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

JULY 1990

Canada

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TIMBER AND WOODWORKING

Railway Tie Replacement Situation Reported Stretched to the Limit

I have just had occasion to read an important telegram at the headquarters of the "Krasnoyarsklesprom" Association. It recommends that "... representatives of the railways meet with directors of production associations of the Ministry of the Timber Industry for the purpose of negotiating and renegotiating agreements for 1990 and 1991 so as to ensure that the resources allocated and remaining for cross-ties and beams, in accordance with a preliminary communication from USSR Gosplan, be kept at the current year's level."

"This is the third time in six months that I have flown to Krasnoyarsk", complains A. Plakhotin, the Deputy Head of Route Servicing for the Odessa Railway. "Soon, our trains won't have anything to run on, for not only have we been undersupplied with cross-ties year after year. We are being undersupplied now."

V.G. Shubin, the Deputy General Director of "Krasnoyarsklesprom", was unable to gladden the heart of his southern visitor. He had no cross-ties at all and advised the latter to turn to the producers, after first enticing them with some sort of "mutually advantageous arrangement."

One hesitates to enquire, even rhetorically, how the Odessa Railway could awaken the interest of the woodworkers. On one occasion, for example, they asked U.A. Plakhotin for a carload of chocolates, but he was unable to fulfill the request as the railway doesn't haul confectionary.

The cross-tie situation has been stretched to the limit. During the last five years, the output of products for the railway workers has steadily declined at enterprises of "Krasnoyarsklesprom". The situation has been analysed by every kind of high level committee, including one appointed by the government. The result has been a steady increase in the plan for deliveries and an equally steady failure to fulfill it.

The railway representatives maintain that the picture is practically identical in all of the forested regions. In view of this, the railway engineers are expressing dissatisfaction with the wait-and-see policy of their ministry. For some reason it prefers to receive less than its due of wooden cross-ties, even though it could have covered the requirement long ago with concrete ties, for the installing of which all that is needed is to arrange for the production of a couple of bolts and one double-turn washer.

Incidentally, there are no guarantees that the woodworking enterprises are not "converting" some portion of the raw material intended for production of cross-ties with an associated aim in mind. At least, exports of the lumber to the socialist countries are decreasing, while those to capitalist countries are increasing. Specialists maintain that growth is only possible here through the use of large-dimension timber.

But even if this is the case, such liberties will scarcely affect the overall shortage of cross-ties. The trouble lies elsewhere. The association lacks the resources to produce the output required by the railway workers. In other words, it is being presented with unbalanced plans. In the last year, for example, "Krasnoyarsklesprom" undersupplied its consumers by more than 700,000 cross-ties. Notwithstanding this, however, the State production order has been increased by almost 50 percent. The question that arises is, will it fulfill it? Of course it won't. True, the Association's managers tried to spread the order throughout its subordinate units, a vain attempt. This is not the time to be dictating the conditions to the "lower ranks".

Even though some impressive corrections to the State production order had been made, through successful appeals to State arbitration, the fact is that out of 7,508,000 cross-ties a total of 3,357,000 had been rejected. What does this say for planning?

At the Ministry of the Timber Industry, desperate attempts are currently being made to salvage the situation and put on a brave face for the consumers. Not only does this apply to cross-ties. The State order is not being executed in full with respect to sawtimber, pit props, telegraph poles and other items. Sector headquarters has been intending to clarify the relationship with the Krasnoyarsk people at the USSR State Arbitration Agency.

But even if the Ministry twists the Association's arm in Moscow, my guess is that this won't change a thing. The collectives at the sites are convinced that they are in the right and are not giving in to "Krasnoyarsklesprom".

From all of this, the following conclusions must be drawn. Voluntarism in planning is becoming obsolete, albeit slowly and very unwillingly. Remember the words in the telegram to the effect that the resources for 1991 will remain "according to a preliminary communication for Gosplan, at the level for the current year". Since we already know what the actual level is, it would not be a bad thing for the appropriate bodies to find out and take it into consideration. Otherwise, in the following year the railway workers will be scouring the country in search of the promised cross-ties.

Lesnaya promyshlennost'

5 July 1990

Page 1 (abridged)

Breakthrough on the Chulym - How the Loggers Are
Battling the Government's Monopoly

A normal person would have difficulty understanding how he could go into the forest, cut down a tree, drag it home, and not profit from it. The woodsman neither planted the tree nor raised it. He simply went into the taiga and took it, at no cost. And yet, he's in debt? It isn't possible!

It is possible if the wood rots at home without being used. This is just what is happening in the "Tomlesprom" (Tomsk Timber Industry) Association where at felling sites, along rivers and roads, in lumber yards and at trans-shipping points every sixth tree felled is lost out of a total of 6 to 7 million cubic metres. A third of those not lost leave the the oblast as bare timber. Anybody who wants to can trade in roundwood - the union of consumers' societies, local industrial enterprises, and state farms.

Of course, the prices are laughably small: ten 'tacks' per cubic meter. The proceeds from the wood are lower than the cost of harvesting it. But we haven't sunk "Tomlesprom" yet: the State is keeping it afloat with subsidies. It is also being supported by funds in exchange for a 100-percent State production order, thereby stripping 'lespromkhozes' (logging and timber establishments) to the bone. While others engaged in felling timber contrive to exchange it for scarce goods, sometimes abroad, the association is like a shoemaker without shoes - it is in a forest without trees. General Director, V. Shutov complains about a tunnel with no light at the end: the loggers have nothing with which to build housing for themselves.

