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DATE 7 December 1990
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External Affairs and
International Trade Canada

EXTRACTS FROM THE SOVIET PRESS ON THE SOVIET NORTH AND THE ANTARCTIC

JULY 1990

Dept. of External Affairs
Min. des Affaires extérieures
OTTAWA

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ANTARCTIC

Scrap Metal and Other Waste Products Accumulate in the Antarctic

In embarking upon intensive development of the Antarctic, have we not transferred our unsolved ecological problems to the frozen continent? This is the question that the APN correspondent put to V. Martyanov, leading research associate of the Arctic and Antarctic Scientific Research Institute.

"Fortunately, man began developing the Antarctic after already becoming aware of the need to preserve an ecological equilibrium in nature. But today there are no environmentally neutral forms of human activity, and over the thirty years that polar stations have existed we have already succeeded in disrupting the natural integrity of the continent.

The most acute problem of Soviet stations, in my view, is the accumulation of scrap metal and the delays in removing it from the continent. Equipment that has outlived its purpose quickly freezes in the ice, the metal turns to powder and is very difficult to remove. At temperatures that are, for us, extreme but are common in the Antarctic, hydrolysis - the process of dissolving the metal - proceeds rapidly in the ice.

The Institute is doing all it can to solve this problem, is organizing special expeditions to transport the metal to the stations Bellingsgauzen, Leningradskaya and Russkaya. But some stations are faced with very difficult conditions. For example, one of the first Soviet stations

was Mirnyi. The settlement is located in an area where Antarctic ice crops out. Obsolete equipment at the station was recently replaced, and an expedition from our Institute being sent soon to the frozen continent is due to bring out the waste metal.

The long-distance transport of metal being practised today is very costly. The Institute is looking for a more effective solution which would make it possible to link the polar stations and the USSR in a unified production cycle which would include proper storage, transport and sale of the scrap.

A station is a small city which also has its everyday refuse. The recovery of this refuse at Soviet stations is going rather well. For the most part, paper is used in the packaging of Soviet products and the paper is simply burned. Western stations, on the other hand, have to think about re-processing plastic and other synthetic packaging materials.

At Soviet stations there are no radioactive wastes or release of highly toxic substances. But I am not going to claim that our equipment is the most reliable, and this alone points up the fact that there are real ecological problems at our stations in the Antarctic."

Vodnyi transport

14 July 1990

Page 3 (full text)

ARCTIC

Canada and the USSR to Cooperate in Developing
Shipping Lanes Near Alaska

On February 20, in the item "The Arctic is Not Only in Russia", the newspaper Vozdushnyi transport reported on a Soviet-Canadian seminar on hydrometeorological support for ice navigation in the Soviet and foreign parts of the Arctic. The article evoked lively interest among many readers and a number of organizations who expressed a desire to expand and give concrete expression to the ongoing international Arctic cooperation.

The best answers to all of these questions may be found in a book published at the end of 1989 and written by a former Pevek resident, Aleksandr Ivanovich Arikainen, now an associate of the All-Union Institute of Systems Research. The book is entitled "In the Ice of the North American Arctic," with the subtitle "Stages in the Development of the Northwestern Sea Route." It was published by the Publishing House of Hydrometeorological Literature, contains 214 pages and sells for 65 kopecks. The book's chief reviewer is also a former resident of Pevek - V.I. Smirnov, now with the Arctic and Antarctic Scientific Research Institute (AANII). Both the author and the reviewer devoted many years to airborne ice reconnaissance and both have been members of international teams. For this reason they are well acquainted with the subject under discussion.

The book summarizes a voluminous body of facts from foreign sources, with more than 400 titles listed. It examines in detail the history of the discovery and development as well as the current status of the American Northern Sea Route in relation to all of the various managerial, transport, aviation, military, political, financial and scientific problems.

The book is usefully distinct from previous publications in its wealth of illustrative material. It is truly geographic, containing as it does 22 maps and 12 drawings.

The general conclusion of the book is that whereas our Northern Sea Route has long since become a normal operational transport artery, the Arctic route in the seas and straits of North America is still in its initial stages of development and lacks large-scale cargo transport.

Efforts to forcibly demolish the North American ice by frontal assault have been unsuccessful. It is precisely for this reason that our foreign colleagues in recent years have started organizing scientific support for arctic navigation by attempting to adopt and implement on their side the wealth of experience accumulated by Soviet polar experts.

On the whole, as the author intended, the book is a useful reference aid for all specialists studying and developing the Arctic.

In concluding this discussion it should be pointed out that a flight from the "Severnyi polyus-31" (North Pole-31) station recently brought to Pevek a high level delegation which included Yu.A. Izrael, Chairman of the State Committee on Hydrometeorology; his deputy A.N. Chilingarov; and the cosmonaut V.V. Aksenov. B.A. Krutskikh, Director of AANII (also a resident of Pevek in the early 1960's) spoke to workers of the Pevek Hydrometeorological Service about concrete steps being taken to promote commercial, technical and scientific cooperation in the Arctic between Canada and the USSR. In particular, plans call for joint operations in the near future by seamen, pilots and scientists of both countries on Soviet icebreakers and aircraft off the continental shelf in the waters around Alaska.

