annual allowable cut exceeds 66 million cubic metres. Specialists have estimated that at felling

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rates such as these the forest resources will only be sufficient for 44 years, whereas to reestablish the resource base, as is well known, would require 100 to 120 years. Indeed, in the Angara region some of the timber industry enterprises are already counting on their fingers the number of years left to them.

For the present, the enterprises lack genuine independence. Their wellbeing is in many respects dependent on instructions received from higher up. But these instructions are very imprecise. For the sector as a whole, the plan for production of roundwood for this year has been increased by seven million cubic metres, and for large and medium-sized assortments it is twice what the forest reserves will permit. It seems reasonable to ask: "Why, then, is Gosplan not concerned about developing the production of wood substitutes?"

Nor should our planners be proud of the lack of realism in the assignments for the production of marketable timber. Why, for instance, did only three of the 15 enterprises in the "Komilesprom" Association cope with the sawtimber production plan last year, while many of them overfulfilled the assignment for cross-cutting? The reason is that what is desired is being passed off as valid, with resulting disruption of deliveries, which explains why our largest sawmills (the one at Archangel, for example) are working at only 70 to 80 per cent of their capacity.

It is also difficult to understand the lackadaisical attitude towards interruptions in shipments of roundwood for export. Even though "Komilesprom" annually exports up to 3,000,000 cubic metres of roundwood, a half of which is sawtimber, its own sawmilling capacities are standing idle. The reason for this is simply that foreigners pay in hard currency for timber, while their own consumers pay in roubles and in much smaller amounts. It is high time to review the system of incentives. There is, however, a hitch to this. Once the enterprises had more

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independence, they would find a way out and would set in motion contracted prices and wholesaling levers. For the present, everything is in a state of flux. Indeed, more of the currency is being spent on purchases of consumer goods and it is only in the best event that this extends to logging equipment. Somehow, it doesn't run to the purchase of woodworking units. No wonder our sawn timber products are unended, uncured, unpreserved, etc. Meanwhile, potential revenue is going down the drain.

Look at the shocking figures on wood wastes in the "Vologdalesprom" Association: 30 per cent, and if you include woodworking, 50 per cent overall. The foresters have already estimated that if this situation continues, then by 2015 the Vologzhane will begin importing timber from other countries.

As before, the road to independence is thorny. Recent events at Minlesprom (USSR Ministry of the Timber Industry) bear striking witness to this. How is your everyday enterprise going to stand its ground when the sovereignty of the headquarters staff is being encroached upon? For how many years has our newspaper fought for the right of the ministry to do its own planning of timber shipments! It finally received this right during the current year... but not for long. In October USSR Gosplan (State Supply Agency) issued a decree stating that beginning in 1990, Gosplan's Department of Pulpwood and Wholesale Trade in Forest Products will plan the transportation of timber. Does this mean that the suppliers and the consumers of the timber will agree upon dates and volumes of deliveries, while the supply of freight cars will again be handled by an intermediary?

With us, "leadership" is frequently viewed as being merely the right to the lion's share of the income of subordinate enterprises. How, for instance, will the Mari Pulp and Paperboard Combine survive if all that is left for it is a quarter of the earned income, and of the amount realized from export sales... a mere one per cent?

How then are they going to do their rebuilding, construction of new housing and public amenities? It won't be with the help of management or material aid from above. But as they say, every cloud has a silver lining. It is precisely this kind of behaviour on the part of the administration that is pushing the collectives of the enterprises to make the transition to progressive forms of management. Now and then, it necessitates overcoming the resistance of their "patrons".

This is exactly what happened to the collective of the "Zakarpates" (Carpathian) Association, after deciding to cease being subordinate to the Ukrainian Ministry of the Timber Industry and establish an association of lessees based on its own 23 enterprises. To quote the Chief Engineer of the Association, the Ministry was the stumbling block. In point of fact, their equipment for processing beech dates from the pre-war era. They signed an agreement with the Yugoslavian firm "Bratsvo" to supply new equipment in exchange for 5,000 cubic metres of wood particle board. But the Ministry vetoed it. They wanted to assemble an automated mill for the processing of building timber (the Austrians had agreed to help), but again the Ministry "nixed" it. The question is still unresolved and the subject of heated debates in the sector headquarters for the Republic. However, the Law on State Enterprises is on the side of the Carpathians, even though the Minister considers their decision illegal.

Lesnaya promyshlennost

December 7, 1989

Page 2 (abridged)

Drop in UK Imports of Coniferous Sawtimber (Soviet Figures)

The largest purchaser of coniferous sawtimber in Western Europe is Great Britain. Last year she imported 9,000,000 cubic metres. Every third cubic metre sold in Europe is purchased by British firms. During the first six months of this year 4,177,000 cubic metres of coniferous sawtimber arrived in that country. Almost a third of these were obtained in Canada, 21 per cent in Sweden, 14 per cent in Finland, 9.5 per cent in the USSR, and 8 per cent in Portugal. The British timber market noticeably worsened in the second half of the year. According to preliminary estimates, the total volume of imports dropped by 700 to 800 thousand cubic metres as against those for 1988. It is expected that in 1990 British demand will again decrease by 700 to 800 thousand cubic metres.

Lesnaya promyshlennost

December 19, 1989

Page 3 (full text)

PULP AND PAPER

Projected Expansion of Syktyvkar Paper and Boxboard Manufacturing Capacities in 1990-1995 Jeopardised by Shortage of Investment Capital

The Syktyvkar Timber Industry Complex is the largest supplier of various types of printing paper in the country. The year is not yet over and the complex has already managed to produce 500 million square metres of paper more than in 1988.