In order to obtain even a 'smidgin' of board timber for their own needs, management closes its eyes to over-cutting, thereby contributing to a ruinous destruction of the forests. The reserves of raw materials are dwindling - in their pursuit of timber, crews have cut the

last pine ridges and are moving further and further from the villages, which are beginning to be eroded by unemployment. "Economic genocide" is how the loggers characterize the association's attitude toward them. Meanwhile, the directors of "Tomlesprom" shrug off the loggers' grievances about suppression and themselves lament their helplessness in the face of ministerial power. They lament, but they imitate it.

At first glance one doesn't notice the way that the Chulym River is being re-directed by whirlpools deep below the surface, undermining the steep right bank and clearing a new channel for itself. Clod by clod the steep wall is tumbling down, and already the muddy waters have broken through, straightening out the river's course and carrying the retaining wall away into the new channel. The stagnant, swampy old river bed is left behind to dry up.

I ask the reader to pardon this old-fashioned imagery, but something similar is happening on the taiga shore where the Chulym lespromkhoz is based. While its logging output is not large (140,000 cubic metres per year) it has earned the noisy reputation as an unbridled scoundrel. Its director, P. Fedorov, is for "Tomlesprom" something like Stenka Razin, in holding autocratic sway on the Chulym.

His assistant on economic and commercial affairs, N. Ostroverkhov, produced figures showing that "autocratic management" is good for the lespromkhoz. While logging used to result in millions in losses, it now brings in nearly 90,000 rubles profit every year. And at the same prices...

How have they done this? By "earning" money on the side? By speculating in timber? No, they've done it by processing the wood themselves locally. The lespromkhoz has refused to deliver roundwood ordered by the association. At six branches - Narga, Zolotushka, Sulzat

and elsewhere - the lespromkhoz has opened its own sawmill facilities. Their products - beams, railway ties, boards, etc. - are bought by construction and railway enterprises. What they buy is not wood but goods. In other words, that which, during the reign of our powerful administrative system, was discussed countless times, approved, and repeatedly proposed as an "emergency solution" but never carried out became reality at the lespromkhoz just as soon as it began to move toward a market system.

Being aware of the genuine advantage of even superficial processing, the Chulym people are making the most of it. Inviting other enterprises to go shares, they are building a furniture-making shop and a wood processing combine, and are preparing to produce parquetry. They are also supplying materials for reconstruction of local social amenities - housing, kindergartens, clubs, and subsidiary farms. The lespromkhoz also has a brick factory which was restored from old ruins by a local cooperative.

The fact that the Chulym Lespromkhoz is bringing its products onto the market against the will of the government department is felt by the directors of "Tomlesprom" to be a slap in the face, an insult to their supreme authority. All the more so since the Chulym example is catching. Other lespromkhozes have claimed for themselves the right to dispose of the timber they log and are already seeking the customers they need without consulting the association.

But the power of the monopolistic department is still considerable. It has placed on the wilful Chulym lespromkhoz the heavy yoke of rafter. This yoke is harshly chafing against economic viability: each cubic meter of timber floated (and the total is approximately 300,000) represents 7 to 8 rubles of uncompensated expense. These costs are devouring all of the profits obtained from its enterprising initiative. It is being driven into debt. The fact is that the Chulym people, being forced to provide transport services to other lespromkhozes are penalising themselves. And it is the prices dictated to them that are responsible.

Worse still, the Tomsk Supply Administration (Tomsksnab) is withholding payment for production delivered by the lespromkhoz in accordance with the State production order. The arrears amount to almost one and a half million. The Chulyum people have not only been compelled to live on credit but to repay the bank at higher rates due to the delays forced on them. In effect, they are paying for someone else's failures and economic mismanagement. Moreover, they have been virtually deprived of subsidies.

The Chulyum people rebelled. Fedorov sent a letter to Tomsksnab demanding a change over to direct financial dealings with customers and compensation for the cost of water transport and handling of timber from rivers to railroads. What's more, Tomlesprom was told that if the terms set by the lespromkhoz were not met it would refuse to raft, especially drift timber.

As Ostroverkhov said to me, the lespromkhoz (which has 1200 people) can live comfortably without floating any timber at all, nor does it need to log 150,000 cubic metres. A hundred thousand would be enough. If all the wood is processed intelligently and every chip is utilized, people will have a year-round employment. The better you make it, the better the price you can get.

"And if the government department doesn't want to break its ties with us, it can sign an equitable agreement. It is no longer in a position to block our progress toward the market."

The Chulyum is steadily clearing a new channel for itself....

Izvestiya

30 July 1990

Page 2 (full text)

PULP AND PAPER

Price of Printing Paper Soars On Account
of Burgeoning Demand

For many years now, newspaper publishers and printing trades workers have maintained strong business links with the Kondopoga and Balakhna pulp and paper combines. They have often come to the aid of each other. Perestroika, however, is bringing a new dimension to these relationships. Today, the directors of the paper combines can frequently be heard saying: "If you want to be given priority in receiving our products, you must pay more for them. And if you want our collective to be a dependable supplier in the future then invest money for the development of production." In short, today's "friendship" must be sustained economically. Even the slightest misunderstanding of this will lead to interruptions in deliveries of paper to the country's publishing houses.