Vozdushnyi transport
24 July 1990
(full text)

The Art of Survival At Dikson

Anyone who has visited the small arctic village of Dikson on the shore of the Kara Sea has certainly been struck by how dirty its streets are, by the refuse scattered about. For a long time this was not considered anything out of the ordinary. What could you expect of people who considered themselves to be here temporarily? What sort of claims could you submit to expeditions if, in the national interest, they dumped tons of iron into the sea and on its shores, ploughed up the tundra with the tracks of their all-terrain vehicles and spilled fuel on the ground. In a word, "conquered" the North.

Today the "greens" are making ever firmer demands to halt destruction of the vulnerable arctic environment. But the ministries and government agencies are not paying much attention to them.

"I am amazed," says V. Galkin, Chief Physician of the Dikson Line Public Health and Epidemiological Station for Water Transport, "that we haven't had some sort of epidemic break out before now. Believe me, the conditions for this exist in Dikson. Apparently, it is only the cold weather that slows down development of infections."

Specialists feel that the ecological situation in the coastal region of the Soviet Arctic is growing worse every year, although this is not happening as fast as in the large industrial cities. And still, the consequences of man's economic activity here are fairly tangible. Fishermen claim that the number of fish in the Gulf of Enisei and the Kara Sea has declined in recent years. Stocks of the Enisei whitefish are threatened.

It appears that an indifferent attitude toward the environment of the North has become the norm. In 1986 a fish plant in Dikson acquired the large refrigerated fishing trawler "Mongoliya". This ship, which has operated

for two decades in southern seas, turned out to be unsuitable for arctic navigation. As a result, in time holes developed in its hull and the holds filled with water. And on the trawler were tons of diesel fuel, fuel oil, ammonia... In the summer of 1988 a storm cast the "Mongoliya" onto the rocks along the shore, leaving it lying on its port side. Even now one can see the contents of its fuel tanks pouring into the sea. Dozens of commissions have visited the arctic village. They hotly debated projects to save the trawler and the sea. But the projects have remained on paper.

Today there are nearly 3,000 people living in Dikson. Five-storey buildings with conveniences are being built in the village. But it is precisely this situation that is adding to the uneasiness. In the 75-year history of Dikson no purification facilities have been built here. This means that all of the industrial and domestic effluents are still being discharged into the Kara Sea.

"In the five years that I have lived here I have become convinced that nobody is interested in building purification facilities," says Galkin. "Nobody has any intention of doing it."

In Dikson there is a conflict between the interests of numerous ministries and government agencies, each of which thinks only of how much it can extract from the Arctic and doesn't give a damn about the place itself. But the principal "users" of the high latitudes are still branches of the USSR Ministry of the Maritime Fleet, the Ministry of Civil Aviation, and the State Committee on Hydrometeorology. They also haven't allocated any funds for construction of purification facilities. They are frightened of the high costs. Building anything in Dikson is two to three times more expensive than in central parts of the country. And the local soviets cannot make any headway in this. Dikson is under the jurisdiction of Krasnoyarsk Krai only on a territorial level. In fact, it is managed from Moscow, Leningrad and Murmansk. The local budget doesn't permit the incurring of such expenditures.

The village is cut off from the mainland by hundreds of kilometres and is encumbered by dozens of acute social problems. Take, for instance, supplying the buildings with drinking water. Quite frankly, it was frightening to listen to the chief physician:

"Talks about this have been going on for a good ten years, if not longer. As a public health physician I can state with full authority that the water coming from our taps cannot be drunk. It is dangerous to health. Dikson, although it stands on the shore of the sea, is virtually in a "desert". Geologists' surveys have shown that artesian wells cannot be drilled here. Tundra rivers and lakes are far away. And so the northerners decided at some point long ago to build a dam on a small stream that flows near the village, thereby creating an artificial lake. But the stream cannot supply enough fresh water to satisfy Dikson's needs. Nature lent a hand. In the winter, enormous quantities of snow accumulate in the tundra. During the two to three months of summer the snow melts and fills the reservoir. But together with the spring freshets, an enormous quantity of microorganisms harmful to man enter the lake. A considerable quantity of these microorganisms are brought to the lake by the ever present seagulls which, after feeding on the village dumps, fly to the lake to "take the waters".

Studies conducted by the Dikson Public Health and Epidemiology Station have shown that this drinking water, if it can be called that, is more than ten times more polluted than permitted by State Standards. And the most frightening thing of all is that this water enters apartments, kindergartens, the school, the hospital... In this water people wash their clothes and dishes and bathe their children, they drink it, prepare soup with it...

In 1987 and 1988 water levels in the lake were not high enough. A decision was then made to use salt water from the sea in heating and hot water systems. Its colour resembled that of badly brewed coffee. But more importantly, this water completely finished off all of the plumbing, and this now simply has to be replaced.