In less than a year our newspaper has twice reported on the rather less than satisfactory state of affairs at this enterprise. After the second article the editors received a detailed reply, signed by Deputy Minister of the Timber Industry V.A. Chuiko. In the reply it was stated that on July 12, at a meeting in the First Deputy Minister's office, there was a full review of progress made in implementing measures previously agreed to for the purpose of ensuring stable operations at the Syktyvkar Timber Industry Complex (TIC), and also of the Ministry's Order (Prikaz) dated May 11, 1989 entitled "Programme of action for development of the Syktyvkar TIC during the period 1990-1995".

The problem of optimizing the composition of the various types of paper produced has been solved. This has made it possible to save more than 16,000 tonnes of softwood pulp during the first half of the year, thereby greatly reducing the shortage of it.

The reply went on to discuss the allocation of the necessary machinery, materials and chemicals to the TIC, and mentioned that the problem of allocating foreign currency from centralised funds to provide for the purchase of spare parts for the Kamyrdigester and of 40 tonnes of heat-resistant chains for the lime regenerating kiln had been solved.

During the period 1990-1995 the Syktyvkar TIC has been authorised to sell by direct agreements, including export agreements, any output over and above the volumes stipulated by the State order for 1989.

Despite the acute shortage of centralised investment funds, the Ministry is taking all possible steps to allocate the funds needed by the TIC to develop capacities for production of pulp and also boxboard for the packaging of food products, and to implement nature conservation measures.

At first sight, virtually all of the points contained in Prikaz 155 are being implemented. But when we looked at the Minutes of the technical meeting it turned out that there was little cause for optimism, at least with respect to ensuring stable operations at the Syktyvkar TIC. On the contrary, the first line of the document had a cautious ring to it: "The decisions taken earlier are not being properly implemented". It then listed the former chief directorates of the Ministry which had been unable to cope with the obligations entrusted to them and went on to conclude: "The Chief Directorate for the Planning of Capital Construction submitted a proposal calling for removal in 1990 of the ceiling on construction and assembly work in the amount of 13.2 million roubles and having the entire construction project placed in mothballs. Not only would this disrupt implementation of the Ministry's Prikaz No. 155. It would also mean that the enterprise, in experiencing an acute shortage of pulp for its own needs, would be forced to heavily curtail production of printing paper and boxboard.

"Due to non-fulfillment of the decisions taken earlier, highly unfavourable conditions have been created at the enterprise as regards implementing the State plan for 1989-1990. Moreover, the ecological problems have become more acute".

One of those decisions, of course, was to authorize the TIC to engage in direct sales, including exports, during the period 1990-1995, of any output over and above the volumes stipulated by the State order for 1989. Naturally, it says "thanks for the authorization", but how is this to be put into practice if "unfavourable conditions have been created for implementation of even the State plan for 1989-1990?" Where is this output to be found, if the State order is for 100 per cent of it?

The Syktyvkar people certainly need to have their own supply of currency. For at the meeting with Chuiko they made up their minds that from now on, beginning in 1990, they would arrange for the purchase of imported forming wire at the expense of the mills own reserves of currency. Well, since the mills don't have the funds, off went a telegram to the Minister, V.I. Mel'nikov, asking him to immediately arrange for the purchase of felts and wires requisitioned on September 5, 1989.

It is during the current year (1989) that the so called second phase of the Syktyvkar TIC is supposed to come on stream. This means handing over a capacity for the production of 50,000 tonnes of pulp, as well as scrubbers and deodorizing units for the flue gases. But due to the non-allocation of funds the second phase will not be completed in 1989. This means that fines will be exacted for the failure to install new plant and introduce new production capacities. Moreover, the contractual obligations of the foreign firms will automatically lapse, as most of the plant is of western origin.

The plan for capital construction and reequipping of the TIC as spelled out in the Ministry's Prikaz No 155, provides for the introduction of a number of new capacities, based on imported equipment, for the production of 30 million conventional sheets of wallpaper, 30,000 cubic metres of wood particle board, 51,800 tonnes of pulp and 120,000 tonnes of paperboard for the packaging of food products. The Prikaz also calls for the introduction of 20,000 square metres of new housing annually, two kindergartens and a school.

"This extremely demanding programme", wrote the General Director of the TIC, A. Kononov, to the Minister of the Timber Industry, "necessitated the securing of bank credit. The Ministry obligated the TIC to take out 40 million roubles worth of credit in foreign currency to finance the purchase of equipment for the rebuilding of boxboard-making machine No. 3, with a guarantee that investment capital would be allocated in accordance with Prikaz No 155. It was only by virtue of these guarantees, obtained from the Collegium of the Ministry and personally from the former Minister M. Busygin, that the Council of the workers' collective at the TIC consented to this binding credit, which is associated with the repayment of vast sums of foreign currency at a high rate of interest."

Is it not to be expected that the Syktyvkar people will find themselves even more deeply in debt than was the case earlier? Where are they to obtain (or how can they earn) the currency with which to "clothe" the machine and purchase the spare parts? Where will they find the investment capital for 1990, of which a total of 9.8 million roubles have been allocated, instead of the 54.1 million that are needed?

Lesnaya promyshlennost
December 5, 1989
Page 1 (abridged)

Railway Tie-Ups Result in Glut of Paper at Kondopoga
Creating a Fire Hazard and Threatening to Disrupt
Publication of Central Newspapers

"About 400 central, oblast and republican publishing houses are supplied with our products," says the General Director of the 'Kondopogabumprom' Production Association, V. Federmesser, but there are no freight cars to ship them out."