"Up to and including strike action, our collective intends to fight for a reduction in the State production order (Goszakaz) says V. Gerasimov, Secretary to the Party Committee at the Kondopoga Pulp and Paper Combine (PPC). "Otherwise, we shall find ourselves in an economic depression..."

And this is not just talk. The papermakers of Solikamsk and Balakhna have similarly spoken out against the goszakaz. The Ministry of the Timber Industry and the USSR Council of Ministers have been forced to make concessions to these three giants. Several tens of thousands of tons of newsprint were left for the collectives to sell as they please.

Hundreds of representatives of cooperatives and newly emerged publishers are ready without a murmur to pay two to three thousand roubles for a ton of newsprint. They are offering meat, sugar, vegetables, fruits, mixed fodder and building materials in equivalent value. We saw with our own eyes persistent visitors to Balakhna and Kondopoga who either clung to the coat tails of the directors of the paper combines, or lay in wait for them in ante-rooms, on the street and at the entrances to their homes.

In the case of the leading producers of newsprint the share of the goszakaz has remained at 95-98 percent of their capacities. But even this tiny reduction enabled the Kondopoga PPC, for example, to instantly find some highly profitable foreign partners. In exchange for the paper left for the collective to sell on the free market, the noted "Burda Moden" Company will deliver to the shores of Lake Onega motor vehicles, sanitary engineering equipment, gas and electric stoves for apartments, food products, radio equipment, and machines and assemblies for automatic control systems.

Here is a voice from the banks of the Volga. "If you would give me unrestricted access to just three per cent of our output", says V. Lapukhin, Hero of Socialist Labour and Director of the Balakhna PPC, "I would feed, clothe and shoe not only our own collective, but even an entire district. But whereas at Balakhna, at present they are merely dreaming of getting 15,000 tons of newsprint in three of four years time to sell on the free market, at Kondopoga they have long since passed through this state. They are intent on getting higher margins: on accepting a goszakaz of not more than 70 per cent of the amount produced. The remainder - about 200,000 tons per paper - will be sold abroad, mostly to capitalist countries, at prices of 600-700 dollars a ton.

In a letter sent to M.S. Gorbachev several months ago, the Kondopogans wrote in particular: "This will provide an opportunity, by increasing our exports of paper, which is in great demand on the world market, to renovate

production plant, acquire advanced technology for recycling of waste paper, take environmental enhancement action and resolve many social problems. In contrast to other industrial sectors the papermakers are capable of coping on their own with the vast majority of the problems that have accumulated, and may even render important assistance to the loggers".

It cannot be denied that with regard to the loggers, who for decades have been supplying the Kondopoga PPC with excellent spruce pulpwood, the papermakers are quite correctly taking a lenient attitude. They feel that a huge wave of displeasure could originate in the woodlots if they were to sell paper at 600-700 roubles a ton, while continuing to purchase wood, as before, for 25-40 roubles a cubic metre. The difference between the prices, as we see, is inordinately large.

The Kondopogans are offering to solve the problems experienced by the printing trades workers and publications people as follows: "We are confident that a well-founded reduction in the number and circulations of newspapers, and a change in the periodicity of their issues, will be properly understood by the people."

"No, the people will never understand if there is a drop in the circulations of the newspapers and a cut back in other publications", comments the director of the Balakhna PPC. "There is no necessity for this, for we should have been thinking about fair prices for paper, timber and newspapers long before now. Ours are the lowest in the country".

"Yes, these consumers are forming very close contacts with us, and are rendering financial assistance", confirm the directors of the Kondopoga PPC. "You see, we are planning to start up yet another machine in 1993 - our tenth - and it will produce more than 200,000 tons of paper annually."

There is one other salient factor. The Supreme Soviet of the Karelian ASSR recently adopted a resolution stating, "When drawing up plans for 1991, directors of associations and enterprises must provide for the channelling of ten per cent of their output into the republic's exchange fund". To be exchanged for meat, milk vegetables, fruits, clothing and footwear.

But the "Karellesprom" (Karelian Timber Industry) Association, of which the Kondopoga PPC is a part, issued yet another directive: "Taking into consideration the situation in the State system of material and technical supply and the change over to a market - type economy. We consider it necessary for all subordinate enterprises to anticipate the setting aside of a further ten per cent of their output for exchange operations to meet their own needs".

Indeed, life is forcing us to exchange just about everything. For example, in the matter of the enormous complex of operations associated with the commissioning of the aforementioned tenth papermaking machine at the Kondopoga PPC, the State does not guarantee that it will be fully supplied with the building materials, cement, pipes, cable products, power generating equipment and timber, nor is it allocating funds for reconstruction and new building activities. This means that willy-nilly you will be searching for advantageous deals and will be turned into a money-changer.

There can be no doubt at all that combines planning the commissioning of new production capacities are finding themselves in a difficult situation. "We are living on bank credits and are up to our eyes in debt", say the directors of the Balakhna PPC. The need for funds is so pressing that the combines are gladly responding to a proposal about financial collaboration and are holding talks concerning the guaranteed supplying of paper to those consumers who will invest money in their development.