On January 1, 1990 Galkin formally prohibited the use of the drinking water. Alas, the prohibition is not being observed.

What colour is snow? Even a child would answer 'white'. In Dikson the snow is black. The heating season here lasts the entire year, and the chimneys of the coal-fired boilers smoke 365 days per year. Tons of ashes and soot settle on the streets of the village and on the heads of the residents. The proximity of the Norilsk Mining and Metallurgical Combine is also felt here. So the air in the Arctic is not as pure as one might think.

The village is literally overflowing with garbage. Rats and seagulls feed here, as well as the occasional polar bears. There has long been a need to build a small facility to treat waste.

"I don't want to create the impression." Galkin goes on, "that we are merely reciting a litany. Both the Executive Committee and the Public Health and Epidemiology Station have made numerous appeals to various bodies and to the people's deputies. This has produced nothing. I have also written to the procurator's office, but they can't institute legal proceedings because of a lack of corpus delicti. Public health bodies, it seems, are waiting for a disaster, but that will simply be too late. I have already stopped issuing decisions for allocation of land plots for new construction. I haven't found any other way to make an impression on authorities.

People have different attitudes about the station in Dikson. Some say: Why panic, since nobody has died from the water in Dikson yet? But an objective assessment of the situation indicates that virtually no one is showing an interest in the northerners' concerns. They are surviving, that's all that counts...

Vodnyi transport
28 July 1990
Page 2 (full text)

ENVIRONMENT

Give Nature a Chance

I recently returned from a series of flights. I haven't been able to shake a sense of disaster. In the upper reaches of the Pechora and Tsilma, in the vicinity of Naryan-Mar, we witnessed the continuing merciless destruction of natural resources. For a year already I have been attempting to draw the attention of the USSR Supreme Soviet to this problem. I have spoken up in public a couple of times. I attended a reception by N.I. Ryzhkov. And now I am working with members of our parliament's Committee on Economics trying to find a way to prevent the ecological destruction of the North.

Everything is linked together in nature. If even a single link in the chain is destroyed the consequences may be irreversible. Take mineral fertilizers, for example. They are delivered late to the Pechora and unloaded on inundated sections of the riverbank. The bags break, the fertilizer spills out, and then come the floods... The result for the harvest is zero, but the fish which enter the flooded grasslands perish, the water is poisoned, dead ducks and shorebirds lie all about.

Practically all of the forest of the Mezen taiga has been cut down, there is no water left in the Mezen River, and all of the streams in the taiga have dried up. Motor boats used to travel these waters all summer but now a boat can no longer pass. The same fate awaits the Pechora.

What is especially troubling is that we have grown accustomed to such facts: we say "maybe it will work itself out..." The same attitude towards responsibility prevails on the part of those who are destroying nature. For example, in Naryan-Mar a well was drilled without following regulations. This well gushed for six years, poisoning the Pechora with hydrogen sulfide. Fish stocks suffered colossal damage. And would you think that the guilty party was punished? No! He left for a higher position.

Of course, it isn't just a matter of levying fines. We have to make it so that there is an advantage to protecting the environment. By not investing a certain amount of resources for environmental protection in the development of a project, we are condemning the environment to destruction at the outset. In this event, the best laws on nature protection are of no avail.

From time to time acute discontent about ecology crops up in various regions of our country, and then, as a rule, government agencies quickly come forward with the funds, equipment and specialists. But our land cannot be saved by emergency measures.

The only solution is to have a carefully thought-out ecological program and to subject it to the same strict controls as applied to the housing and food sectors. This will at least give our wounded environment some change of survival.

V. Nosov, USSR
People's Deputy for
UST-Tsilma district,
Komi ASSR
Izvestiya
6 July 1990
Page 3 (slightly
abridged)

International Cooperation Aimed at Saving the Barents Sea

The Tenth Regular Meeting of Members of the "Northern Kalott" Movement Has Taken Place in Murmansk

First a few words about the history of this movement. The word 'kalott' itself can be translated as 'cap'. A cap on the top of the planet. In 1962 representatives of northern regions of Norway, Sweden, Finland and the Soviet Union met for the first time in the Finnish city of Kemi to discuss common problems. Among those participating in the kalott meetings are representatives of world peace committees, trade union, women's and youth groups, businessmen, and representatives of sister cities...

And now comes the tenth anniversary meeting of members of the Northern Kalott movement in Murmansk. This time ecological problems were at the centre of attention. In virtually all special interest groups, whether composed of representatives of peace organizations, business circles or youth, again and again one hears the word "ecology".

We cannot be insensitive to the enormous atmospheric emissions of sulphurous compounds, the destruction of forests, the catastrophic pollution of the sea with oil products, pesticides, domestic waste... Alarming facts could be heard in the reports of M. Nenonen of Finland, the Swede G. Nilsson, and the Soviet scientist G. Matishov.

