



Indigenous Peoples of the Soviet North



DOCUMENT 67

IWGIA

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Cover photo: Nenets reindeer herders on Yamal Peninsula. (Mikael Sne).

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**Indigenous Peoples
of the Soviet North**

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*Children of Nenets reindeer herders in the Yamal peninsula
(photo: Mikael Sne).*

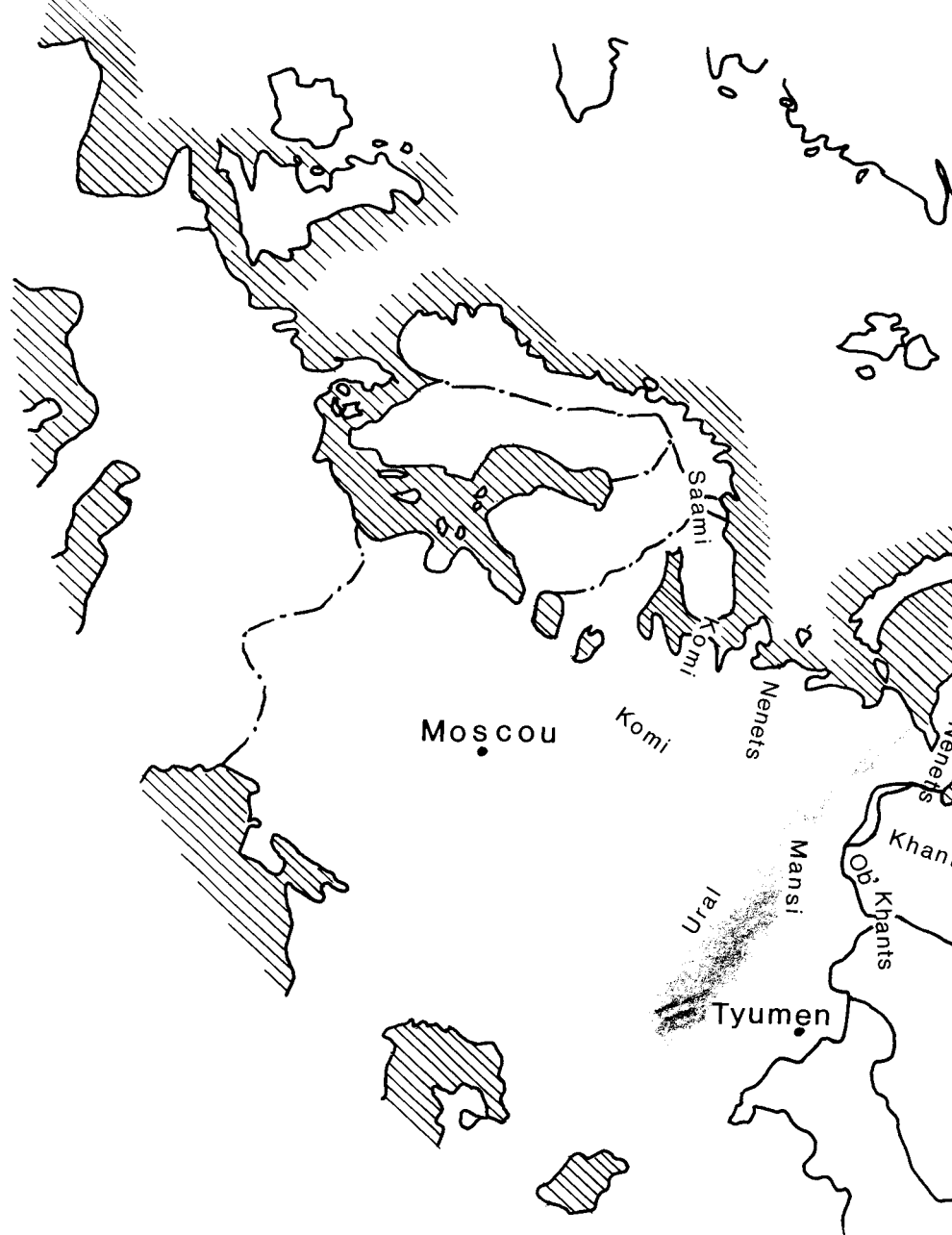
Preface

On March 30-31 1989, indigenous people of the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic of the Soviet Union met to establish an association of their own. Besides the Inuit Circumpolar Conference and the Nordic Saami Institute, the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) was the only officially invited guest organization from outside the Soviet Union.

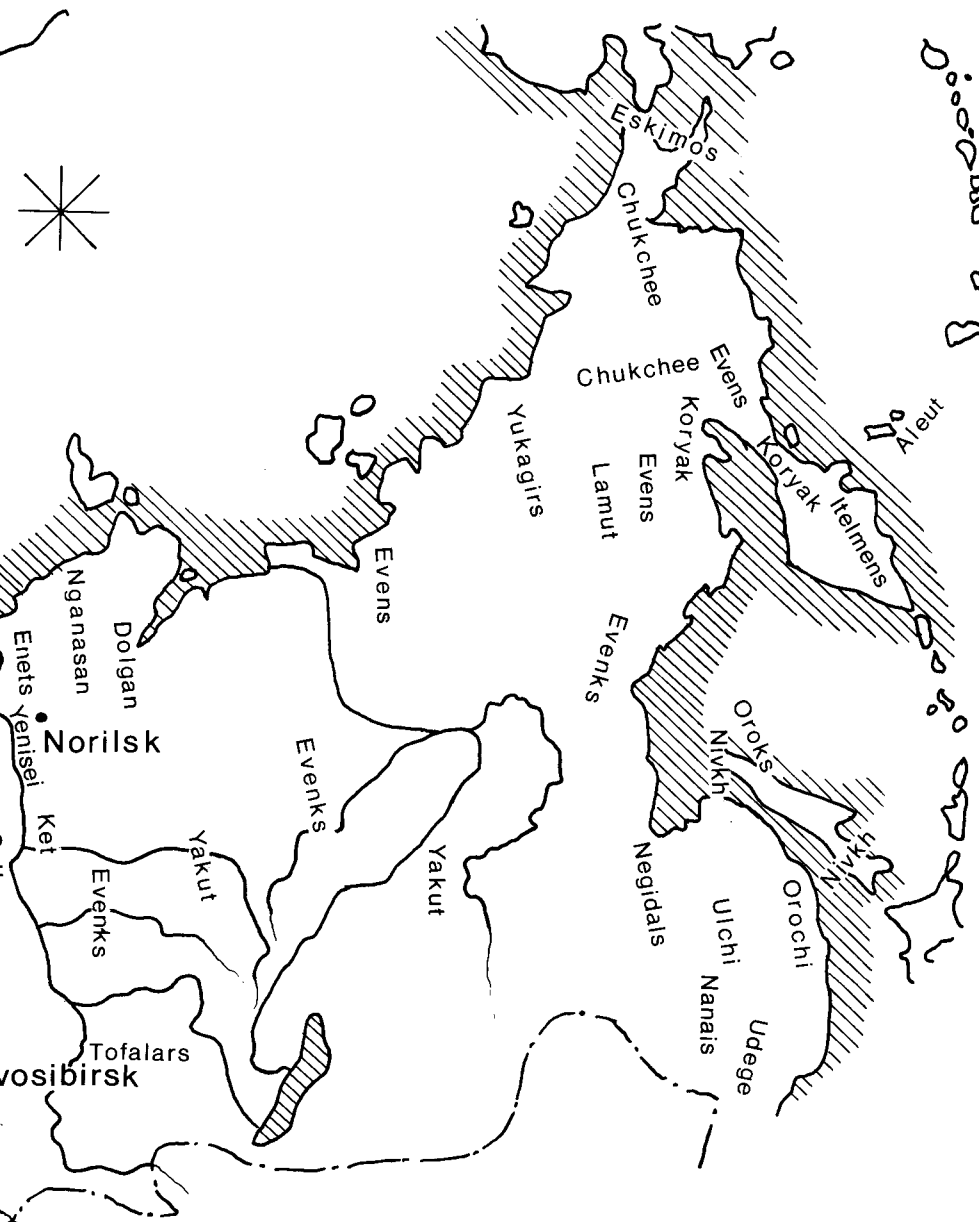
This document deals with this historic meeting.