To be truthful, I am tired of writing about the transportation muddle at the Kondopoga Pulp and Paper Combine. In the course of the last eighteen months, "Pravda" has already published five "rockets" along with some alarming press coverage from Kondopoga and has personally criticised the Minister of Railways and the directors of the Ministry of the Timber Industry and the Oktyabrskaya Railroad for the disruption of planned shipments of newsprint.

The Ministry of Railways located some reserves of freight cars and the situation was smoothed out, at least for the present. But in recent days another distress signal has been received from Kondopoga: "We are overstocked with paper and there are no freight cars to remove it." Meanwhile, the printing presses where "Pravda", "Izvestiya", "Trud", "Sovetskii Sport" and other editions are run off are on the brink of shutting down on account of the paper famine.

It is unfortunate that no press photographer was present when I visited Kondopoga, for words are inadequate to describe what I saw. In many towns, the last stocks of paper have been used up and a number of rotary presses are being shut down. But at the Kondopoga Combine it is impossible to get near the largest of the papermaking machines. The vast machine rooms of the paper mills, the aisles between the machines, the passages and the corridors have become glutted with multi-tonne rolls of newsprint. Highly skilled machinists, machine tenders, controllers and engineering and technical employees along with auxiliary personnel, were forced to abandon their work stations at high-speed units turning out 25 to 30 tonnes of newsprint an hour, and by the sweat of their brow move the huge rolls of paper across the territory of the combine, so as to create some free space. Only a tiny spark would be needed and disaster would be inevitable. Two months ago there was a major fire at the Combine. The investigation agencies are still trying to determine the causes.

"Non-fulfillment of the State order has affected us very badly", say the disheartened workers. "We are being deprived of bonuses, deductions to pay for social needs, housing, reconstruction and renovation of productive plant."

Here is the text of an urgent telegram to the First Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers, L. Voronin:

"The collective of the 'Kondopogabumprom' Association is again appealing to you on account of the extremely difficult situation here. In October the railway workers failed to provide for the removal of 5,217 tonnes of paper, in November the figure was 6,724 tonnes and for the first thirteen days of December, 3,476 tonnes... Once again, we ask you to take immediate corrective action."

I visited the Combine three days after that telegram was sent. With the arrival of the second shift, an emergency session took place in the General Director's office which without exaggeration could only be called a council of war. Several officers from the fire protection administration of the Karelian Ministry of Internal Affairs were demanding that the papermaking machines be shut down, since the evacuation routes for employees were blocked up and the accesses to the firefighting equipment had been cut off.

I wandered over to the loading area, where there were mountains of paper rolls and ... silence. Although many dozens of freight cars would be needed to restore rhythm in the shipping operations, only four refrigerator cars were standing on the approach routes. These, of course, are not equipped to haul paper, but meat, fish and other perishables.

On behalf of the workers of two related shops - the nation's journalists and papermakers - we put the question point-blank to the management of the Ministry of Railways: Is it aware that through its own fault the country may find itself without newspapers within a matter of days?

Pravda
December 17, 1989
Page 3 (full text)

Allocation of Refrigerator Cars to Ship Newsprint from Kondopoga Results in Heavy Spoilage of Rolls When Unloading

The largest newsprint production enterprise in the USSR -- the "Kondopogabumprom" Production Association -- has been supplying the country's printing houses with high-grade products for 60 years. Many central and local publishing houses, including "Pravda" and "Izvestiya", print on Karelian paper.

This year things are not turning out well for the Kondopoga papermakers. The Solikamsk Pulp and Paper Combine is having difficulty obtaining sufficient supplies of pulp.

Also contributing their "mite" are the Ministry's planners: while they have stipulated that 5,000 more tonnes of paper should be produced this year than last, the funds allocated for the necessary pulp are for two thousand tonnes less. That is why a nationwide search must be made for the valuable component: at Bratsk, on Sakhalin and in Kaliningrad. And then there is the problem of prying loose the freight cars and driving them over vast distances. Shipments moving in the opposite direction and idlings between scheduled stopping places have "eaten up" both time and rolling stock.

As a result, the supply of pulp which must make up the seven-and-eight-day norm is sufficient for only one and a half to two 24-hour periods, after which there will be none at all. This is partly offset by the fact that the Kondopogans long ago mastered the technology of producing "thin" paper. This will make it possible to consume the pulp more economically. But the debt to the consumers will continue to grow. It is already on the wrong side of 6,000 tonnes.

Moscow, Leningrad, the Ukraine, the Baltic, Armenia and other regions are bombarding "Kondopogabumprom" with telegrams saying "Send paper, otherwise there will be no newspapers". Two months ago the freight car problem became paramount. In November alone, the Association did not receive more than half of its planned allocation of rolling stock. The warehouses are glutted with rolls of paper.

In the circumstances the railway resorted to extreme measures: it allocated refrigerator cars to transport the rolls. Instead of using them for shipments of fish, meat and other rapidly spoiling products, they would now be loaded with newsprint.

They are only just managing to load the rolls, and it must be said, in much smaller quantities than in the usual covered cars: 24 tonnes instead of the usual 42. Added to this is the fact that the shippers are proving "difficult", including the expensive Toyota Company. The recipients have been racking their brains over the question of how to remove the rolls from the refrigerator cars. They are using ropes and other facilities, which are damaging the paper and resulting in much of it going to waste.

Production of Paper at Kondopoga Hampered by Undersupply of Pulp

Telegrams, letters and teletype enquiries have literally crammed the desk of R.V. Yushkova, Head of the Sales Department at the "Kondopogabumprom" Production Association. The telephones are ringing continuously: "Send paper! The issuing of newspapers is being held up". "Never has the supply of empty railway cars for the loading of finished products been so poorly handled as it is today", replies Rimma Vladimirovna.