It seems that we are moving away from the demonstrations of good intentions and peaceful rhetoric with which, to put it bluntly, we and our northern neighbours attempted until recently to plug the holes opened by the policy of confrontation, and we are moving toward business-like discussion and cooperation in the realms of economics, ecology and trade. And so now

Practically all of the forest of the Mezen taiga has been cut down, there is no water left in the Mezen River, and all of the streams in the taiga have dried up.

compliments are being replaced with concrete suggestions. Judge for yourself: two firms, a Norwegian and a Finnish, are proposing to Murmansk to modernize the "Pechenganikel" Combine. This will make it possible to almost completely eliminate the harmful emissions from its operation. And realizing that the costs - one billion Norwegian kroner - are today beyond our means, they are prepared to search for ways to meet them. This is one of the points in the "Northern Plan", the creation of which was reported by A. Melkildu, a representative of the Arctic Development Fund from the Norwegian city of Tromso.

The condition of the Barents Sea today is arousing particular concern in everyone. The population of cod, capelin and other species of fish has already declined by a factor of 5 - 10; the sea animals are dying.

Scientists who spoke at the current kalott meeting have distinguished among the many causes of this situation those that are primary. These are the operations of the fishing fleets of the USSR and Norway; the activities of merchant and naval fleets from the Soviet Union and NATO countries; geophysical surveys of the continental shelf in support of oil prospecting; acid rain; and the discharge of domestic and industrial wastes. There is a good reason why, during the meeting, people referred to the Gulf Stream as the "sewer" of the planet. If we do not heal the sea, the gene pool of marine life may also be lost.

In the course of the discussions a joint formula was worked out for saving the sea. For example, it has been proposed that seismic sounding be prohibited during the period of fish spawning, to create sanctuaries at fish spawning sites and sea animal nurseries, to organize a system of ecological stations to monitor the water of the Gulf Stream, and to reduce the size of the nuclear fleet.

opened by the...
toward business...
And so now
Page 3 (slightly
abridged)

The Barents Sea has played and continues to play an important role in the life of coastal states of the Northern Kalott, and the exploitation of its resources should be under the control of these countries. This is the substantiated demand advanced by participants in the meeting at Murmansk.

(Author) A. Fest,
State Inspector of the Murmansk
Oblast Committee on Nature Protection
Vodnyi transport
21 July 1990
Page 3 (full text)

Mass Destruction of Starfish Remains a Mystery

Yet another attempt to determine the cause of a massive destruction of starfish in the Gulf of Dvina in the White Sea has ended without results.

This time it is an inter-departmental commission working under the aegis of the USSR Council of Ministers and the USSR Academy of Sciences that has suffered the defeat.

Scientists have rejected a theory about increased radiation and poisoning of the Gulf by rocket fuel components spilled from a submarine that was stricken in December 1989. On the other hand, a story among old timers about containers of mustard gas going down in the White Sea in the 1950's seems to have been confirmed.

Yet another group of scientists and specialists from Moscow have arrived in Archangel. Maybe it will succeed in clearing up the mystery of an ecological catastrophe which continues to grow.

Izvestiya
12 July 1990
Page 2 (full text)

Will the Novaya Zemlya Nuclear Testing
Range Reveal Secrets?

A session of the Nenets Okrug Soviet has appealed to the Supreme Soviets of the USSR and RSFSR regarding the Novaya Zemlya nuclear testing range.

The news of a possible transfer of underground nuclear testing to the arctic archipelago of Novaya Zemlya conflicts with the idea of a nuclear-free zone in Northern Europe advanced by our government. The news has evoked a wave of public protest. In view of this, at the end of May military authorities permitted a group of people's deputies from Archangel Oblast and the Nenets Autonomous Okrug to visit Novaya Zemlya for the first time since the opening of the range in 1954. "Unfortunately, they treated us like tourists who should only be told about achievements," noted one of the participants in this visit.

Despite information published in local newspapers to the effect that the radiation situation is safe for people living in the Arctic, negative attitudes toward the range have not changed. For this reason, the session of the Nenets Okrug Soviet appealed to parliamentarians of the

USSR and Russia. In particular, the session considers it essential to make public plans for use of the Novaya Zemlya testing range and to introduce compensatory benefits for these who live in the area affected. The People's Deputies are concerned about the fact that military authorities have turned the Arctic archipelago into a zone that is beyond the jurisdiction of soviet authority, and they are insisting that a town soviet be set up there.

Izvestiya
14 July 1990
Page 2 (full text)

OIL AND GAS

Yamal Peninsular Gas Fields: Contruction of Treatment Facilities

River workers of the Ob-Irtysh Steamship Line have delivered to Yamburg the first three superblocs for construction of the next in the series of comprehensive natural gas treatment facilities. They were delivered across the Gulf of Ob by crews of the motorships OTA-961, OYA-989 and OTA-973 of the Surgut Repair and Operations Base. Safe guidance for this extraordinary convoy was provided by the crew of the icebreaker "Kapitan Moshkin".