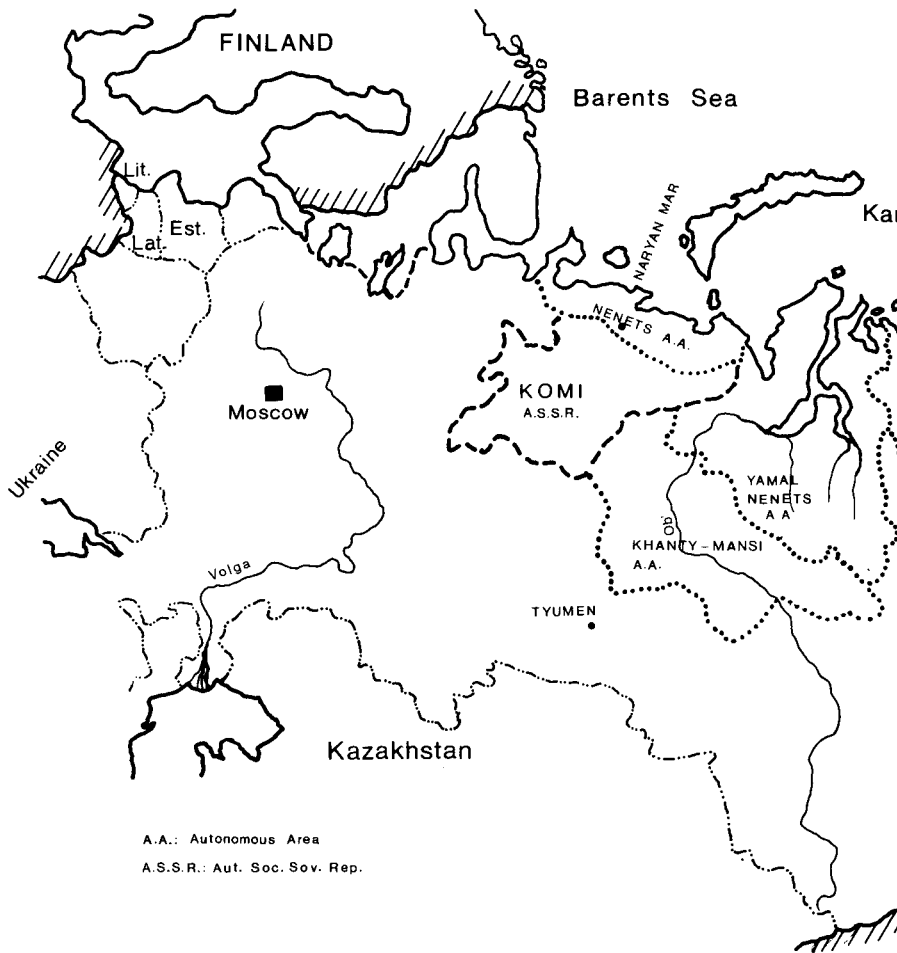
The Introduction is an eyewitness report and provides a general introduction. Professor Chuner Taksami, gave the opening speech on behalf of the organising committee and we have printed the written version of his speech in this volume. The next document is the declaration of "The Association of the Small Peoples of the North" as adopted by the Congress. The Charter and the Programme of the new association are reprinted although they were adopted only as *preliminary* Charter and Programme to be worked upon and presented in revised forms to a new assembly of indigenous peoples.

The documents have been translated from Russian by Peter Jessen, Inge Larsen and Poul Gustav Pedersen.

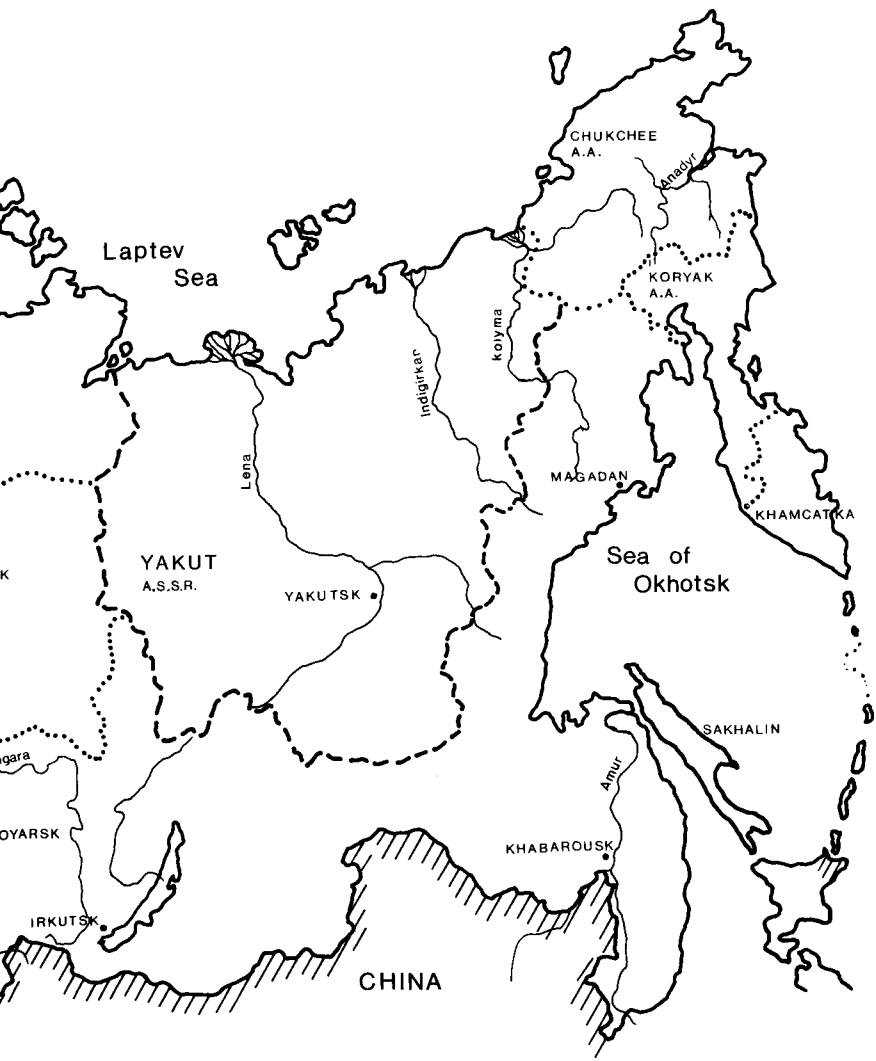


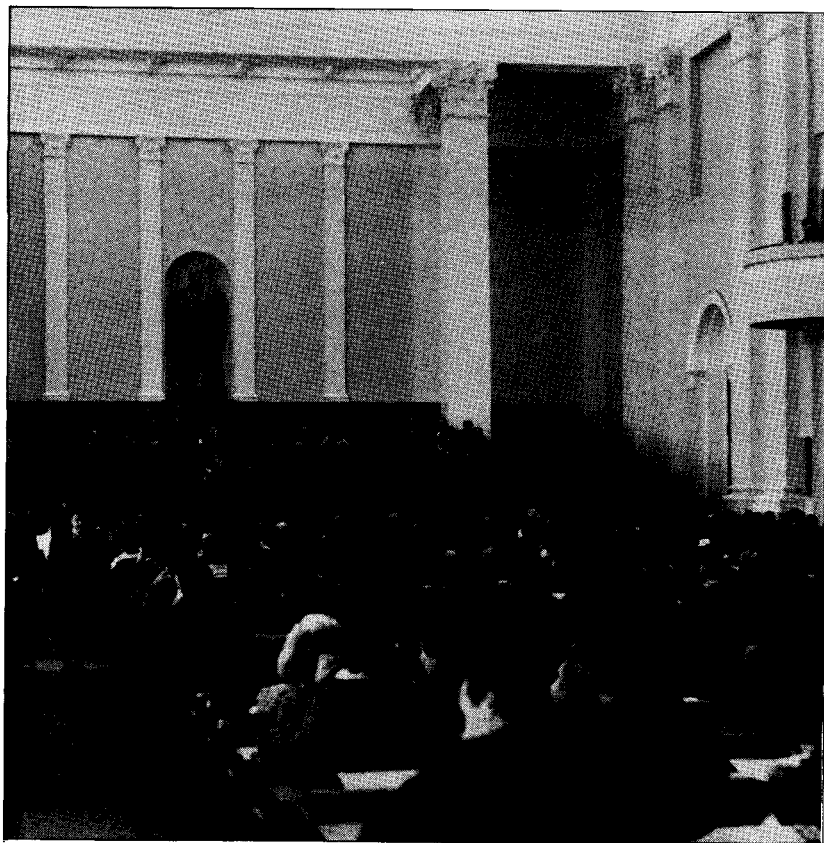
Map showing the distribution of indigenous peoples of the Soviet North and the Far East (map: Jorge Monrás).





Autonomous areas and autonomous republics of the Northern Russia Socialist Federative Soviet republic (map: Jorge Monrás).





*The first Congress of Indigenous People in Russia was held in the Kremlin.
(Photo: Jens Dahl).*

Introduction

by Jens Dahl

The 26 Small Peoples of the Soviet North

During the last two days of March this year indigenous peoples of the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic came together in order to establish their first national association. The congress was a historical event and this was evident from the first moment as delegate after delegate arose to speak.

The venue of the meeting was one of the parliament buildings in the Kremlin. This indicated that the Russian authorities, in the end, had accepted to host the Congress.