It turns out that month by month the Oktyabrskaya Railroad has been failing to meet the Kondopogans' requests for railway cars, and that in their place it often sends refrigerator cars and even flatcars. In October, for example, the railway workers failed to provide cars for the export of 5,219 tonnes of newsprint, with the corresponding shortfalls for November and December being 6,724 and about 5,000 tonnes of newsprint respectively. The mountain of paper in the warehouses is growing larger by the hour.

A second reason for the enforced idleness in the paper mills is the lack of pulp, which has resulted in a loss of more than 300 machine-hours. The shortage of semi-manufactured products is having a particularly severe effect on the very new and high-speed eighth and ninth papermaking machines, which are operating on imported pulp. Since the start of the year the Kondopogans have been undersupplied with it to the extent of about 400,000 tonnes. They are being let down particularly badly by the collective of the Solikamsk Paper Combine.

Nor is the situation any clearer with respect to the availability of pulp in the year about to begin. The Kondopogans have already twice sent their contracts to Kaliningrad, Vyborg and Sakhalin and everywhere they have refused to sign them. Currently, in Karelia they have

FORESTRY

arrived at the conclusion that it is necessary to stop sending the output of the "Pitkyaranta" pulp mill beyond the borders of the autonomous republic and to give it all to Kondopoga.

The net result of the arhythmical operations of the "Kondopogabumprom" Association is as follows: during the current year more than 160,000,000 square metres of paper have been undersupplied and there has been a drop in the average earnings of both unskilled and engineering and technical personnel.

Lesnaya promyshlennost
December 19, 1989
Page 2 (full text)

Lesnaya promyshlennost
December 19, 1989
Page 4 (full text)

FORESTRY

Description of the VM-1.25 Tree Lifter

The machine is intended for digging up seedlings of all varieties, as well as saplings of shrubs and berry-bearing plants in tree nurseries, orchards and ornamental plantings. It digs up plants growing on an even surface and in beds of up to 20 cm high. It is designed for use in medium loamy soils and soils of lighter mechanical composition in nurseries of the forested, forest-steppe and steppe zones.

It is mounted on tractors of the "Belarus'" type and can also be operated in parallel with DT-75 and T-74 tractors.

The main sub-assemblies are: a frame with a device for linking it to the automatic hitch of a tractor; a trapeziform grubbing piece; a shaking-off device in the form of a rod-shaped elevator and mounted behind it, two rotodynamic rippers; two vertically adjustable supporting wheels and a driving mechanism.

Specifications:

Width of grip, 1.25 m.

Depth of dig down, not more than 30 cm.

Operating speed, 2.2-5.0 km/hr.

Ground clearance, 350 mm.

Rate of movement of elevator web, 1.7-2.3 m/sec.

Overall dimensions, 2020x1800x1400 mm.

Weight, 755kg.

Productivity per hour of continuous work,
0.2-0.4 ha.

Operator, 1 (tractor driver).

Applications should be forwarded to the following address:

P.O. "Rosleskhoz mash", Ul. Gor'kii 20a, 141200
Pushkino, Moskovskaya Oblast.

Lesnaya promyshlennost

December 12, 1989

Page 4 (full text)

Excerpts from Interview with the Minister of Forestry for
the Belorussian SSR

Beginning in the New Year, forestry in Belorussia is converting to full cost accountability and self-financing. What are the problems confronting the sector? Our correspondent talks with the new Minister of Forestry of the Belorussian Republic, G. Markovskii.

Q. "What are the specifics of the new economic structure insofar as they apply to the activities of enterprises of the Belorussian Ministry of Forestry?"

A. "First and foremost, the fact that our activities under the new system of cost accountability should be viewed in the overall context of the change over to self-financing and self-administration of the entire economy of the Republic. For 65 years, since the mid-twenties, forestry has been part of the budgetary estimates system of financing, which has long been a hindrance to the development of the sector. Its main shortcoming is the absence of a relationship between expenditures and the end result. It is precisely here that the reasons for the indifference of the forestry enterprises to the end results of managerial activity should be sought. I do not need to explain what this has led to. The statute drawn up by the government of the USSR concerning the transition of the sector to full cost accountability is based on the development of money-exchange relationships, which provide for the more efficient use of forest resources and their more extensive regeneration. In particular, payment for finished forestry objects and for goods and services at differentiated prices is being introduced, to take the place of financing individual actions and studies. Self-financing is changing over to a normative basis."

Q. "The Chairman of the USSR State Committee for Forestry (Goskomles), Academician A. Isaev, stated at a recent plenary session of the Central Committee of our sector's Trade Union that "the question of overfellings of allowable cuts is being removed from the agenda since it is an ecologically immoral phenomenon". Everyone knows that in the past, however, the planning bodies of the republic repeatedly took decisions and interceded with the government to secure the retention of such overfellings. What action is being proposed with a view to the firm application of scientific principles of forest use under the new conditions of management?"

A. "A heavy overfelling of the allowable cut occurred in the Republic in the fifties and sixties. At that time, there was a 1.5 to twofold overfelling of the allowable cut, which could not fail to have had an effect on the age structure of the forests. Although the 'percentage of forest cover' ecological index, by virtue of intensive reforestation and elimination of overfellings, has now been increased to 34 per cent for the Republic as a whole (as against 26 per cent in 1950), we have not yet succeeded in restoring the resources of mature timber. These currently make up only 2.4 per cent of the total forested area. Of course, in these circumstances even what would formerly have been perceived as a slight overfelling is unacceptable. We maintain that in the very near future the procedure for reviewing and sanctioning scientifically validated allowable cuts must be set in order and that we must get rid of the multi-staging that occurs in their coordination with various institutions. These latter frequently assume no responsibility for the fate of the forests, and to make matters worse, exert pressure on those who have a say in the possible "making of an exception" so as to unjustifiably increase the allowable cut and even "scientifically" validate the increase.