Meanwhile, the next in a series of ship convoys of the Ob-Irtysh Steamship Line transporting superblocs have already left Tyumen. Four giant blocks, assembled in the Tyumen shops of the "Sibkomplektomontazh" Association, will make a journey of 2600 kilometres along the rivers Tura, Tobol, Irtysh and Ob and the Gulf of Ob.

On the first leg of the trip from Tyumen tugboats of the Tyumen shipbuilding and ship repair plant are leading the way. Later they will be relieved by river workers of Surgut, Khanty-Mansiisk and Salekhard. At Yamburg the superblocks will be brought ashore and loaded onto the storage platform. They will then be brought by winter road into the tundra to the Yamal gas fields.

Vodnyi transport
31 July 1990
Page 2 (full text)

SOCIOLOGICAL ISSUES

Regional Conference on Social, Economic and Ecological Problems Held at Murmansk

Cold, lack of oxygen, long polar nights. How can northerners be compensated for these and other extreme conditions?

On June 21-23 in Murmansk, a regional conference was held on social, economic and ecological problems of the North at the initiative of the trade union councils of the Buryat, Karelian and Yakut autonomous republics, the Krasnoyarsk Krai, the Archangel, Irkutsk, Kamchatka, Magadan, Murmansk, Sakhalin and Tyumen oblasts, the Komi Republic Federation of Trade Union Organizations, and the council of the RSFSR Federation of Independent Trade Unions. Our newspaper reported on this on June 28.

The participants were in session for three days. From the podium were heard official addresses which N. Dvoryanchikov, a delegate from Kamchatka, dubbed "a funeral lament".

"We came together to solve concrete problems," he said. "But all we heard from the podium was how badly off we are."

Indeed, the essence of the speeches was summarized in the conference resolution: "The socio-economic status of residents of the North indicates that the many years of intensive exploitation of natural resources in that region have been conducted without regard for social and demographic conditions. The economic situation has taken on a dangerous aspect. All of this has led to a radical worsening of living conditions and quality of life for workers, especially aboriginal peoples.

The social development of the regions and the material wellbeing of the workers do not correspond to their contribution to the economy of the republic and of the country. Existing forms of compensation do not cover the additional expense associated with differences in the cost of living, working and climatic conditions, nor does the level of wages and salary correspond to actual labour expenses.

Many of the conference participants with whom we spoke were perplexed:

"We knew all of this before the conference started. Why assemble so many people from such distant regions? Just to listen once more to speeches by the leaders of the oblast trade union councils? But surely the real power is with the workers? Why weren't they allowed to speak from the podium?"

There were also other proposals which, in my view, made good sense.

"All of this speechifying is only taking up time. What we should be doing is creating a working group which would quietly and in a businesslike manner draw up documents and get them ready. After that we should hold discussion in the regions and submit our ideas to the Soviet government", said Captain-Instructor S. Kudryashov, of the Korsakov Ocean Fishing Base. "If you think about how much money was spent in conducting this conference, how many people were forced to give up almost a week of work..."

Of course, action is needed. But we need other methods whereby the main thing is not the measure itself but its result. After all, there has been, in a formal sense, constant attention on the North on the part of party leaders and the government of the country. A curious document was prepared by the press service of the RSFSR Federation of Independent Trade Unions for the conference participants. We learned from it that in the period 1980-1990 alone there were 15 resolutions passed by the Central Committee of the CPSU, the USSR Council of Ministers and the RSFSR Council of Ministers regarding northern regions as well as 18 resolutions of the USSR Council of Ministers and three of the RSFSR Council of Ministers. All of them began with the words: "On measures for further comprehensive development...", "On urgent measures...", "On measures to provide..." and so forth. Trite, stale phrases which no one ever acted on or even thought about. And so it is appropriate to ask: Why has the recently created Federation of Independent Trade Unions gotten involved in problems which state organs are unable to resolve?

"By the end of last year," said V. Romanov, deputy chairman of FNPR, "the trade union councils of the twelve northern regions had come up with the idea to take on themselves the pressing social problems without waiting any longer for the government of the USSR. Numerous appeals to the government had received little attention. And when the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia was

established in March, these regions appealed to us for help. Our work is aimed at carrying out social mandates that come 'from below'. We see this as the basis of our efforts. Experience has shown that only decisive actions and the uniting of forces brings success."

For the first time the demands of the trade unions are advancing the sober findings of scientists rather than merely confirming the sad facts and appealing to reason. Taking part in the work of the conference was Doctor of Economic Sciences G. Luzin, director of the Institute of Economic Research of the Kola Research Centre; A. Tkachev, laboratory head at the Arkhangelsk Medical Institute; and Professor S. Kaznacheev, department head of the Novosibirsk Institute of Clinical Experimental Surgery. Their analytical and scientifically well-founded papers, which were prepared at the request of trade union bodies, formed the basis of the conference's final documents. At times the scientists were brutal in their characterization of the problems, but how could it be otherwise? On the subject of the North, with its incredibly difficult conditions, one mustn't speak glibly, as has frequently been done in the past.