The congress was convened by the 26 "Small Peoples of the Soviet North". In terms of population – a few hundred thousands – they do not loom large, but their traditional homelands cover the far-ranging Arctic and Sub-arctic territory from Kola Peninsula in the west to the Bering Strait in the east. This region of *tundra*, *taiga* and vast forests amounts to about one third of the entire Soviet Union and perhaps 2/3 of Russia, which is by far the largest of all the Union republics. Furthermore, this is where we find the largest reserves of oil, gas, minerals, timber and hydro-electric potential in the USSR.

The concept of the "Indigenous Peoples of the Soviet North and Far East" (or only "Small Peoples of the North") came into use as early as the 1920's and 1930's. Since then these people have been treated as distinct, and special ordinances have been applied to them. They are the small indigenous peoples of the European and Siberian North and Far East, the latter to include people along the Pacific coast. The two large indigenous peoples of this region, the *Komi* west of the Ural Mountains and the *Yakuts* of central Siberia, are not included among "the 26". Furthermore, there are indigenous peoples, which are not recognised as distinct ethnic groups and therefore not treated as having the same rights as "the 26". One of the rights given to several of these people was to have their own autonomous ethnic area, *okrug*, or region as it is shown on the map (see Map 2, pp. 8+9). Non-recognised peoples were never conferred such self-governing ethnic areas. But the two aforementioned indigenous groups, the Komi and the Yakuts, were given their own autonomous republics (within the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic) and bestowed with more political and administrative authority than was given to autonomous areas and regions. A

large number of people belonging to the other indigenous peoples reside within these two autonomous republics.

The traditional homelands of these 26 small indigenous peoples are the vast tundra, taiga and forest regions of the Soviet North. The indigenous people have their subsistence from this huge wilderness – they are fishermen, hunters, trappers and reindeer herders. Today, industrial enclaves and development projects can be encountered in all corners of this country. Unfortunately, the industrial process has taken none, or very little, consideration of the vulnerable northern ecology. Vast areas have been turned into wasteland according to accounts by delegates from the Kola peninsula and from the oil- and gas producing regions of Western Siberia. Rivers and lakes have been extremely polluted as reported from the Ob-basin, Yamal peninsula and many other regions. Large-scale hydro-electric projects will change the micro-climate and the ecology of large forest regions on which indigenous peoples depend for subsistence and other economic activities. The global significance of this northern ecology is presumably unknown, but if the industrial process continues unchanged, most of these indigenous cultures will disappear.

Some of the 26 groups are without their own written language. Among some of the smaller groups, the native language is on the verge of extinction and the vernacular is no longer managed by the children.

Among those who have taken the first steps to change this process are the indigenous people themselves. Due to *perestrojka* and *glasnost* the whole world is now reminded of the consequences of Russian colonialism and the disregard and neglect of indigenous peoples' rights.

Protests against the development in the Arctic and Sub-arctic regions were first voiced by indigenous people in oil-rich Western Siberia. At a meeting in the Writers Association of Russia in 1988, the Nivkh writer Vladimir Sangi came with the suggestion to establish an association of indigenous peoples of the Soviet North. In late 1989 the idea was supported by the Central Committee of the Communist Party, and in March the idea came into reality. Meanwhile, ethnic associations have come into existence in all corners of the Russian Federal Republic.

The meeting in the Kremlin

More than 350 delegates and observers representing 35 nationalities from all over the Russian Republic were assembled in the Kremlin. Indigenous peoples from “the 26” were represented according to their numbers. Those indigenous groups “which were removed from the history books during the Stalin era”, had been allowed to send observers. They were allowed to

The 26 officially recognised “Small Peoples of the Soviet North and Far East” and their numbers in 1979 and 1989:

	1979	1989
Aleuts	546	702
Chukchee	14 000	15 184
Chuvans	-	1 511
Dolgans	5 053	6 932
Entsy	350	209
Eskimos	1 510	1 719
Evenks	27 531	30 163
Evens	12 286	17 199
Itelmens	1 370	2 481
Kets	1 122	1 113
Khants	20 934	22 521
Koryaks	7 879	9 242
Mansi	7 563	8 461
Nanais	10 516	12 023
Negidals	504	622
Nenets	29 894	34 665
Nganasans	867	1 278
Nivkhi	4 397	4 673
Orochi	1 198	915
Oroks	450	190
Saami	1 888	1 890
Selkups	3 565	3 621
Tofalars	-731	
Udege	1 551	2 011
Ulchi	2 552	3 233
Yukagirs	835	1 142

There are two indigenous peoples who have their own autonomous republics, and their official status is therefore different from the 26 small indigenous peoples of the North. These are the Komi (1979: 480 000; 1989: 344 500) and the Yakuts (1979: 328 000; 1989: 382 000). However, the situation of the Komi and Yakuts is very similar to that of the 26 small indigenous groups.

Finally, several indigenous peoples are not recognised at all, and their situation is even more precarious than those who have an autonomous republic and live within “their own” autonomous area.

speak, but not to vote. As a matter of fact, even “indigenous Russians”, descendants of Russians who had settled in Siberia and the Far East as hunters and fishermen centuries ago, were represented at the meeting. From abroad, the organisers had invited the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, the Saami of the Nordic countries and a representative of International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs.

There were very few fishermen, hunters and reindeer herders among the delegates. A large number were intellectuals and people from the field of culture and the arts. There were many women, but men were clearly in the majority. Half of the delegates were members of the Communist Party.

The Government of the Russian Republic had several observers at the meeting, but the most significant was the fact that President Mikhail Gorbachev and Prime Minister Nicolai Ryshkov took part in the opening session.

The goal of this first Congress of indigenous peoples in the history of the Soviet Union was to establish an Association of Indigenous Peoples of the Soviet North.

Chuner Taksami from the group of organisers opened the Congress. He made a lengthy review of the economic, social and cultural situation of the indigenous societies (his written presentation is printed in this document). In general terms, he outlined the goals and ambitions of a new indigenous association. Although the tone was extremely diplomatic, it was not to be misunderstood that the demands for radical changes were on the agenda.

After having concluded his summary of the state of affairs, the floor was given to a delegate from each of the 26 groups. Immediately, reality from the North was brought right into the Kremlin.

The message, which was reiterated again and again, was not to be misunderstood by either observers, delegates or the two leading politicians of the Soviet Union. Speaker after speaker argued for constitutional changes as necessary for the cultural survival of indigenous societies of the Soviet North. The indigenous people have to regain their positions on all levels of political decision-making. Furthermore, the destructive extractive resource exploitation which has reigned in the North for decades must be changed. A *Chuckchee* reindeer herder talked lengthily in his mother tongue, but although very few of the delegates understood the text, his gestures and his appeals to the listening Gorbachov were unequivocal: no more empty promises while our reindeer die because of diminishing pastures and pollution.

The picture given by him and the other 26 representatives was extremely gloomy – and it was repeated by the testimonies that followed these presentations. Had I not had the opportunity, with my own eyes, to see a corner of this situation I would maybe have found it exaggerated. Under-

standably, “the people of the tundra had been waiting for this day”, as expressed by a *Nenets* delegate.

Tundra, taiga and forest

“The rivers break up earlier this year than usual”, said a *Mansi* writer. I suppose that he talked in symbolic terms. Or did he?

In Yakutia the forest is rapidly being cut down and fears were expressed about timber projects organised as joint-ventures between USSR and private companies from South-East Asia. Gigantic hydro-electric projects like the Turukhan Project will dam rivers – supposedly having enormous ecological consequences. The *Nenets* people of the Arctic Sea complain of increased incidence of sickness due to radiation from the nuclear testing at Novaya Zemlya carried out in the fifties and sixties.

For one and a half day we listened to these testimonies. There was much repetition, which only underscored the critical state of affairs for all indigenous peoples of the Soviet North and Far East. From Kola to the Bering Strait, the number of reindeers are on the decrease; so are fish in the large rivers and river-systems of Siberia. The state construction companies, the oil-, gas- and mining companies show no respect for the vulnerable arctic and subarctic ecology. Even though it takes decades for plants on the permanent frozen subsoil to recover from being trod down, the summers are used for what seems to be completely uncontrolled traffic across the tundra.

In Western Siberia the exploitation of one of the world’s largest oil- and gas-reserves has led to cultural ethnocide against the indigenous *Khants*. They have lost control of their land, and now they suffer from unemployment, poverty and alienation. They want to regain their lost home- and native land.

It struck me that many of the testimonies were given in a very resigned manner but now and then anger, from years of suppression, came to the surface. Very few believed that the Kremlin, or the international community for that matter, will change policy just because a few indigenous people are “in the red book of endangered species”, as one delegate characterised the situation.