"Certainly, the economy's requirement for timber is constantly growing. Where will the additional raw material be gotten? Which tactic should the sector adhere

to in connection with the change over full cost accountability? One way out would be to develop an industrial base for logging and processing the low-grade, small-dimension timber (forest thinners), which is abundant in the Republic. It is time to review the whole structure of wood consumption and production, as well as the technology and criteria of intermediate forest use. All these are chronic problems which have long been in need of solving.

"Unquestionably, we can make use of much that is valuable and instructive from the experience of Scandinavian foresters, but we need machinery and equipment, as well as environmentally clean production lines which are qualitatively different from those available to our foresters. What we are therefore talking about is restructuring (perestroika) and the development of a domestic machine-building arm for forestry and the timber industry. Although we have been talking for decades about the chronic backwardness of this sector, things are moving extremely slowly. One gets the impression that forest machine-building is immune to criticism. No one is assuming responsibility for its reconstruction or for the low efficiency of what is now being produced."

Q. "What do you think of the possibility of leasing out State forest lands (Goslesfond) to the loggers for periods of 5 and 10 years?"

A. "In the Belorussian forests only two agencies are engaged in the extraction of timber: the Ministry of the Timber Industry and our own Ministry. The resources of mature timber are extremely limited. And if we are talking about leasing for periods of five to ten years, then given the present areas of allowable cut the mature timber resources will suffice for precisely this period. And beyond that, what? Should an agreement be concluded for the leasing of newly matured forests?"

"Our loggers have virtually no competitors. It is sufficient to have qualitatively and promptly formulated felling plans, even though in principle, variants of leasing arrangements may exist. It is important that the interests of the interested parties should not suffer through this, and what is of paramount importance, the forest lands themselves."

Lesnaya promyshlennost
December 28, 1989
Page 2 (Abridged)

Glaring Inadequacies in Forest Firefighting Capabilities
Suggest Opportunities for Trade

More than six months have elapsed since the expedition "Ecological Task Force 01", organized by the editorial office of "Lesnaya promyshlennost" and the Production Association "Avialesookhrana" (Aerial Protection of the Forests), set out on its journey. The itinerary extended from Sakhalin to Moscow by way of Vladivostok, Chita, Ulan-Ude, Krasnoyarsk, Sverdlovsk, Tomsk and Perm.

The following is a condensed transcript of the discussions at a "round table" held in the editorial office to report on the expedition's findings. (Note to reader: a transcript of an earlier "round table" in which many of the same speakers took part, was published in the May 1989 edition of these Extracts (INI F3/89, 25 September 1989, pp. 23-32)).

G. Korovin (Deputy Chairman of the USSR State Committee for Forestry - Goskomles SSSR). "First, I want to report on the totals for the 1989 forest fire season. During the current year, more than 28,000 fires have been reported from the actively protected territories of the general forest lands administered by the State (Goslesfond). The area affected by fire exceeds 2,000,070

hectares, of which 1,646,000 were forested. The last time we had so many fires was in 1972. This was not only on account of the exceptionally dry weather conditions, but also because the transfer to the new system of remuneration resulted in a reduction in the numbers of people employed in forest fire protection, both on the ground and in the air. We have 20 per cent fewer employees now than formerly. Secondly, we have been operating in a worsening financial environment. Expenditures on aerial protection of the forests have been cut. We are now spending a paltry 11 or 12 kopecks to protect a hectare of forest. This was the summer, moreover, when the timber industry's forestry enterprises were transferred. What has happened is that some of them have already abandoned, at least in part, their involvement in forest fire protection, while others have not yet made a start on this work. The combined effect is that of the 183,000,000 hectares of forest which were transferred to the USSR Ministry of the Timber Industry (Minlesprom SSSR), a half were damaged by fire.

"A quarter of all the fires occurred in forests administered by Minlesprom. This marks the first year when, according to official statistics, losses caused by fires exceeded 200 million roubles. But even these figures do not fully reflect the losses to the national economy. If we calculate by the method used at the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (SEV), the losses can be at least doubled."

V. Onyanov (fireman-parachutist from the Western Urals Air Base). "It is unfortunate that ground protection and aerial protection of the forests are administratively distinct. It is only when we notify a forest farm from the air that fire has broken out in a particular compartment that close working contact is established. The chemical fire control stations (CFCSEs) are currently the province of the forest farms and should be made subordinate to the air service. Also, they should be supplied with tank-mounted heavy equipment. In winter, these CFCSEs would be able to earn additional income in logging enterprises where the equipment is in demand - on the building and clearing of roads and winter trails."

N. Pogodin (Head of the Primorskaya Forest Protection Air Base). "Practical experience on Sakhalin has demonstrated that actively combatting forest fires, especially major fires, is only possible when there are well trained specialists. Even though a large quantity of machinery was assembled on the island, it was used inefficiently. It wasn't until the groups of smoke jumpers/parachutists arrived that success was achieved in dealing with the fires. Today, however, the training of aerial firefighters usually takes place right at the fire. We need well equipped classrooms in which a specific situation and possible variants in the development of a fire can be shown on display panels. All this, however, is contingent on the availability of financing. If we had had computers it may be that the disaster which befell one of the finest firefighting parachutist groups in the country, when it descended into a canopy fire and lives were lost, would not have happened. I earnestly appeal to our scientists and designers to help us."