"A special issue is that of payment for adaptation, in the biomedical context. This is essential," said A. Tkachev. "Real life has shown that the existing material compensation is largely symbolic and absolutely demands a re-examination.

"And it was precisely the word 'demand' rather than the former 'request' which was heard so often in the speeches and final documents. One of these is entitled 'Plan of Action for Trade Unions in the Upcoming Period'. This document contains, in particular, certain points which some trade union activists are not accustomed to. Namely: developing new forms of action for trade union organizations and carrying out certain measures aimed at fulfilling the demands of the workers, including strikes as

one of the effective means of resolving labour conflicts; and a call to celebrate every year, July 10-20, Unity Action Days of Russian Trade Unions dedicated to the protection of social and economic rights of workers, in commemoration of the strikes in the Kuzbass in 1989."

Yet another serious document - "Resolution of the Regional Conference on Social and Economic Problems of the North". The document lists in concentrated form all of the ills plaguing northern residents for many decades. And following the traditional introduction - the "complaint" section attesting to the facts - is a clear enactment section which enumerates numerous concrete problems point by point, including time frames for implementation. The document includes demands from northern residents to change the Soviet legislation regarding pension support and income tax, and the development by the RSFSR State Construction Council and the Ministry of Public Health, no later than January 1, 1991, of scientifically sound standards for the development and siting of a network of medical preventative treatment institutions. The Supreme Soviet of Russia is called upon to accelerate and work out adoption of the legislation "On Ecology", "On Protection of Nature", "On Protection of Labour", "Law on Baikal"...

Some serious allegations were made. Participants at the conference turned over a number of documents to USSR and RSFSR people's deputies to be conveyed to the Supreme Soviets of the country and of Russia, and to N. Ryzhkov, Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers.

It is well known what an important role is played by maritime and river fleets in developing regions of the Far North and the Far East. Unfortunately, unlike the USSR Ministry of Fisheries and a number of other ministries, neither the USSR Ministry of the Maritime Fleet nor the RSFSR Ministry of the River Fleet have authorized representatives to participate in solving the major problems of northern residents. The country's river workers and seamen were represented by V. Volikov, chairman of the Murmansk basin committee of the river transport trade union and member of the presidium of this sector's trade union central committee.

"What demands are the seamen making?" I asked Vladimir Mikhailovich.

"The same as other people," he answered. "We did not prepare anything separately."

What a pity! Especially since there were different examples. V. Evseev, captain-director of the large refrigerated fishing trawler "Mys Grotovyi" and a representative of the fishermen of Sakhalin, worked with persistence and diligence at the conference. He prepared an appeal from the fishermen to B. Yeltsin, Chairman of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet, I. Silaev, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Russia, and N. Kotlyar, USSR Minister of Fisheries; gave the appeal to a group of people's deputies, and was very active organizing. There should be more such people protecting their rights!

Vodnyi transport
14 July 1990
Page 2 (full text)

TRANSPORT-AIR

Retirement of Il-14 Poses Problems in
Ice Reconnaissance and Support Flights

I heard some sad news at the Kolyma-Indigirka Integrated Aviation Detachment:

"This year we will be saying farewell to the last of the Il-14 airplanes. Production was halted some time ago and the few that remain are no longer serviceable.

one of the effective means of resolving labour conflicts; and a call to celebrate every year, July 10-16, Unity Action Days of Russian Trade Unions dedicated to the protection of social and economic rights of workers, in connection with the anniversary of the Revolution of 1917.

I can well understand the sadness of northern residents. These simple planes have rendered excellent service in the skies of the Arctic. It was precisely their reliable wings which in the spring and autumn delivered new teams to arctic stations and high-latitude expeditions, simultaneously delivering cargo as well.

"We frequently visit Franz Joseph Land, Severnaya Zemlya and other distant islands and drifting ice islands - right up to the Pole," relates V. Tsoun, commander of the flight detachment. "Acting on requests of the Arctic and Antarctic Institute we conduct oceanographic aerial surveys and take water samples."

More and more often helicopters from Zhokhova Island have been bringing in freight and people to the planet's northern summit.

"AN-26 are delivering cargo to the island from Cherskii and Chokurdakh," continues Vladimir Ivanovich, who has spent more than thirty years in the North.

His uncle Arkadii Petrovich, by the way, also worked in the arctic skies. Mr. Tsoun is a first-class pilot and an acknowledged ace in Yakutiya. I have visited with him and other pilots of Cherskii - the centre of the Nizhnekolyma Raion - in distant corners of the tundra and of the Arctic Ocean, or the "northern 'akiyan'" as they used to call it. For example, at the polar stations "Bukhta Ambarchik" and "Ostrov Chetyrekhtolbovoi".