The wretched people

After having listened to 96 testimonies, the speakers’ list was closed. We missed listening to 180 registered speakers, because there simply was no more time left. It would have been 180 more accounts of alcoholism among the *Yukagirs*, tuberculosis among the *Chuckchee* etc., etc. What impression does it make on the world that tuberculosis in 1990 is one of the most common sicknesses among indigenous people of the Soviet North? Or that the

average life expectancy has decreased from 61 to 47 years within the last decade or so? A figure lower than those in many so-called underdeveloped countries in the Third World. Housing standard in the Soviet North is inferior to the rest of the country – but this holds only for indigenous people, not for the Russians and immigrants of other nationalities. The economy has deteriorated to the point where, as a delegate said, “the consumption of fish to vodka is one fish to two bottles of vodka”.

The official policy has been to urbanise and assemble the population in urban centres. Children of nomadic people are removed from their homes to live in non-native speaking boarding schools, usually far away from their relatives and cultural surroundings.

As a consequence of this policy, many indigenous peoples today, like for example the *Evenks*, are spread across a much larger area than they were only a few generations ago. Thus, the indigenous people of the Soviet North are far more intermingled today. Furthermore, in the 1920's and 1930's when the small peoples of the North were allotted their own autonomous areas, the whole idea was based on the fact that the concerned indigenous group made up a majority of inhabitants of the area. In 1990 all indigenous people have become minorities in their own autonomous areas – in their homelands. Fewer and fewer speak their own mother tongue, and among some of the smallest groups, the vernacular is dying out. In all autonomous areas the political control has come into the hands of the immigrants; local and regional *soviets* are now dominated by Russians, Ukrainians, Armenians and other immigrant nationalities.

These facts should be kept in mind in order to understand the variety of expectations that the delegates had with them to the meeting in Moscow. Actually, the idea of this first congress of indigenous peoples was not to enumerate the existing miserable conditions, but to discuss a common political strategy and to establish a new country-wide association. The goal is a future in which *Saami*, *Evenks*, *Nanays* and all other indigenous people are masters of their own land and of their own future. A united approach was clearly seen as a precondition to cultural survival of future generations.

The demands

Indigenous people of the Soviet North are reindeer nomads, hunters, trappers and fishermen; as such they live off, and by, nature. They are the ones who suffer from the destruction of the Arctic and Subarctic environment. Delegate after delegate therefore demanded control of land, and land management to be returned to the indigenous people.

Several speakers demanded that the North be turned into a nuclear-free zone while some expressed the wish to have all missiles removed from the area.



Women Saami delegates at the Congress (photo: Jens Dahl).

A main claim was ownership of the land in one form or another. The land must be given back to its original owners. So when the Chairman of the State Planning Committee of the Russian Republic said that the peoples of the North should be masters of the land and that they have a right to own their land, this was of course met with applause.

Some delegates proposed the establishment of reserves or ecological reserves with priority given to indigenous resource exploitation. Other delegates strongly opposed this type of solution. Several people stressed the need to re-establish the autonomous areas so that indigenous people will regain their majority positions.

To be in control of one's own territory should imply that part of the economic profit which is created within the territory must be given to the local people. In practical terms this means abolishing the fixed prices to the producers of furs, fish and meat. It also implies that a royalty on timber, oil, gas and mineral production be given to the owners of the land – the indigenous people. Changes are underway in this matter and some compensation have been promised people whose land have been destroyed by industrial activities. From an indigenous point of view, a major problem concerns to whom shall the compensation be paid. The local councils, the local *soviets*, are controlled by non-indigenous persons, and indigenous people have very little influence on the state-farms, *sovkhozes*, to which many belong. But it seemed as if a delegate from Yakutia had general support when he said, that “we wish no material compensation, but a new legislation, which will make us masters of our land”.

The political claims put forward at the Congress were quite far-reaching. As already mentioned, many speakers requested that indigenous peoples be represented at all levels of political decision-making from local *soviets* to national councils. Some delegates spoke in favour of establishing local and regional councils with wide authority, and under the control of indigenous people. One delegate depicted Russia to be a federation of all the peoples of the republic, with all having equal rights. He wanted autonomous areas to be directly represented in state parliaments, and not through regions as it is today. In their presentations some speakers referred to the Greenlandic Home Rule, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act and the Canadian Nunavut as possible models.

The programme

How will all these wishes, claims and requests be carried out in practice? Which means shall be applied? In a sense this was one of the main themes of the congress, but the lack of time did not allow that it could be dealt with, before the afternoon of the second day. Too much anger and frustration had to be dealt with first. However, from an observer's point of view, it was obvious that it was precisely this point that led to raised emotions in everybody.

When the congress was inaugurated during the first day, many decisions were taken in advance (e.g. the appointment of the Presidium) and confirmed unanimously by show of hands and without discussion. After a while this “traditional” way of decision-making was no longer acceptable, and proposals came with alternatives. Voting became more and more exciting and sometimes confused as when a minority refused to accept to be voted down.

Shall the new organisation develop into a political party or a socio-cultural movement? This is a very important point and emotions ran high down on the floor. Should the new organisation develop into an association of regional ethnic associations, or should it be a movement elected by direct vote from all over the republic? There was voting on these points, but the minority refused to bend to decisions which they thought may have been taken in advance. As an observer, my impression still was that people had submitted themselves to the authorities for so many years, and that they now refused to accept a new authority whose legitimacy was based on only a simple majority of votes. Several speakers voiced distrust over this procedure.

The result of this was that the proposals from the drafting committee were adopted as the preliminary programme and preliminary statutes of the new Association. An alternative programme adopted by five indigenous groups in a Krasnoyarsk meeting in February was to be incorporated. Further revisions have to be made on the basis of the many proposed amendments. The final programme and statutes have to be adopted at a new meeting or congress.

The first president of the Association of Small Peoples of the Soviet North was elected in a closed meeting without observers. The *Nivkh* writer Vladimir Sangi, who originated the idea of such an organisation, was elected President at this meeting.

International relations

The formation of this association signifies that indigenous people of the Soviet Union, for the first time in history, have obtained the opportunity to speak on their own behalf in a national setting. However, to gain support for carrying out their aims, they are also looking for help from outside the Soviet Union. In this, they stressed, first of all, their desire to cooperate with other indigenous organisations, among them the Inuit, Saami and other northern organisations.

Several speakers of the Congress spoke for a Soviet ratification of international treaties and convention, primarily pointing to the newly revised and adopted ILO Convention 169 (107), the “Convention Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries”. The viewpoint was



Nenets reindeer herders on Yamal Peninsula. (Mikael Sne).

that if this treaty is ratified by the USSR, indigenous people will then have a very effective means in fighting for their highest aspiration: to gain back their homeland.

The future

The fact that the founding congress of the Association of Small Peoples of the Soviet North took place in the Kremlin has been interpreted very variedly. Some people have taken it as a victory on behalf of indigenous peoples; to others, the official “recognition” is a sign of non-radical, moderate or conservative goals and ambitions.

This is not the place nor occasion to give any judgement on these viewpoints. But I would like to point out that the programme is not yet final; neither is the charter. The political profile is not finally agreed upon. Besides, “the 26” other indigenous people are knocking on the door; who will take care of their interests and ambitions? The future may seem uncertain, but the fact remains however, that for the first time in history, indigenous groups in the Soviet North and Far East, have succeeded in setting up an organisation of their own.



Chumer Taksami addressing the Assembly.

Opening Speech at the Congress of Small Indigenous Peoples of the Soviet North

by Chuner Taksami

Dear delegates, dear guests:

This Congress is taking place in a period of revolutionary reconstruction and renewal of Soviet society. The peoples of the North have more than once raised the question of summoning an assembly like this. What brought about the decision to hold this Congress? First of all the fact that the small peoples of the North are confronted with the question whether they shall continue to exist or forever disappear from the face of the Earth. The peoples of the North find it absolutely necessary to unite, and by joint efforts work out a program for further development and thorough change of the existing system of social relations. With the brotherly support of other peoples from our multi-national country the peoples of the North have achieved considerable progress in economic, cultural, and educational development, and the Northern peoples themselves contribute significantly to the economy of this country.

After having pointed to these facts I shall now focus on still unsolved problems and on possible ways to further development. The Northern regions of the Soviet Union constitute a vast territory, almost half of the country and 64% of Russia. Since the beginning of time these regions have been inhabited by peoples, few in number, but courageous and wise "to whom the cold was the constant element, the vast stretches of water and ice, the life-giving fields". The indigenous peoples have lived here for centuries and each of them has created their own culture, their own authentic art, and they have learned by themselves not only to survive but also to rise above mere survival and develop in spite of severe and sometimes extreme climatic conditions.

Many things unite us, first of all the severe nature of the North, the fact that we are all very few in numbers, and have our special kinds of economy. But there are also many differences between us, because each people, however small, is unique and its disappearance would be an irreparable loss to world culture, to world society.