The collaboration between the paper combines and the publishing houses will remain. There would be no point to either side giving it up. But the forms in which it is manifested will inevitably change.

At the combines they are now willingly speaking of a joint-stock amalgamation of funds. To all appearances, the publishing houses will be in a better position next year and will profit from the opportunities opening up. The remainder will be even more strongly in the grip of paper fever.

Pravda

8 July 1990

Page 8 (slightly abridged)

Nationwide Shortage of Newsprint: Pulp and Paper
Combines Beginning to Dictate Own Terms

During the years since the advent of glasnost many publications have increased their circulations sharply. Like mushrooms after the rain, many new newspapers are appearing. At virtually every Moscow street corner astute vendors can be seen, offering their editions at 50 kopecks or occasionally a rouble per copy. Where are they getting the paper? It is no accident that the paper shortage has become much more severe. The railway cars and ships carrying the white rolls from the paper combines often arrive at major publishing houses in a partly unloaded condition. This is because a substantial portion of the paper is being resold to new publishers.

But this is not the only reason for the shortage. It has long been known, and often described in the press, that the paper market is reacting to all this by raising the prices. The paper combines are striving to get a low State production order, so that the remainder of the paper can be sold at a higher price. Many producers are in fact managing to do this. Next year, with the consent of USSR Gosplan and the government the combines are bent on obtaining a State production order that is not 95 per cent of the total, as in the case of present, but only 75 per cent. They will sell the remaining quarter of the amount produced, which totals many hundreds of thousands of tonnes, at higher contracted prices.

By taking advantage of this opportunity, the combines are starting to dictate their own terms to consumers within the Union: "If you want paper, you must pay more for it than you did previously. It would be better still if you were to set aside your own financial resources for the rebuilding of existing mills and the construction of new ones."

How are the government and the State Planning Commission (Gosplan) reacting to all this? Here is what Deputy Chairman V.K. Gusev of the USSR Council of Ministers said recently in reply to a letter from the editors of "Pravda": "In view of the critical situation that has arisen in supplying the country's publishing houses with newsprint, chiefly on account of the cessation of purchases through imports, it is no longer possible to seek out additional quantities of newsprint for publishing "Pravda" on eight sheets. Please work within the quotas for newsprint allotted by USSR Gosplan for 1990, which will fully guarantee the current year's circulations."

In his letter V.K. Gusev, as we see, refers to the cessation of newsprint purchases through imports. But he makes no mention of the fact that our country is selling many hundreds of thousands of tonnes of paper abroad. Surely if we have ceased purchasing it, given the severity of the paper shortage the logical thing to do is to cease selling it.

Today, "Pravda" is being published on eight sheets more often than was planned. This is because the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U., not without the knowledge of the government, authorized an increase in the size of the newspaper from six sheets to eight in 50 issues per year, in connection with the preparations for and holding of the 28th Congress of Party.

It is a pity that V.K. Gusev did not take into account one other important element. For the current year "Pravda" has been allocated 126,925 tonnes of paper. According to the State production order, however, the actual delivery is determined at only 95 per cent of the requirement, which means that we shall be short by 6,346 tonnes.

Pravda
23 July 1990
Page 2 (abridged)

Rail Transport and Warehousing Facilities in Derelict
State at Balakhna Pulp and Paper Combine

A severe shortage of newsprint has developed in recent months. On more than one occasion editions of some of the central newspapers have had to be cancelled, "Gudok" among them.

Due to the launching of many new newspapers and information sheets, and also the production of printed matter by informal groups, the demand for paper has increased and it is being avidly sought after. By selling their sheets and special editions for 50 kopecks and more, the informals are prepared to pay the official and "contractual" suppliers five to ten times more than the prices set by the State.

But this is not the only reason for the shortage. It has long been known, and often described in the newspapers, that deliveries of paper are very poorly organized. So once again, I find myself investigating the interrelationships between the partners, in an attempt to clarify the numerous "whys".

It would seem that the railway workers on the Gorkii Main Line are keeping closely in touch with the collective of the Balakhna Pulp and Paper Combine (PPC) and that they are in fact supplying them with sufficient numbers of covered freight cars for shipments of finished product. But it is also clear that officials at the Combine are not always doing their share in the partnership by keeping the transport newspapers supplied with paper. This in spite of the fact that the requirement for it is quite modest. For instance, the printing trades workers in Rostov, Donetsk, Dnepropetrovsk and Kuibyshev, where "Gudok" is produced, require no more than one carload a month, even for the costly multiple runs.

On each occasion when I arrive at Balakhna, in the PCC's sales department they show me the way-bills, which give one the impression that shipments of product are even outstripping the train-movement graph. Where, in fact, is it going? Unwittingly the suspicion arises: is it being disposed of "on the side"? But after mulling this over I ask myself "Could it be that our transport muddle is to blame? How many railways cars containing all kinds of goods in short supply are sitting on the sidings baking?"

At the administrative offices of the Combine I turn my attention to the display chart showing the planned development of the enterprise's approach spur lines. Judging by its faded and discoloured appearance, the need for such development is minimal and any new dotted lines or projected installations have remained untouched for years, even though the Combine is faced with a catastrophic requirement for the development of transport and warehousing facilities. The enterprise is being suffocated by the insufficiency of spur lines and areas for unloading raw material and shipping out finished product.