I had occasion to fly with Vladimir Ivanovich in fierce cold on an ancient AN-2. The mission was to drop off cargo for hunters and Arctic workers of Logashkino, which is at the mouth of the Alazeya, the icy waters of which flow into the East Siberia Sea. The homemade electric heater in the cabin was balky: it only came on when this seasoned airplane was descending. Neither fur coats nor heavy fur boots could guard against the cold. And Northerners put up with this for years.

On that trip we set down along the lower reaches of the Alazeya near the winter station at Kokunya. The snow, bound fast in cruel frost, stamped down and swept clean by gusting winds and malicious snowstorms, did not squeak under the boots, it rang. We warmed ourselves inside the station, built by the Ukagirs - and sipped fragrant tea. Our hosts spoke unhurriedly about their life in the harsh tundra. Ice-covered fish were piled atop a stack of firewood on the outer porch, and there were clumps of blue ice on the station.

"In the winter you can't get water, so we use ice. That's why the tea tastes so good - there's no chlorine in the water," said our hostess.

The aviation detachment also carries out ice reconnaissance and guides sea-going ships. Experienced pilots assess the solidity and thickness of the ice by its colour, hummocks and cracks, although, of course, instruments are also used. In helping the ships set course, the aviators also lead them along the course. In the east they meet the ships at the Chukotka Peninsula and carefully accompany them to the Indigirka. In the west they take the ships under their wing near Severnaya Zemlya, at Mys Kosisty, parting from them at the Bering Strait. Not infrequently, the savage northern wind pushes the ice into shore. It is extremely important to alert seafarers in time.

Recently river-going ships have also been sailing from Tiksi to the Olenek, the Indigirka and the Kolyma. Here even now, in the summer, you can see ice fields any day. Storms rage frequently, but the river motorships cut their way through the icy waves because the crews know that they will be alerted to dangers in good time, the elements will not catch them unawares.

"We have long been debating whether we need year-round navigation along the Northern Sea Route. But, as before, navigation in our sector of the Arctic lasts approximately two months," laments V. Filatov, First Secretary of the Nizhnekolyma Raion Committee of the CPSU. "Things have not gotten beyond the talking stage."

I think that Vyacheslav Antonovich is right. For the time being the aviators at Cherskii are not able to be of genuine assistance to the sailors by providing accurate ice reconnaissance and reliable guidance on all routes. It is becoming increasingly difficult to solve other problems as well. Why is this? I mentioned the reason at the beginning: the indispensable IL-14 is going into retirement. Since 1970 the Ministry of Civil Aviation has re-organized the polar air fleet, and life in the Far North has become much more difficult. Virtually nothing has appeared to replace the LI-2, IL-14, IL-18 and AN-12, now retired from service or currently being phased out.

For almost twenty years polar aviation has been under the control of the Yakut, Magadan, Krasnoyarsk and Archangel regional administrations. As popular wisdom would have it, too many cooks spoil the broth. The expensive MI-8 helicopter made its appearance, but it is unprofitable for fishermen, hunters and reindeer herders to use it.

"When the Polar Aviation Administration was abolished, they began installing essentially identical equipment of airplanes destined for the Arctic and for Central Asia. We adapt them ourselves for practical use, thereby surmounting a heap of obstacles," says G. Yachmenev, commander of the Kolyma-Indigirka Integrated Detachment.

"For us to use MI-8 helicopters," he goes on, "is virtually impossible. Because of their small fuel tanks their radius of operation is limited. On missions to support drifting stations, the helicopter pilots are forced to establish intermediate bases on ice floes and air fields between "hops", which is extremely risky during the Polar Night. The planes are not equipped with "Cospas-Sarsat" beacons of the international search and rescue system."

"It is particularly the ethnic minorities who suffer from the high cost of technology," says V. Filatov. "Over a period of two years the State farms of the Lower Kolyma paid out more than 700,000 rubles for the operation of the MI-8 and AN-2 despite the fact that flying time was significantly reduced."

A Commission on the Arctic has been formed by the USSR Council of Ministers. But, as the aviators point out, it would be better to create a special committee with stronger powers which would unite all of the necessary organizations and coordinate their activities in the region.

The people I spoke with in the Arctic are convinced that the day is not far off when convoys of merchant ships flying the flags of various countries will be sailing the Northern Sea Route. And this day will come even faster if the Arctic receives the reliable AN-74 and, later, the AN-28, also promised for a long time, to perform ice reconnaissance, accompany ships at sea and support polar stations. And, to be fully on the safe side, northerners believe polar aviation should be resurrected as a top priority. The high latitudes need strong, reliable wings.

Pravda

16 July 1990

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TRANSPORT - WATER

Railway Bottlenecks and Administrative Bungling Cause
Drop in Cargo Deliveries Destined for the Northern
Sea Route

The arctic navigation season is in full swing, but reports coming in from base ports of the Far East indicate that 100,000 tons less freight have been delivered there in comparison with last year. The western freight sector - Murmansk, Arkhangelsk and Kandalaksha - is also suffering. Here the shortfall in deliveries is 30,000 tons. This is a huge transport artery supplying virtually all of the North and Northeast of the country.