In this country there are 26 small Northern peoples who all together make up more than 180 000 persons. The largest of them, like the *Nentsy* and the *Evenki*, number more than 30 000, but most of them number between a few hundreds and a few thousands. Obviously it takes only a short step to go below the critical level. Earlier, the mass media used to report about “all the peoples of the Soviet Union as equal stars of the firmament” and about “the great fortunes of the small peoples” and about “the powerful technology relieving the toil of the fishermen and reindeer herders”. The successful performance of an amateur group, the achievements of a scholar, an artist, or an author, was taken as evidence of the prospering of the Northern peoples. People in this country and abroad got their ideas about the indigenous Northern peoples from colour prints in magazines, where they were posing in their exotic national costumes beside their *chums* and helicopters. But at the same time experienced observers of the Northern peoples noticed negative and even tragic trends, and sent alarming reports to government and party authorities – but in vain. The reports of these patriots of the North were ignored, and they are not the ones to be blamed for the missing practical consequences of their warnings.

Obviously, the social problems among these peoples and ethnic groups are not equally urgent, but generally speaking the situation of the peoples of the North is alarming. Today our ancestors’ land is crying for mercy. It has been invaded by industrial enterprises geared to maximum exploitation of natural resources. Gold, diamonds, and mica are extracted in our territory. During the last 10 years oil extraction has increased 2.1 times, gas extraction 4.8 times, and you cannot tell how many forests have been felled without mercy. Surveying the territory from a helicopter you will see how the dense *taiga*, that was still there yesterday, is gone today – barbarously taken away.

Under the pretext of fulfilling important state plans, ministries and local authorities are by means of truths and untruths financing these activities and are continuously building new industrial enterprises, railways, nuclear power stations, hydroelectric stations, and they are making plans for the extraction of oil and gas from new fields and for felling enormous stretches of forests. And not in one single case do we find scientifically or economically well-founded programs which have been accepted by the indigenous peoples. And even if such programs do exist nobody has thought it worth presenting them to the local population. In fact, the Northern peoples have become hostages in the hands of the industrial “magnates” (ministries).

As a consequence the ecological situation is critical and conditions for hunting, fishing, and reindeer-herding have deteriorated drastically. During the last decade reindeer pastures have been decimated by 22 million hectares. The limit-values for injurious substances in rivers and coastal waters of the Arctic Ocean are exceeded by 5 or 6 times and in many places there

are problems with the drinking water. Frequently erosion and melting processes will take a dangerous course. In other words, living conditions have been damaged for all the peoples in the area without exception.

These are only some of the problems which the peoples of the North have encountered during the last decade as a result of the inhuman expansion of ministries and local authorities subduing the North in order to enrich themselves at any price.

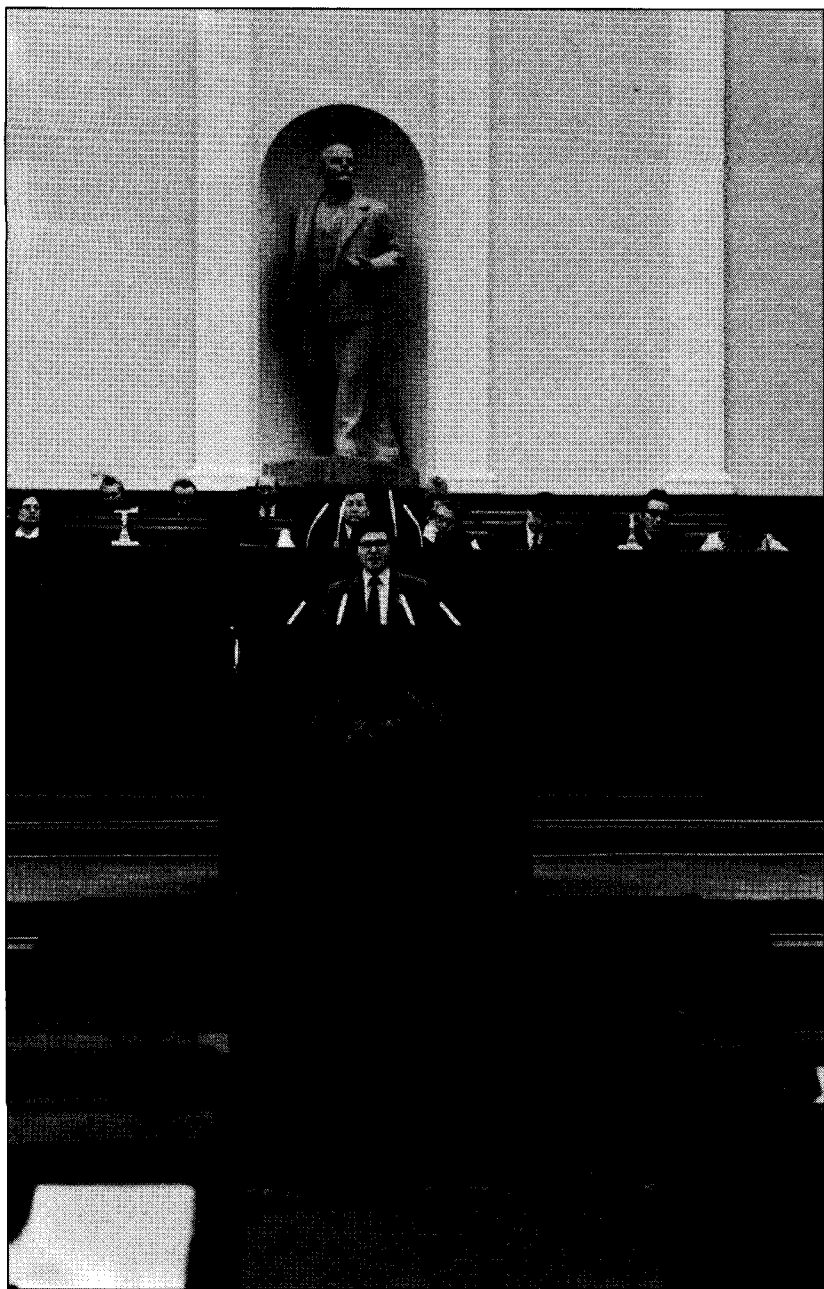
No less harm has been done to the indigenous peoples of the North by the excesses of the policy toward national minorities that put its mark on the peoples' lives during the reign of the bureaucratic command system. Like all other peoples in this country, they experienced all kinds of pain and tragedy, including unfounded repression. They lived through the Second World War and they all contributed to defend their country against fascism. Later on, the bureaucratic command system prevented them from taking part in local self-government, ruined the conditions for further development of traditional economies, and pushed traditional language, culture, and self-consciousness to the limits of extinction.

Nevertheless, we are still being told how the once so backward Northern peoples skipped several centuries in seven decades of Soviet power. Great steps forward were, indeed, taken, especially during the years before the war. Many of the small peoples got their own alphabet and started to read and write in their mother-tongues. Their own teachers, doctors, and economic specialists were educated. Indigenous collective farms and soviets were headed by persons of indigenous origin. Gifted scholars, writers and artists appeared. Gifted young men and women, armed with knowledge, astonished the world. In 1937 students from the Institute of the Peoples of the North were awarded the Grand Prix at the international exhibition "Art and Technology" in Paris. Such results were achieved in a very short time because of the realisation of humanistic principles that pay respect to the indigenous cultures of even the smallest of the Northern peoples, to their economic system, their way of life including their careful attention towards human beings, and towards gifted persons in their communities.

Mobile indigenous *soviets* created in the 1930's were guarding the interests of the indigenous peoples, who were well represented in soviet- and party-organisations at different administrative levels. This made it possible to preserve many cultural traditions, occupations, and ways of life. The leaders of the non-indigenous peoples treated the indigenous peoples and their traditions with respect and appreciation.

Later on, new "conquerors of the North" appeared and, emphasizing our backwardness, they started to ignore our culture and way of life. Anything ethnic was looked upon as something patriarchal, which only deserved extermination.

It is no secret that persons taking up leading positions in our society



The writer Yerey Aipin speaks at the Congress (photo: Jens Dahl).

until these days were appointed “from above”, and that they were selected not because of qualities like ethnic understanding of the Northerners, but because of their adherence to the party apparatus, to the bureaucratic command-system, a position that was very often remote from any kind of understanding of the Northern culture or the psychology of the indigenous population. And this is the reason why decisions were made, at local as well as at governmental level, that did not correspond with the interests of the peoples of the North.

The potentials of the peoples of the North in the sphere of economy and of arts, and their moral values were ignored or underestimated by society. In many cases cultural traditions of the indigenous peoples were violated.

A campaign was started against shamanism and family rites, sacred objects were taken away by force and people became subject to moral pressure. Boarding schools were established and children taken away by force, regardless of the wishes of the parents, thus outraging the parents and the new generation growing up. Economic units were expanded, and hundreds of centuries-old villages were exterminated. Against their own will and ethno-psychological inclinations, people left their native lands and pastures in order to become members of large, centralised economic units. Such processes were particularly strong in the 60's when people from all parts of the country rushed into the area in connection with the expansion of the exploration industry. During the last decade immigration has increased the population by 1.4 millions. Not only the *tundra* has suffered from this invasion, heavy off-road vehicles leaving behind open wounds in the fragile surface. Far from all newcomers have adequate knowledge or are sufficiently civilised to treat the local population respectfully.