Meanwhile, the directors of the Combine and the Ministry of the Timber Industry are adhering to the old way of doing things: the funds being allocated are for the development and introduction of new paper production capacities, and only then (the leftover funds) - for what in their view is of secondary importance: transport and warehousing facilities.

Incidentally, references to the importance of the latter can be heard at every level. In actual fact, the unloading and loading tracks have no direct egress to Pravdinsk Station serving the enterprise. They have become a peculiar kind of trap: you don't bring freight cars prepared for onward forwarding from the sidings, as the rolling stock is currently being processed at loading areas and warehouses situated immediately adjacent to the station.

Having made a saving in one area, we lose in another: last year alone fines for above-the-norm demurrages of freight cars exceeded 400,000 roubles. Whereas in 1988, despite the six hours norm every car was standing idle there for nine hours, the figure today has already reached 17! In a mere six months, 3,000 cars have been lost for loading purposes.

"We are prepared to supply the Combine every day with 100 or more cars filled with raw material", says the Pravdinsk Station Master, O. Stolyarova. "The enterprise, however, is in a position to unload at best a total of 85. This is because the delivery of all of the cars, positioning them for loading and cleaning those that have been unloaded is accomplished by way of a single duct, along one track only. Under these conditions how can one expect to achieve a rhythmic pattern of operations and accelerate the rates of turnaround?"

Yet another "impasse" is the level crossing of the track linking the station with the pulp and paper combine. This is the site of the Gorkii - Ivanovo highway where there is a heavy flow of traffic. While motor transport is being let through, shunting operations come to a halt. What ought to be done is to build an overpass or a motor by-pass, even though either solution would be costly.

On the other hand, congestion of freight cars also occurs when the raw material is being unloaded: pulpwood of normal length is arriving alternately with shorter material. The loading staff are at their wits end to know how to sort and sling this cargo. There is a shortage of unloading areas for industrial wood chips and up to 40 freight cars are needed for this every day. At times they must wait their turn for up to 20 or even 40 hours.

But no sooner has a line of them formed when first one crane, then another breaks down. The mechanisms are old and have just about had it. Whereupon a braking effect begins along the entire chain of cars. Quite often, up to 500 cars loaded with timber are assembled at the approaches to the Combine, paralysing both train movement and shunting operations.

When you take a close look at the spur lines leading to the Combine, not only in plan view but also in profile, as they say, a depressing picture emerges. While there is no point in depicting all of the shortcomings and defects, suffice it to say that derailments and damages to freight cars are frequent, with the need for additional heavy fines.

Of course, the Combine has its own track installation crews, but they are underqualified and lack the necessary machinery and tools. The Gorkii railway workers must also accept part of the blame. They interpret their partnership with the papermakers to mean: "We made a bargain with you that we would keep you supplied with freight cars, but you are not sending paper to our publishing house".

The fact is that at the Combine they are just now assembling the eighth papermaking machine, which will produce 200,000 tonnes annually. The raw material is to be waste paper: neither a lot nor a little - a million tonnes a year. This means that to provide for shipments of the raw material and finished product there will be an additional requirement for more than 10,000 cars.

It is not difficult to imagine the sort of railway car babel that will arise at the pulp and paper combine if reconstruction of the spur lines, loading and unloading areas and warehousing facilities continues to drag on. What is needed immediately are exceptional measures aimed at accelerating the work.

Gudok

20 July 1990

Page 2 (abridged)

FORESTRY

Wanted: A New Policy on Forest Use that Is
Ecologically and Economically Sound

Public opinion concerning the calibre of nature conservation in the forested zone of our country, and sometimes even the opinion of specialists, is shaped first and foremost by the state of preservation of forest stands. Deficiencies in nature conservation activity are measured by the scale on which logging operations are conducted or by how quickly the forests are being "eliminated" by the loggers.

Wide segments of the public are virtually unaware of a process of the opposite kind, namely reforestation, which occurs either naturally - through self-seeding of felled areas - or artificially, by the establishment of forest plantations. For more trees are being grown than are being cut down!

The USSR State Committee on Forestry (Goskomles SSSR) and its field entities conduct a forest inventory every five years for purposes of monitoring the condition and regeneration of the forests.

It is not the intention to swamp the reader with figures, but without them it is impossible to be conclusive. During the period from 1978 through 1988, when the last forest inventory was conducted, despite overfellings of allowable cuts, which in some years attained 20 million cubic metres for the coniferous species, the total area of forested land under the control of Goskomles SSSR and the USSR Ministry of the Timber Industry, increased from 729 to 750 million hectares and the area occupied by coniferous forests increased from 531 to 539 million hectares. Favourable changes of a similar kind also occurred in the European part of the country.

Throughout this period, when the total supply of standing timber remained almost unchanged, its volume decreased only in mature and overmature forests (from 52 to 46.9 billion cubic metres, and in the European USSR from 8.9 to 8.7 billion cubic metres). How are we to assess these results and to what extent are they fraught with adverse consequences?

The share of mature forests in the total forested area of the USSR is 54 per cent, and of these, 41 per cent are overmature. The corresponding figures for the European part of the country are 35 and 49 per cent. Forest scientists consider the ratio optimal when the proportion of mature forests is about 20 per cent of the forested area. As we are seeing, in our country the fault lies in the opposite direction.