"How are northerners going to live and supply themselves in the winter?" This is the question I put to N.P. Tsakh, Deputy Minister of the USSR Maritime Fleet.

"The situation is serious," says Nikolai Petrovich. "I can't understand what the suppliers have in mind. The freight was prepared on time for the beginning of the navigation season. What we are transporting at the moment was delivered to the ports and embarked as early as June. The USSR Gosstab (State Committee for Material and Technical Supply) has the habit of disappointing us and others who count on the assistance of the maritime fleet during the navigation season.

The arctic fleet is not spoiled with sunshine and good weather. It is prepared for anything unexpected. Loading and unloading operations sometimes have to be performed as much as ten miles from shore. If it isn't waves, it's ice. In these working conditions you have to make allowance for surprises. It is easy to understand how a muddle in supplies could introduce anxiety into the work of the fleet.

"And what hurts the worst," adds Valerii Yakovlevich Leshchenko, Deputy Head of the Main Administration of the Cargo Fleet, "is that this year is one of the best ever for navigation. The ice situation in the eastern regions of the Arctic is good. There are huge patches of open water in the area of the East Taimyr Massif in the Laptev Sea. The Bay of Tiksi opened two weeks ahead of schedule. The specialists insist that this hasn't happened in fifty years. But in view of the capriciousness of the North one should never feel too comfortable. Along the northern coast of the Chukotsk Peninsula stands an ice massif, and when the winds come off the ocean the Northern Sea Route is covered in ice. And then the situation becomes even more critical.

What's the problem here? According to Leshchenko there are a number of reasons. Somebody, he believes, has started managing in a new way, and ocean freight, it would seem, doesn't pay so they are having second thoughts... As usual, somebody is being unreliable. At the request of USSR Gosstnab restrictions have been lifted on the transport of export freight from the ports, and that includes ports in the Far East. Control used to be strict. Now some reckless supplier sends off freight without first getting approval from the transport ministries for its passage. Until the matter can be straightened out, the freight is held up, warehouse space is blocked, as are the railroads. These bottlenecks have an effect on coastal freight shipments, which form part of the overall picture. Recently there were almost 800 train cars at a standstill on the Far Eastern Rail Line. Among their loads are goods which, according to the plan, should already be aboard ships.

Sovetskaya Rossiya
20 July 1990
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TRANSPORT - WATER
Tankers leave for the Arctic

The tanker "Taganrog" left Riga today for Novaya Zemlya to deliver petroleum products to polar workers. Also taking part in the current Arctic navigation season are tankers of the reinforced ice class "Samburg", "Kashira", "Leninsk-Kuznetskii" and other tankers of the Latvian Maritime Steamship Line. Their crews are experienced in working at high latitudes. Where ice conditions are difficult the tankers will moor themselves to the landfast ice and pump the liquid fuel to shore depots.

Vodnyi transport

7 July 1990

Page 2 (full text)

Floating Dock Heads Northward

Today a floating dock built at the "Baltiia" plant in Klaipeda set off for its port of registry in Yakutsk. It is being towed by three large ships of the Baltic Maritime Steamship Line.

The new dock is autonomous. It can be used to repair large fishing, industrial and transport ships. The dock is equipped with a powerful generator, two portable cranes and other equipment which make possible the comprehensive mechanization of ship repair operations. It is also carrying wind-protection devices.

Vodnyi transport

7 July 1990

Page 2 (full text)

What can the "Vaigach" Do?

Sea trials are beginning in the Gulf of Finland for a new Soviet nuclear-powered icebreaker. It takes its name from Vaigach island, which is situated on the boundary of the Barents and Kara Seas. This also happens to have been the name of the Russian steam-powered icebreaker aboard which a Russian hydrogeographic expedition discovered the Severnaya Zemlya archipelago in 1913.

As already reported in Pravda, the world's first nuclear-powered ship "Lenin", which led transport convoys on the Northern Sea Route, is now at permanent anchor. Now the Murmansk Maritime Steamship Line has four nuclear-powered icebreakers of the "Arktika" type, the "Taimyr" that can operate in shallow water and in the mouth of rivers, and now the "Vaigach".

The "Vaigach" was built on the slips of the Finnish shipyard "Vyartsilya Marin", and the finishing work - the installation and start-up of the power plant - were carried out at the Leningrad "Baltiiskii zavod" Association.

There are 116 members of the crew. They are quartered in one and two-berth cabins containing comfortable bunks and a divan, a writing table and cabinet, a shower, refrigerator, television...

The satellite system installed on the ship makes it possible for the sailors to receive television transmissions from Moscow at any point on the Northern Sea Route.

To be sure, the Finns have provided first-class accommodations on the icebreaker. The seamen have the use of a psychophysiological relaxation centre, solitude lounges, and an excellent sauna with a swimming pool.

The vessel is leaving the "Baltiiskii zavod" Association's mooring and heading out into the Gulf of Finland.

Sea trials are beginning. The nuclear reactor is being fired up.

Pravda
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