M. Bushui (Head of the Forest Conservation and Protection Sector of Minlesprom SSSR). "Even though the Ministry and production associations had made serious preparations for the forest fire season, we were faced with a difficult situation. The cuts in forest protection expenditures have had a disastrous effect. About 400 specialists were transferred to forest inspection duties."

"I maintain that, given our underequipping, a definite role will be played by the conversion (of surplus military hardware - Tr.). Minlesprom has already purchased six tank-based caterpillar fire trucks and for the coming year they have submitted a requisition for 30 of them. They are not cheap, being priced at 56,000 roubles."

E. Filimonov (Head of the Laboratory for the Mechanization of Forest Fire Control Operations, VNIIPOMleskhoz - All-Union Research Institute for the Organization and Mechanization of Forestry). "Why not take a look at who is in charge in our forests just now and who

is doing the bulk of the work there? Of course, it is Minlesprom which has a vehicle pool containing several tens of thousands of TT-4 tractors, situated mainly in regions of Siberia and the Far East. It is logical to assume that they should be used for putting out fires. What actually happens is that when a major fire occurs, all of the TT-4s are lost, so that there is nothing with which to plough around the fire. In order to cope with such situations our institute has developed a simple piece of equipment. Now, as to the conversion, we are convinced that at the present stage this will definitely be able to turn things around in our favour."

V. Serezhin (Senior Instructor of the Standing Production Conference at Tyumen' Air Base). "With us, much of the discussion is about controlling fires by means of ground-based equipment. Everything necessary for this is on hand: the tractors, tanks and other equipment. But what have the scientists done to advance our aerial fire fighting capabilities? I have spent close to 20 years in aerial fire fighting work and yet, just as I started out with a shovel, so do I take one along today when going to a fire. We have absolutely no equipment for the mounting of mobile groups. Everything that has been developed is for parkland forests. That kind of equipment is unsuitable for our forests."

E. Artsybashev (Head of the Forest Fire Protection Laboratory of the Leningrad Forestry Research Institute - LenNIILKho). "During the last 20 years our institute alone has worked out the designs for 26 fire trucks and the necessary accessories, instrumentation, technologies and space information transmission systems. But when you ask about them at the sites, you are told that they are unavailable. We have models as good as anything produced in the world, are checking, testing and approving them, but in the end, they are set aside. Currently, we are working towards an enhanced capability for extinguishing fires from the air. We are conducting tests on an An-26P aircraft which will be able to carry 4.5 tonnes of water, however

the aircraft constructors are making things difficult for us. We are also engaged in the development of trailer fire-fighting units. But now we hear that Canada, for example, has halved the danger from forest fires by disseminating fire prevention literature."

N. Kopylov (Deputy Head of the All-Union Fire Research Institute, USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs). "Very often, we are the first on the scene to combat a forest fire. But our equipment supply situation is no better than what we have for forest protection. In my view, we are exceedingly underequipped when it comes to fire protection, as demonstrated by the following figures: the overall requirement for fire protection equipment is being met by no more than 60 per cent, and for certain types of special equipment, including that which can be used for extinguishing forest fires, by no more than 50 per cent. Firefighters are losing their lives because of the lack of protective clothing. The requirement for oxygen-tight respirators is being met by only 11 per cent, but without these devices it is impossible to carry out rescue operations efficiently.

"Our institute has recently developed a whole series of tracked vehicles capable of actively and effectively combatting fires, including forest fires."

N. Andreev (General Director of "Avialesookhrana") "Fires need to be put out before they spread. In that event there will be no need for tanks, heavy equipment and fire-fighting aircraft in the numbers we have been talking about. But for the extinguishing of small fires we do have a present need for shovels. We also need motor-driven pumps, knapsack extinguishers and entrenching implements. But the most important thing is that all this should be of a high quality. Since 1981, however, we have had only 10 high-pressure motor-driven pumps. If we compare them with the Canadian pumps, they are not high-pressure pumps at all, but just the opposite... And consider the cost of

explosives. They used to be priced at 600 roubles a tonne. Today this has risen to 5,000. Our institute has developed a set of manual implements consisting of six items. It is priced at 120 roubles. A shovel costs 25 roubles. So before we talk about artificial rain and infrared technology the problems of prevention, detection and day to day procedures for extinguishing fires need to be resolved. Consequently, the staffing of the parachutist-smoke jumper crews needs to be increased and a united effort made by the various departments, so that they can jointly participate in solving this problem."

P. Barsukov (Deputy Minister of Forestry for the RSFSR). "We refer to the forest as national property. This being the case, it is for the State to allocate sufficient funds for the work of the fire protection service. We are accused on every level of sitting on funds and not giving them to the fire protection workers. But check for yourselves and you will find that there is simply nothing for us to give. We maintain that the State ought to finance all nature conservation operations, including - possibly on a first-priority basis - aerial protection of the forests. The cost of the Il-76P project alone is one and a half million. I wonder where we are going to find this money, given that all we have is one and a half million to cover the sum total of the scientific and ministry requirements.

"Another matter I want to bring up is the tactics employed in fighting forest fires. I deeply respect science but I completely disagree that it has done all that is necessary for the successful combatting of fires. In our forestry projects science is often working for the benefit of science. We have no genuine system for the extinguishing of fires, either in flat or mountainous forests. You are showing us equipment which has been tested in a kitchen garden or a good sector of forest. It is as though you said, "Look, we have the airborne tankers with which to strike the first blow, and if the fire begins

to spread, we'll do this, this and this"... For the country as a whole, ten or twenty of these systems are needed. But we have nothing of the kind at present.