It is common knowledge that in mature forests and especially those that are overmature, the increment of wood is much lower than in young forests. Sometimes there is no increment at all. Due to trees becoming infected with stem rot the yield of merchantable timber in such forests is greatly reduced. Maintaining mature and overmature forests as standing timber for a long period of time is poor

management. World practice in forest use calls for felling to be done at the right time and in volumes ensuring equalisation of the age structure of forest resources. This is in order to achieve an optimal ratio between areas occupied by young, middle aged, maturing and mature forests.

In manifesting concern over the fate of our forests, the Soviet public is only dimly aware that agricultural lands are being rapidly encroached upon by forests. This applies in particular to the most valuable of these: the arable lands.

It was for this reason that in 1975, in the course of an inventory of the lands in the non-chernozem zone of the RSFSR, 300,000 hectares of arable land were written off. But more realistic assessments of the land balance during the period 1987 - 1989 showed that in the RSFSR alone 1.4 million hectares of arable land had been lost.

The lands which our grandfathers reclaimed from the forests in past eras and which are yielding at best 12 to 15 centners per hectare in the non-chernozem zone, we are returning to the forest element, obtaining annually from a hectare about one and a half cubic metres of what is usually low-grade timber. This is because the ploughlands are being taken over, predominately by alder, aspen or scrub. Obviously our grandfathers were cleverer than we.

We are paying more attention to woodlands than to farmlands. If only this were sensible! The decree of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR dated November 27, 1989 "On Urgent Action to Achieve Ecological Improvements Nationwide" foresees a number of radical measures aimed at the regulation of forest use. These are both unexpected and far from incontrovertible in the view of the vast majority of specialists, both in the logging industry and forestry.

This applies first and foremost to the lumping together under the jurisdiction of Goskomles SSSR of all of the forests except those managed by collective farms, in order that they may be made available for use under leasehold. While there is no objection to the second part

of this measure, according to the first part Goskomles SSSR is invested with exclusive rights to enjoyment of State-owned forest resources. But of course, it is common knowledge that any monopoly leads to stagnation. It was precisely on account of the monopoly in forestry (until recently about 96 per cent of the nation's forest resources were administered by Goskomles SSSR) that symptoms of stagnation developed within the sector, from which we are only now struggling to emerge.

The forest resources of our closest neighbour - Finland - are in very diverse forms of ownership (privately and State-owned forests, forests belonging to enterprises, communes, parishes etc.). Their managerial competence is superior to ours. Over several decades, a clearly defined forest policy which we call Scandinavian has been worked out in the country. Its main distinguishing feature is rationalism and efficiency.

Such a policy, however, could only have originated in the absence of exclusive rights to ownership of forest resources. Conversely, in a situation where one department is in a position to dictate policy it is difficult to anticipate favourable changes in the sector.

One of the "achievements" of our domestic forest policy is the highly complicated system of dividing the forests into groups and categories of protection, which now number 35 designations. Categories of forests functioning mainly in a protective role account for 9 designations.

Each category of forests has its own regime of forest use. In a substantial part of certain of the forest categories principal fellings are prohibited, with only improvement and sanitary fellings allowed. This accounts for the fact that in the European Urals zone alone 25.7 million hectares of forests, or 16.4 per cent of their total area, have been removed from the economic turnover.

Repeated appeals by the USSR Ministry of the Timber Industry (Minlesprom SSSR) concerning the need to reduce the number of forest protection categories and resolve the question of doing stripped-coupe fellings where forest management and ecological requirements make this advisable are finding no support on the part of Goskomles SSSR.

Today, while disputing the idea of leasing out forest resources to forest users Goskomles is simultaneously coming forward with proposals about making it solely responsible for State monitoring of the condition and regeneration of the forests, and at the same time divesting itself of productive functions, namely reforestation and forest tending operations. Surely in the present economic climate it is hardly justifiable to talk about relegating an entire economic sector to the position of a dependant.

What has happened to the 25.7 million hectares of forests in the European Urals zone (and other zones also), excluded from the economic turnover through the implementation of this "single forest policy"? They are not being used. No wonder! Who would take out a lease on a forest without being granted the right to use it?

Even though, according to the new legislation the local soviets have the right to dispose of natural resources, no one is interested in taking possession of such forest resources. The new economic relations which are taking shape in our country clearly demonstrate the absurdity of such a policy.

Beginning in 1991, overfelling of allowable cuts is to be prohibited everywhere. At first glance this is to be welcomed. But there are enterprises in the sector in which up to 55 per cent of the forest resources (remember, the norm is 20 per cent) consist of mature and overmature forests. These forests urgently need to be felled. In them, nine out of every ten trees cut down have heart rot, and debris left on the felling area is as much as 30 cubic metres per hectare. Instead of providing for equalization

of age structure of the forest resources, as is required by silvicultural science, and thereby obtaining a higher increment, what is occurring is a further accumulation of overmature timber stocks.

Not one of the countries with a high standard of forest management permits this to happen. Take Finland for example. That country, where the forested area amounts to only 20 million hectares, harvests more than 55 million cubic metres of timber annually and knows nothing of overfellings. The Karelian ASSR, with a forested area of about 10 million hectares, harvests 9.6 million cubic metres, of which 1.2 million are due to overfelling of allowable cuts.