This is how one way of life, one world-view, and one system of values is crushed by other ones. When a people loses its feeling of being master in its own house, it also loses its feeling of worth and dignity, and this loss is irreparable.

It is no secret that immigrants come to the North in whole clans and take up all key-positions in local administration, thereby ousting the representatives of the indigenous people. Therefore it is rare to find indigenous people among soviet and party leaders, among managers of state farms and state industries. Indigenous leaders of collective farms in the Northern area are so few that they can be counted on one's fingers. The reason for this is not that there are no qualified people among the Northerners, because there are quite a number of them. But the reason is that the system deliberately stopped the education and promotion of candidates from the ranks of the indigenous population.

Nowadays one can hear how the people from the administrative centres and towns, representatives of the urban and rural intelligentsia, the most acculturated part of the population, with increasing intensity talk about

themselves and their problems while they often identify their interests with those of the whole people. But we must focus our attention on the part of the indigenous population whose way of life is still determined by traditional occupations – reindeer herding, hunting, fishing, and different other kinds of craft. It is among this part of the population that social alienation takes place and deformation of ethnic development is evident.

Today people working in traditional branches of production are alienated from the results of their work, prices are fixed “from above” and the mechanisms of the fixing of prices are unknown to them. Most people do not realise that they are the ones who pay the costs of the overgrown administrative system.

In many collective or state farms there are nowadays 50 managers. The chief managers often live hundreds of miles away from the proper producers, and have very vague ideas about the needs of the people, but nevertheless it is left to them to engage or dismiss, to take care of provisions with equipment and other kinds of supply, with means of transportation – all suffering from constant shortages. These are the conditions that lead to corruption and abuse.

In my opinion it is not a coincidence that the best hunting and fishing areas are often taken away from the indigenous population, and given to people who came to the North to make easy money. These people do not feel any kind of moral obligation towards the local population or Northern nature. Usually they do not refrain from poaching and from speculation in precious fish or fur and they go unpunished. Money is the only incentive, determining the aggressive intensity of their productive activity which is often involved with the shadow economy. But managers who are “deeply concerned” with fulfilling the plan – that is what counts.

Unfortunately such persons often do not understand the values of the indigenous peoples and their ways of expressing themselves and their culture. Because of their assumed incompetence, the Northerners are kept away from production and are forced to live in large settlements without regular contact with living nature.

The large-scale exploitation of the North caused serious social problems like lack of full-time occupation or unemployment, housing shortage, vagrancy, and hard drinking. One will also note a large scale fluctuation of Northern people in all kinds of occupations. Many ethnic settlements, kindergartens, schools, and health-care centres are put up in buildings that are not intended for normal work, and often in a wrecked condition. Many schools have no gym-hall or reading room, central heating, or sewerage. Every fourth club needs repair or is in a wrecked condition. Every second to third family needs improvement of housing standards. On average there is 1.5 to 7 square metres’ space for one person and, as a rule, in ramshackle and Godforsaken buildings.

In Chukotka, at Taymir, Evenkiya, and other places several families live together in one room in order not to freeze. Many reindeer herders in the oil-producing Yamal-Nenets area do not have a place to live and some not even their own *chum* (tent). In this area the authorities do not build houses at all for the reindeer herders. And at the same time newcomers get temporary quarters in modern flats in new buildings almost without waiting time. The indigenous peoples of the North fall ill from tuberculosis 5 times more often than the average of the Russian Republic, and the duration of life is 10-16 years below the average (men live 18-20 years less, women 18-26 years). The main reason for the high rate of suicide is the insolubleness of the contradictions present, a fact that complicates the demographic situation. As a consequence, the number of several peoples is decreasing, among them the *Lapps*, the *Orochi* and some others.

Attempts to improve the situation were made twice. In 1957 and 1980, the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the Council of Ministers of the USSR carried some provisions aimed at furthering the development of the economy and culture of the indigenous peoples of the North. Similar provisions were carried by the government of the Russian Federative Republic and by the deputies of local soviets at all administrative levels. But this hardly changed anything. During the last 10 years 42 union and 36 republican ministries and local authorities took part in the realisation of a program for the complex development of the Northern areas inhabited by indigenous peoples, but this measure did not bring about any significant improvement either.

According to information from the State Planning Commission of the Russian Republic, 31.2 billions of rubles on the social needs of the small peoples of the North during the last two five-year plans. What has become of this money? It got stuck in the towns of the different administrative units (*kray, oblast*), in the administrative centres, and in the industrial settlements. Instead of using this money for housing, for cultural activities, for improving everyday conditions, building health-care centres and schools for the indigenous population, it was spent on the building of giant administrative buildings and on the improvement of conditions in the large settlements.

Perhaps the time has come to call to account those people who have disposed so freely with public means, thereby neglecting public interests.

The peoples of the North were never indifferent to the fate of their land. Seeing how it was treated, they suffered and tried to save it. As a protest they were using expressions like: "We are the last generation of the tundra peoples, the tundra is like the cover of an old *chum*." More and more often their voices are heard in defense of their rights and their interests. The indigenous population is protesting against the building of the Turukhansk hydroelectric station at Nizhnyi Tungusk, calling this project satanic! They

are fighting against the building of an atomic energy station at the Evoron Lake and a fertiliser complex on the banks of the Amur River, and against other giant projects. The peoples of the North are not against the exploitation of the riches of the area in general, but against the destruction of the environment in their living areas.

A popular movement has appeared in defense of Yamal. But spontaneous activities do not always lead to the necessary results. So it was no coincidence that the Platform of the Communist Party on National Questions acknowledged the expediency of summoning in the nearest future a Congress of Northern peoples in order to create an association that should represent our interests at all administrative levels.

Now the Congress has been summoned and we are standing at the springs of the creation of a movement of the peoples of the North so far unprecedented in history. We must all display firmness and resoluteness at this crucial moment, but be wise and considerate in order to take the right decisions in the interest of our people.

We must remember that the peoples of the North were able to survive throughout their history only thanks to their diligence, their wisdom and respect toward other peoples. I am convinced that also the new and well-educated generations will be able to continue the positive experience of the peoples of the North when solving complicated and vital problems.

As a part of the preparations for the Congress the Organising Committee addressed itself to the Northerners and to everyone who was concerned about the fate of his native land and asked them to express their opinion about possible ways of further development. We received a lot of material from people who competently analysed existing problems and made suggestions for their solution. The Organising Committee has analysed this material and will now express its view on how the most basic and urgent problems can be solved.

First of all, there must be undertaken measures to stimulate the social and political activity of people and to educate political workers and leaders. Therefore it is necessary as quickly as possible to work out laws for the self-government of the Northern peoples, laws that precisely define the legal status of the autonomous areas (*okrug*), of the ethnic areas, of the villages and settlement soviets, and which specify the functioning of the popular gatherings, associations, councils of elders, and other kinds of social organisation.

We all can observe how the Northern deputies for the USSR actively take part in the work of the newly elected Soviet parliament (the Congress of People's Deputies). Here they defend the interests of the voters of the whole North with dignity. Let us hope that the newly elected deputies for the Russian Federal republic, the autonomous republics and local councils will behave just as competently.

But the elections of deputies to the Supreme Council of the USSR,



*Salekhard, the administrative center in the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Area
(photo: Jens Dahl).*

RSFSR, and the local soviets nevertheless revealed that indigenous peoples, who constitute a minority in their original territories, are not sufficiently represented in the Councils.

Therefore it would be correct if the Supreme Council of the RSFSR would take into consideration a whole series of legal projects with the following aims:

- the formation of new autonomous areas and national regions, village and settlement councils;
- an extension of the rights of the local councils of deputies;
- the guaranteed representation of Northern peoples at the local and highest levels of the legislative and executive power, right up to the introduction of quotas for deputies in order to secure the representation of all ethnic groups according to their number;
- the creation of a two-chamber system in the councils of the autonomous areas in order to secure the representation of Northern peoples in the local bodies of self-government;
- the establishment of a permanent working commission in areas with mixed population, taking care of inter-ethnic relations and with the right of vetoing decisions which go against the ethnic interests of the small peoples of the North.

In the Northern areas there are now 280 state farms, state industries, cooperative fur farms, 54 industrial fishing units, where about 54% of the indigenous population works; 42,2% works in state farms, 9,3% in collective farms, and 27% in fishing units.

The enlargement of farms and other production units, and the concentration of the population in large settlements have failed to prove their value. To Northern peoples production units like small collective farms, family brigades, and production cooperatives are appropriate. Therefore they must be re-established. The best thing would be to start with the restoration of abandoned settlements, villages and migration camps.