"Today, all that we have in the way of fire fighting equipment is a handful of fire trucks and some shovel-type implements valued at 25 roubles a piece. There is no first strike equipment. Here is just one example of what happened this year. A fire was spotted near Komsomol'sk-on-Amur. We were in the air with a dozen parachutists on board, and quickly flew to the site. The area of the fire was less than a hectare. But by the time we had encircled it, calculated the wind velocity and after several passes completed the air drop, the fire had spread to 15 hectares. We had to monitor it for three weeks before putting it out.

"In addition to the driver, a fire truck carries only one man. We approached the factory and asked if a truck for five or six men could be allocated to us, at prices to be agreed. They replied saying "We won't give you any such thing", and they haven't. During the current year we have not received a single fire truck. I am asking you to verify this, not because we are not giving you something, which is not what we want anyway, but because we are tied hand and foot."

N. Pogodin (Head of the Primorskaya Forest Protection Air Base). "Until we have the equipment, we will extinguish fires by whatever methods, including shovels, that are available. Unquestionably, this means that there will be injuries and fatalities. This is why I am once again asking our scientists to devise easy and reliable individual protective facilities. Also, there is a need for medical personnel supplied with powerful anaesthetics to be on hand at large fires. My own children were caught in a fire this year and endured excruciating pain for several hours. The first aid kits are of very poor quality."

M. Bushui (Head of the Forest Conservation and Protection Sector of Minlesprom SSSR). "In the near future we shall be receiving 500 motor-driven pumps, which will strengthen the forest protection service. Jointly with the Ministry of Forestry (Minleskhoz) we have decided to train a reserve force of smoke-jumpers for use in various regions during the forest fire season. They will be drawn from our ministry's employees, will receive special training and when the need arises, will be used in summer to make up for the shortage of trained personnel in Avialesookhrana. We are in the process of preparing the necessary documentation to get this under way as soon as possible."

S. Dusha-Gudym (Head of the Forest Pyrology Sector of the All-Union Research Institute for Forestry Chemistry). "Today, Avialesookhrana is capable of patrolling the territory twice. This is totally inadequate for the timely detection of fires. We need fast aircraft with a relatively low cost per flying hour. Our institute has been working on the use of light and super-light aircraft for the detection of forest fires. What can be said about the results of these studies? Today, hundreds of Yak-12T aircraft formerly used for training civil and military pilots have been freed for alternative use. Another aircraft that could be employed is the "Blanik" motor-assisted glider, which is an ecologically clean form of transport. Compared to an An-2 it consumes ten times less fuel, and if you compare it with an Mi-2 helicopter - 24 times less, since a large portion of the flight can be made with the motor switched off. Then again, all of the references here have been to protected territory, but as we know, there is also unprotected territory where there are many fires. Since these have a tendency to spread from unprotected to protected territory, I consider that the entire forested territory needs to be protected."

N. Pavlinov (Head of the Department of Forest Protection and Conservation, RSFSR Ministry of Forestry). "I would like to say a few words about the interface between ground-based and aerial protection. It is not

always effective. Last year we issued instructions to the effect that the chemical fire control stations were to be subordinated to aviation, but at the sites this was not always done."

G. Korovin (Deputy Chairman of the USSR State Committee for Forestry). "Our financial situation will not improve until our forests are protected by economic and legislative means. We tried to introduce cadastral evaluations ten years ago, but Gosplan (State Planning Commission) did not accept them. If we introduce them now and calculate the value of the forests, the sum will be greater than the national revenue generated during all the years of Soviet rule. Decisions are needed on both leasing and insurance matters. The sooner the government and the legislative bodies take these decisions the better it will be for all. I have already spoken about the State order (goszakaz). We have been notified of the State order and the area has been indicated but no money has been provided. What sort of State order is this, if there is no financial backing or supplies of materials and machinery? If we turn our attention now to aerial protection, we see a paradoxical situation: those republics in which aerial protection of forests is not of fundamental importance are given more money for this purpose. Take Kazakhstan and the Ukraine. There, expenditures per hectare are ten times greater than in Russia, where aviation is an essential service. Since we are transferring natural resources to the local Soviets, let them play a more active part in protecting the forests, rather than waiting until laws are enacted, compelling them to do this.

"We have talked at length about aircraft, tankers, tanks and heavy machinery. All these things are certainly needed, for large forest fires will always be with us. But our principal task is to eliminate fires in the incipient stage. What are our actual capabilities? I am not going to talk about prevention. We have already said a lot about that. But as regards promptness of detection, half of our land areas are not covered by spotting towers. In

aviation, promptness of detection is a function of the frequency with which patrols are carried out. In the Baikal zone where they have increased the frequency of patrols, almost twice as many fires have begun to be reported. On the other hand, the area affected is much smaller, due to prompt detection and extinguishing of the fires.

"We are currently in receipt of a mass of proposals from numerous design bureaus for the development of new equipment, but we have no money for this. For the development of a tanker, for example, they are asking 240 million roubles, but in the USSR State Committee for Forestry (Goskomles) 20 million roubles have been allocated for science as a whole.

"We are ready to accept and consider all proposals aimed at the preservation and augmentation of our forest wealth.

"Finally, I would like to thank the editorial staff for arranging this meeting and organizing the "Ecological Task Force". In my view, initiatives such as this should become a regular happening, not only with respect to forest protection, but in addressing all ecological problems."