In Finland the category that we conceive of as the "allowable cut", which must be rigidly observed and is mandatory, does not exist. There, the factor determining the yield is acknowledged to be the annual increment and one of the most important goals of forest management is equalisation of the age structure of the forest resources and preventing the accumulation of overmature forests.

Recently the Supreme Soviet of the USSR adopted a resolution calling for a ban on fellings of cedar. This species, like no other, has been classed with the "privileged" species by forest legislation and public opinion. In general, this is in order. The only question is whether these "privileges" should be widened.

Of the 39.3 million hectares of Siberian nut pine forests about 9.4 million hectares are classed with the nut harvesting zones in which industrial felling of timber is prohibited. Forest management there is done solely for the collection of nuts. While this seems excellent at first glance, in actual fact not more than 100 grammes of nuts are gathered from a hectare annually.

the Tyumen Oblast last August. Have any practical conclusions been drawn? Here is what the Deputy General Director of the Tyumen Oblast Association, A.G. Turlov, said.

The allowable cut for the cedar forests (where logging activity is able to take place) amounts to 16.9 million cubic metres. But the actual size of the felling is only 4 million cubic metres. The stocks of mature and overmature cedars (not including the nut harvesting zones) currently amount to 1,710,000,000 cubic metres. Given the logging volumes being achieved, these stocks could last for 430 years! This is without taking into account the Siberian nut pine forests excluded from the economic turnover, where there are also about 1.8 billion cubic metres of mature and overmature timber. It is also necessary to point out that we have adopted very advanced felling ages in the case of this species, the effect of which is to promote the accumulation of forests that are exceedingly old.

According to the Institute of Forests and Wood, of the Siberian Division of the USSR Academy of Sciences, cedar stands aged 150 to 200 years are 30 per cent infected with rot. In the case of 200 to 250-year old stands, the figure is 40 per cent. Mature and overmature Siberian nut pine forests account for 45 per cent of the total. Due to the predominance of overmature stands the yield of marketable timber in them is less than that of the other coniferous species. Many millions of cubic metres of cedar wood are going to waste, that is, they are simply rotting away. Meanwhile, as a result of the resolution adopted to prohibiting the felling of cedar, the nation's pencil factories - producing more than a billion pencils per year - have been left without raw material.

Many local Soviets are engaged in illegal delistings of forested areas from the resource bases of logging enterprises. Between 1981 and the present time alone, about 500 million cubic metres of growing stock have been dislisted. The vast majority of them had already been furnished with access roads, along with the industrial collecting areas for registration of felling produce.

Thus, due to the shortage of raw material, the logging sub-sector which serves as the resource base for the timber industry has been placed in an extremely difficult position. Because of the prohibition of overfellings, as of January 1, 1991 alone the loss in terms of logging capacities will amount to 12.3 million cubic metres. The ban on cedar fellings will reduce the timber extraction volume by a further 4 million cubic metres. The establishment of State national parks and preserves (the areas of some of which are planned to exceed 600,000 hectares); the unsanctioned delisting of stocks of standing timber from the raw material resource bases of logging enterprises; and also other actions which have already ceased to be controlled, are making the timber supply situation for the economy even more complicated. All of this means that mines will be left without pit props, railways without cross-ties and housing construction sites without timber.

What is needed is a new State policy on forest use - a policy founded on economic and ecological principles and which is neutral with respect to the departmental interests of Goskomles SSSR and Minlesprom SSSR.

Yu. Spirin
Forestry Engineer, Moscow
Lesnaya promyshlennost'
7 July 1990
Page 2 (full text)

Firefighting Arrangements for Tyumen Forests Upgraded

Fires inflicted enormous harm on the forests of the Tyumen Oblast last summer. Have any practical conclusions been drawn? Here is what the Deputy General Director of the "Tyumenlesprom" Association, A.G. Turlov, said.

"Conclusions have unquestionably been drawn and they appear to have been well thought out. The USSR Ministry of the Timber Industry has just allocated 5,300,000 roubles for aerial protection of the forests. This is 1.8 million roubles more than last year. Two additional air units have been formed at the Tyumen base for aerial protection of the forests. The strength of the parachutist and smoke jumper service has been increased by 100 men.

"Aerial fire brigades have been formed at all of the composite timber enterprises. By decisions of the local soviets of the Khanty-Mansiisk Autonomous Okrug three million hectares of highly combustible tracts of forest have been assigned to enterprises of the oil and gas complex.

"Nevertheless, for 53 million hectares of taiga it is clear that not enough has been done. Operational expenditures on forestry in the "Tyumenlesprom" Association remain at about 13 kopecks per hectare, which continues to be the lowest in the country and the sector."

In the second ten days of July the weather became hot and there were many thunderstorms, which resulted in a sharp increase in the number of fires. On July 17 alone, 26 of them originated. Emerging as "leaders" in the incidence of forest fires are the Berekhovo, Nizhnevartovsk, Konda and Khanty-Mansiisk districts. The Tyumen base for aerial protection of the forests had plenty of work to do. Every day, up to 170 men from neighbouring enterprises were recruited for firefighting. Also supporting the Tyumen people were sub-units of the Urals and Western Urals air bases. At the time of writing, 40 fires are still burning. The situation is becoming ever more complex in that very soon, the taiga will be invaded by a horde of unorganized berry pickers from our own and the neighbouring Sverdlovsk oblasts.