It must be up to the reindeer herders, the fishermen, and the hunters themselves to decide, which settlements they want to restore, what kind of life they want to live, how to combine settled life with nomadic life, and which season camps, they want to preserve. But everywhere there must be established normal housing and living conditions, carefully adopted to the life of nomadic peoples.

The restoration of small family units in traditional branches of production will further the solution of many social problems, first of all the unemployment. Small settlements, including a network of reindeer herding camps will no doubt organise people's life and activities in a much more appropriate way. In these places there must be not only store houses with supplies of provision, but also comfortable housing, a certain amount of different tools for the making and repairing of means of transport, for manufacturing skin, sewing things out of fur, for manufacturing antlers, horns, blood, and for the preparing of ready products out of meat and fish etc.

Traditional manufacturing was left at the roadside, while scientific and technological development was passing by and the North remained, and is still primarily a source of raw materials.

In our opinion, family collectives will have considerable success if they shall be able not only to provide the raw materials, but also the manufactured output, provided that they be given economic independence and can rely on free market prices. One must remember that the economy and culture of the peoples of the North can only develop successfully on the basis of those traditions which have stood the test of time. Any attempts to evade this will not lead to anything good. Today it is important to create conditions for preserving and developing those ways of life and work that the peoples themselves consider necessary.

In order to exploit the resources of the area more rationally it is necessary in the near future to make an inventory and a passport system for all production lands and pastures.

And then, on this basis, to hand over the land to family collectives and other kinds of collectives for eternal use. The recently-carried law on land

use establishes special conditions for the production activities of the small peoples and ethnic groups in the areas where they live. Expropriation of land is possible only according to the results of a referendum, carried out among these peoples, and with the consent of the local soviets. The small peoples now get the preference for traditional economic and productive activity on the territory where they live. Simultaneously the law provides, that "the land belongs to the peoples, living on a given territory", which, in fact, advances the idea of equal rights for land use for the peoples who lived there for centuries as well as for those, who have come to live there only for a while. The correct thing would be to consider the land the property of the indigenous peoples. This is very important to us, as a guarantee against evicting us from the places, where we were born.

In the ILO Convention "on indigenous peoples and people leading a nomadic way of life in independent countries" one can read as follows: "These peoples are considered the owners of the land in which they traditionally live, and the right of land use is theirs".

This point presupposes a special system of rules for the exploitation of natural resources in the areas inhabited by the peoples of the North with the purpose of preserving the conditions for developing their culture. The Convention pays special attention to the situation of nomadic peoples, and we recommend the immediate ratification of this document.

It has become indispensable to work out a regulation "On zones of priority land use" for the peoples of the North. These regulations must provide legislative restrictions for different kinds of production others than reindeer herding and other kinds of traditional production. At the same time it is necessary to take into account the peoples' historically-established social structures, and transfer hunting and fishing areas, and reindeer pastures to individual families and family tribes for free, permanent, and hereditary use. But on the conditions, that these lands will not be leased and that no cooperatives of temporary immigrants will be established. Those peoples of the North, who are engaged in traditional economic activity and reindeer herding must be entitled to hunt and fish all the year round in order to secure the subsistence of the family. There is no reason to fear that they will misuse nature or cause it damage, because they know very well how much fish they need for covering the family's requirements. Fishing quotas are always fixed in Moscow, in ministerial cabinets. "They force us to steal the fish", people say. In this way whole peoples become poachers on their own land.

The peoples of the North must be in charge of all the resources providing them with the necessities of their way of life. Therefore local budgets must be based on the deduction of economic means from all enterprises and organisations operating within indigenous territories. The budget must, for example, consist of the payment for land use, for the exploitation and ex-

appropriation of natural resources, and taxes from all kinds of commercial transactions. There must be established a foundation for the development of the peoples of the North, to which ministries and local authorities must contribute with money for the creation of an economic and social infrastructure.

Today, much is being said about the revival and preservation of the national cultures of the peoples of the North. It is absolutely necessary to leave the narrow and sometimes even incompetent understanding of this very important problem. One has to keep in mind, that in spite of their small numbers, the peoples of the North through centuries created their own unique and distinctive culture, that is found only in the Northern regions. They somewhat founded an outpost of human civilisation under the extreme Northern conditions.

During the last decade many unique and valuable things were lost. But at the same time the mutual influence between different cultures created a mutual enrichment in new forms.

In this process of mutual influence it is our task to try to preserve the distinctiveness of the culture of each of our peoples and develop a modern culture on this foundation. In my opinion, one of the most important tasks of our association must be to take care of, and develop our peoples' cultures, and make them enrich each other.

The time has come to go from words to action and create cultural and historical centres in areas with dense indigenous populations through museums, exhibition halls, collections of photographs. In such centres, first of all children should be acquainted with all the riches of their people, their culture. Precisely in such centres one could hold national feasts and games, festivals of folk arts etc. It is a good idea to revive old traditions and feasts like for example seeing the hunter going off to work, "the Day of the Reindeer-herder", bear-feasts, and family feasts in accordance with the popular calendar. Also old songs ought to be rediscovered.

The man of the North must fully realise the potential of his own revival and the right of every small people to develop freely as an ethnic group, to develop their culture, their own way of life, their ethnic psychology. Full of confidence, people must revive and develop their national arts and appreciate their gifted people.

Creative self-confidence stimulates the development of national popular art, artistic creativity, songs and music. It is important to make an effort to create a professional art.

Today the North suffers from an invasion of folklore collectors. Objects of applied arts are taken away, as well as works of art, among them children's unique drawings. These people shun no means, they even encroach on sacred things, objects of worship and sacred places, cemeteries, camp sites of reindeer herders, and fishermen. It is time to put a stop to the activities of these amateur collectors.

It should also be noted that many foreigners visit the North, and in particular the small indigenous groups, for commercial reasons. Things should also be made clear in this respect. If we allow such commercial visits they must take place within a commercial and legal framework. We are very anxious to expand cultural contacts, but this should happen without damaging the cultures of the indigenous peoples, and without squandering natural riches whose sources recede far back into our historical past.

Comrades! It is particularly important to say something about the languages of the peoples of the North. The loss of any of them may lead to the extinction of the said people and its unique culture.

All the peoples of the North without exception, have realised this fact. It is no coincidence that the question of preserving the languages was raised at every meeting, conference, or congress, where regional and national associations were formed. Many proposals were made about this question in letters that we received from Northerners. The critical language situation arose as a result of the playing down of the roles of the indigenous languages in society and politics. The sphere of use was getting constantly narrower. The almost total exclusion of indigenous languages from the Northern school-system led to a loss of prestige of the mother tongue and to a sharp reduction of its social function. At school, children were even prohibited from speaking in their mother tongue. Among many peoples a whole generation grew up without knowing their mother tongue.

To make each mother tongue function fully, conditions have to be created that make it natural as well as necessary to use the mother tongue at home, in public, and at work.

A precondition for solving the language problem is the creation of national elementary and secondary schools with their own programmes, and among these schools situated at production localities and in nomads' camps. This has, in fact, already begun. It is extremely important to solve the school problem and it demands a fundamental change of the educational programmes so that the training of the children can take into account local traditions of pedagogy that take the seasonal prevalence characteristic of the fishing, hunting, and reindeer economies, into consideration. Perhaps it will be necessary to establish more semi-nomadic boarding schools and kindergartens. In each region such problems must be solved in accordance with specific local conditions. The beginning and the end of the school year and the duration of holidays must be timed with the local economic cycles so that children actively can take part in production processes and in family life. The man of the North must feel concerned about life under extreme severe conditions and have the feeling of being the master in his homeland.

I think that the establishment of small schools in the living and working places of the North will bring the children close to the surroundings where their own language is spoken and that this will make them master



Indigenous representatives voting (photo: Jens Dahl).

it and at the same time familiarise them with the working habits of the parents. That kind of knowledge is indispensable for the traditional branches of production in the Northern regions.

We all know very well that the existing system of training in the boarding schools tears the children away from their original language sphere, and that this creates parasitical attitudes of mind and a consumption mentality which make young people unable to work in traditional branches of production. The existing system of social security frees the parents from their responsibilities not only of their material support of their children but also of bringing them up spiritually.

At the present stage of the socio-economic development of the Northern regions, many indigenous families, in particular those who are working in traditional branches, live poorly and in straitened circumstances. In such cases it is not only indispensable for a certain period to preserve the boarding schools along with schools for housing the children of families in need. It is obviously also necessary to call upon the government to introduce a system of allowances for the indigenous peoples of the North.