Lesnaya promyshlennost
December 16, 1989
Pages 4 and 5 (abridged)
Also December 12, 1989
Page 2 (abridged)

ENVIRONMENT

Excerpts from Supreme Soviet Decree Aimed at Improving the Conditions in the Environment

On November 27, 1989 the Supreme Soviet of the USSR issued a decree outlining a series of "Urgent Measures for Improving the Ecological Situation Throughout the Country". The worst conditions of all existed in the Aral Sea region and the areas affected by the Chernobyl disaster. Listed as being "on the verge of an ecological crisis" were Kalmykiya, the Dnieper region, the Donbass, the Urals, the Kuzbass and the basins of the Volga River, Lake Ladoga, the Sea of Azov, the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea and the Baltic Sea, as well as a number of other, unspecified areas. There was a need to accelerate nature conservation measures that had already begun in the Baikal, Ob and Amur basins.

The document also noted that in 103 towns with a population of about 50 million people the maximum permissible levels of air pollution were being exceeded ten or more times, and that in 600 towns no provision had been made for what was described as "quality sewage treatment".

Insofar as the forestry sector is concerned, it was considered important to decide on the question of expropriating the lands occupied by "group 1 forests", including those performing shelterbelt, public health protection and water conservation functions, and placing them within the competence of the Supreme Soviets of the union republics and autonomous republics.

Beginning on January 1, 1991, overfellings of allowable cuts are to be prohibited, and beginning in 1990, fellings of cedar. It should be noted that this latter prohibition may refer at least in part, to the Siberian pine (Pinus sibirica Rupr.,) which is often grouped with the cedars.

All forests, except those worked by collective farms, are to be placed under the jurisdiction of the USSR State Committee for Forestry (Goskomles) in order that they can be made available for leasing. In 1990 a State reforestation programme is to be developed and approved. A set of urgent measures are to be carried out with a view to making improvements in forest fire prevention and control.

Lesnaya promyshlennost
December 5, 1989
Page 3 (gist)
(Full text of decree
contained in "Pravda",
December 3 edition)

Archangel Oblast: Permission to Overfell and Continuing
Pollution Heavily Criticised by People's Deputy

(Excerpts from an interview with People's Deputy Viktor Aleksandrovich Gubin, Engineer-Technologist at the Solombala Pulp and Paper Combine)

Q. "Our editors are swamped with letters of complaint from readers in Archangel. Any comments on this?"

A. "The problems of the All-Union Sawmill, as Archangel is being called, stem from the fact that almost 200,000 people are employed here in the sub-sector. But as to their living and working conditions... during the brief period that I have been a People's Deputy, so many heartaches have been poured out to me that it would be beyond the ability of one individual to relate them all. But let me tell you in detail about the kinds of problems with which I have to deal. It is in our Oblast that the largest wood chemical complex in the country has been developed, that is to say, the combines that produce the lion's share of the country's pulp and paper. But they are simultaneously the centres of origin of the region's ecological stress, for they are poisoning the natural

bodies of water and the atmosphere. Although our forest resources are at par with those of Finland, we are harvesting only half as much timber as the Finns. Nor is there any end in sight to the paradoxical situation in which the Oblast is shipping millions of cubic metres of timber beyond its boundaries while leaving its own mills without sawtimber. With the arrival of spring, production at those mills will almost dry up.

"The state of our forests is such that to continue to put up with further overfellings - in excess of the allowable cut - especially of coniferous trees, given the shrinkage of the tundra forests, would be criminal.

"I categorically disagree with the decision of the USSR Council of Ministers sanctioning overfelling for the Northwestern region in 1990 in the amount of 11,600,000 cubic metres, including more than 4,000,000 cubic metres for the Archangel Oblast.

"I am hoping that the executive committees of the local Soviets will exercise their right to review questions of forest use and that they will not permit fellings in excess of the scientifically validated coupes.

"Returning to the ecological consequences of the activities of the pulp and paper enterprises, it is clear that without united efforts, and perhaps, without a special governmental decision, this matter will not be resolved, since the enterprises don't have enough funds to modify the technology and build highly efficient purification plants."

Lesnaya promyshlennost

December 14, 1989

Page 1 (abridged)

Ecological Awareness and More Efficient Resource Use
Hampered by Administrative Duplication

There are many causes of negative manifestations in natural resource utilisation. Take the forests. In the RSFSR they cover an area of 766,600,000 hectares. This is 95 per cent of the entire forested region of the country. However, the absolute boss and manager of this wealth is not the people nor the Soviets, but Union-wide departments, namely the USSR Ministry of the Timber Industry, the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) and the State Committee for Forestry (Goskomles), which latter organization is also responsible to the State for monitoring the conduct of forestry and the efficient use of the forests.

The results of heedless departmental management are lamentable. In a number of oblasts and krais the forest deteriorated due to the fellings exceeding the allowable cut. The coniferous forests, especially Pinus sibiricus, are becoming exhausted. Losses of timber are enormous. The forest plots and areas administered by the woodworking enterprises are littered with waste products. A great deal of timber is floating or has sunk to the bottom in rivers and enclosed water basins.

Inasmuch as 95 per cent of the forest-covered area of the country is in the RSFSR, the question regularly arises: why do we need a USSR State Committee for Forestry when there is already a Ministry of Forestry for the Republic? Another surplus link in the administration of natural resource use is the RSFSR Chief Directorate of Hunting (Glavokhota). It seems to me that we would be better off without these bodies.

The separateness of views with respect to natural resource use and above all else, departmental ambitions, are standing in the way of the emergence of nature conservation bodies. The time has come for everyone to be

imbued with the idea that it is impossible to strengthen the economy without taking the ecology into consideration. Economics, technology and ecology are interconnected links in all of our work.

Lesnaya promyshlennost

December 2, 1989

Page 2 (abridged)

(Article signed by A. Koval'chuk, Chairman of the RSFSR State Committee for Nature Conservation)



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