"In addition to the tax on revenue," continued Andrei Genrikhovich, "the amount of which is determined in accordance with the USSR law, the ministry has established deductions for enterprises of the Association will be used for financing expenditures on environmental conservation, which already amount to 23 million roubles for the year 1991. In our view, these funds should be left at the disposal of the enterprises and directed towards effecting improvements in forestry, and in particular, combatting forest fires.

Lesnaya promyshlennost
21 July 1990
Page 1 (slightly abridged)

ENVIRONMENT

Biosphere Preserves Being Established in the USSR

Reader's question: "In various regions of the country, nature preserves have been established. What are the conditions governing their formation?"

The answer to this question can be found in the collection of documents entitled "On Protecting the Environment" (Politizdat, 1986). It contains, in particular, a statement that the status of a national preserve is determined by a Charter ratified by a decree issued by USSR Gosplan and the USSR State Committee on Science and Technology in April 1981.

A mandatory condition for nature preserves as the superior mode of nature conservation is the prohibiting of any activity disrupting the natural complexes of protected areas, and the conducting therein of scientific research studies directed primarily at round-the-clock monitoring of principal natural features.

In accordance with the UNESCO program "Man and the Biosphere" a part of the preserves are currently categorized as biosphere preserves, the purposes of which consist primarily of preserving a genetic pool of plants and animals, as well as of ecological system as a whole, and also the conduct of scientific research aimed at studying the dynamics of natural processes. Biosphere preserves serve as the main global control over the state of the biosphere of our planet.

A detailed description of the preserves, listed by union republics, is to be found in the book "The Soviet Union's Nature Preserves", edited by A.M. Borodin and E.E. Syroechkovskii (Timber Industry Press, 1983). It contains descriptions of the climate, soils, landscapes, and plant and animal life.

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Page 3 (full text)

White Sea (Belomorsk) Declaration Calls for an
International Convention and UN Action to Preserve
the Northern Forests

The "Belomorsk Declaration" is the name given to a document adopted by participants in an international symposium held in Archangel. Throughout the ten days of its work the participants - silvicultural scientists from 11 countries - (the USSR, USA, Canada, Sweden, Finland, Japan and others), attended innovative workshops and plenary sessions and paid visits to silvicultural and logging enterprises in the Archangel and Murmansk oblasts. The initiator of the symposium was the USSR State Committee for Forests (Goskomles). Also participating were the USSR State Committee on Science and Technology and representatives of international governmental and non-governmental organizations. The theme of the meeting was "Northern forests: their condition, dynamics and the effects of anthropogenic activity".

The feeling among the Soviet and foreign participants was one of alarm: the area of the forests is shrinking and their condition is getting worse. Industrial pollutants are causing impoverishment of the species composition, the structure and the productivity of the forests. This may adversely affect the state of the biosphere as a whole. "I was shaken by what I saw on the Kola Peninsula", said Assistant Professor Bengt Neilgard of Lund University in Sweden. "The northern forests of the USSR are in danger. Precipitation of heavy metals and sulphur dioxide is poisoning the trees, animals, insects and birds. Nickel is a toxic element. It is mutagenic and carcinogenic. The impression I formed is that the people of Monchegorsk are not yet aware of the extent to which their environment has been affected. Nowhere in Europe have I seen such widely affected tracts of forest."

The forum of forest scientists, in the opinion of its participants, made for a useful exchange of ideas, thoughts and hopes for the preservation of the forested zone of the plant.

The "Belomorsk Declaration" supports the drafting and adoption of an international convention and placing the issue of the preservation of northern forests on the agenda of the United Nations World Conference on the Protection of the Environment, to be held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

The symposium appealed to international organizations, governments, national scientific institutions and private funds to support the idea of implementating a plan for the northern forests, and also to redouble their efforts with respect to the conservation, rational use and regeneration of the northern forests - an important factor in achieving a stable environment in the interests of human survival.

In the early 1970s, the concept of "Biosphere Reserves" was introduced. The idea was to create areas where the interaction between man and nature could be studied and managed in a way that would ensure the long-term survival of both. The first Biosphere Reserve was established in 1971 in the Swiss Alps. Since then, the number of Biosphere Reserves has grown significantly. The concept of Biosphere Reserves is based on the idea of a "core zone" where nature is protected, surrounded by a "buffer zone" where human activities are limited, and an "outer zone" where human activities are encouraged. This approach is seen as a way to achieve a balance between conservation and development.

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The "Biosphere Reserves" supports the drafting and adoption of an international convention and placing the issue of the preservation of natural forests on the agenda of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, to be held in Stockholm in 1972.

The symposium resulted in international organizations, governments, national authorities, institutions and private firms to support the idea of Biosphere Reserves. The idea was to create areas where the interaction between man and nature could be studied and managed in a way that would ensure the long-term survival of both. The first Biosphere Reserve was established in 1971 in the Swiss Alps. Since then, the number of Biosphere Reserves has grown significantly. The concept of Biosphere Reserves is based on the idea of a "core zone" where nature is protected, surrounded by a "buffer zone" where human activities are limited, and an "outer zone" where human activities are encouraged. This approach is seen as a way to achieve a balance between conservation and development.



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