Alarming at the utmost is the fate of many children who are sent to auxiliary schools. Many indicators show that children are selected for these schools in a way that does not properly consider the special ethnopsychology

of the conditions of their childhood, of their character, inclinations etc., etc. It is therefore necessary to find out whether the selection methods that send children from even the lowest classes to auxiliary schools are scientifically well-founded. The selection tests are meant for people living in other regions. The result is that children with a normal intelligence are sent to auxiliary schools, children who seem both diligent and apt when at home in their normal surroundings.

We are also worried about the level of the training of our children. Quite often, unfortunately, incompetent approaches to the children of the North permit the teachers to teach and work without caring about the quality of the upbringing and the training. I am afraid to say that this kind of dishonest and irresponsible attitude among teachers is rather widespread in the North. Many teachers, who have been working with these children for years, do not find it necessary to learn their language - not even at an elementary, every day level.

Because of the extremely alarming problems that have arisen in connection with the upbringing, education, and health of the children, I take the opportunity from this high platform to appeal to the leaders of the Ministry of Education and to the government with the urgent request of working out, already this year, a state programme called "The Children of the Peoples of the North" with our active participation and with the help of the Soviet Children's Foundation.

At the moment there are about 300 national schools and more than 200 mixed schools. Alphabets (ABCs) are being published in 17 languages and dictionaries in 16 languages, while there are published more than 100 textbook titles. The share of children speaking their mother tongue is extremely small although the number of children being taught their own language rose from 23% in 1988 to 45% in 1989. At first glance quite a lot has been obtained. But we must be aware that this is only the beginning of a huge task.

We have been reading and writing a lot about the necessity of publishing textbooks, original fiction and translations, social and political literature in the languages of the Northern peoples, specimens of folk art, Indigenous-Russian and Russian-Indigenous dictionaries, phrase-books, and teach-yourself-books. But this is done to an unsatisfactory extent that fails to cope with actual needs. Most Northern people never see a book in their own language. Two years ago there was not registered one single library in the Amur, Murmansk, Tomsk, Irkutsk, and Chitonsk areas, in the coastal areas, or in the Taymir and Nenetsk autonomous areas (*okrugi*) being in possession of this kind of literature.

Publishing literature in the national languages is very difficult because of different orthographical principles, but these difficulties must be overcome.

To realise a task of this size it would be desirable if the State Publishing Committee of the USSR would establish new national editorial offices in all autonomous areas, and in other areas densely populated by Northern peoples. There is an urgent request to establish local national publishing centres.

Gradually it is necessary to strive for the publishing of newspapers in all Northern languages as well as radio and television broadcasting.

Northerners know very well the journal *Severnye prostory* ("Northern widths") that propagates the culture of our peoples and raises urgent questions, but it also becomes increasingly important to publish a special journal on society, politics, and arts, that would reflect the life and culture of the Northern peoples seen not only from without, but also from within.

I think the time has come to raise the question of founding a special series for literature written in the Northern languages.

In order to preserve, to study and understand the peculiarities of our riches, and the variety of the cultures of all the Northern peoples, we must publish books about each people that must serve as a depository of memories. This does actually correspond with UNESCO's cultural programme.

Another urgent question is the need for the training of indigenous specialists. We need competent, highly skilled specialists, who know the North, its peoples and cultures.

In 1925, 19 young men and women from the Northern areas arrived in Leningrad to study at the Faculty for Workers at the Leningrad University for the first time ever in history. Today, around 4 500 students are being trained in 63 educational institutions in this country. Most of the entered with competition?examination.

Unfortunately most of our specialists are by tradition trained in the humanistic field. Two years ago only 380 persons out of 2 000 with a higher education were working in the production sphere. And out of these only 1 % were agricultural specialists.

Today we have no system of education specially designed for the training of indigenous specialists from the Northern peoples. Every year there are more free places in institutions of higher education and in technical secondary schools than there are school-leavers. The standard of the training of the specialists is criticised, especially the teachers of the indigenous languages. As before, specialists are trained without taking into consideration local requirements. As a consequence, many people who have been studying the humanities cannot find themselves a job. But it is particularly exasperating when young agricultural specialists return home and find that there is no need for them in the reindeer collective farms. And at the same time they find that the jobs are occupied by newcomers. To a very large degree it is the leaders of the farms and the local authorities that are to



*Editor of the Nenets newspaper, Kh. Yaungad, speaks from the floor
(photo: Jens Dahl).*

blame for this because they send people off to educational institutions and then forget all about them. We must try to create a system where specialists are educated according to the needs and used where they are needed. Every leader must be personally responsible.

In our opinion, specialists from the Northern areas of indigenous origin are not trained in a way that respond to the needs of modern society, and the way of organising the training is even an impediment to the education of people from among reindeer herders, hunters and fishermen with their special ways of life. It is necessary quickly and radically to change the profile of the technical schools and the institutes of higher education, so that they shall be able to train specialists for work in traditional branches of production. We urgently need ecologists, economists, lawyers, and people with special knowledge about reindeer farming and other kinds of traditional production and manufacturing.

At the moment it is important to speed up this training by means of short-term courses. There have been proposals for the establishing of an institute or a university for the peoples of the North. A versatile scientific educational institution like this would certainly further the training of specialists for the whole of the Northern region.

In letters to the Organisational Committee, many people have proposed to expand the network of technical schools that are training specialists for reindeer herding, fishing, and hunting, specialists for the manufacturing of skin and fur and handicrafts, including also engineers and other technical workers for manufacturing branches. This would, according to the letters, make it possible to preserve important work habits and to guarantee continuity.

Comrades!

The peoples of the North have not received less than their share from the sciences. While 30 years ago only two institutions took care of the problems of the North, today there are 134 of them and 25 ministries and local authorities. Many of these were founded with the noble purpose of helping our people. But we must say frankly that many of the subject-matters being investigated seem irrelevant to the peoples of the North and frequently reflect only group interests or the interests of single investigators. There are even attempts to monopolise the study of the Northern peoples by some scientific departments and commissions.

In such conditions talented young people will not be able to enter the leading scientific departments. And those Northerners who did come in achieved this, thanks to those leading scientists of this country who created our written language and studied the languages and the culture of our peoples as long ago as in the 1930's.

As a part of the preparation of this Congress we addressed ourselves to all the departments and institutions which are involved with the northern areas, and asked for their proposals for the solving of the problems in the region. Only 5 of them answered us. And so what about those many scientific departments in this country that consider themselves the champions of the Northern peoples? Perhaps their creative studies and their opinions are not intended for the Northern peoples, but only for an intimate audience? History and time will judge.

Under the present circumstances, the further development of the North is unthinkable without a scientific programme, because so many causes and effects have tied themselves together in a knot. But until this day the social effect of the use of science for solving the problems has been extremely poor. For the time being, no complex plans have been worked out in any department for the social, economic, demographic, and cultural development of 26 peoples.

The time has come to work out practicable and scientifically-based recommendations for the development of the peoples of the North. Above all it is necessary to render assistance to the small peoples so that they can discover and realise their own creative potentials in economic and spiritual life. These complicated tasks can be successfully solved only with the participation of highly qualified specialists first of all from the ranks of the indigenous peoples themselves. If we want to get things moving we must establish an Institute for the Development of the Northern Peoples with laboratories in all the autonomous areas and in areas with dense indigenous populations.

A versatile institute like this would make it possible to organise many-sided, short-term courses in many different sciences in order to train competent specialists. I am convinced that the training of highly qualified specialists will further the free and natural development of the traditional culture without distorting influence from without.

I should like to take the opportunity to ask the Council of Ministers of the Russian Republic and the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union to find a positive solution to this question.

An institute like this could play the role as the scientific centre for all Northern studies and could establish contacts with all scientific and educational institutions.

You all know that the Northern peoples during their history mixed with each other and with the peoples that had settled among them and first of all with the Russians.

Profound cultural contacts made mutual enrichment possible as well as the mastering of the languages of the neighbouring peoples.

Today the situation in the North is strained. In consequence of the great rush of newcomers, the share of the indigenous population dropped

dramatically and in some autonomous areas it constitutes only 1.5 to 4 %. The rush of people to the North continues and there are now more than 8 million newcomers.

Scientific prognosis tells us that the North in spite of its great economic potentials and attractiveness, cannot endure the same density of population as other regions of the country. Therefore attention has to be paid to the scientifically well-founded concepts about the population in the region. And the demands of science corresponds entirely with the wishes of the indigenous population. People ask for a mechanism which can reduce the migration of temporal inhabitants into indigenous areas. The phrase "Northern nature suffers from people" quite adequately expresses the population problem in the region.

I am sure that the government of the Russian Republic understands the character of the population problem. The indigenous peoples draw attention to these problems not only in their own interests, but also in the interest of the local population that has been living in the area for generations.

One of the problems that has to be examined and discussed is the perspective of uniting the whole of the Northern area as an independent area within the boundaries of the Russian Republic. This is necessary for the integration and creation of horizontal economic relations that can sustain stability in a fast and powerful economic development. A Council of Autonomous and National Districts must be formed for its management and administration.

The regional politics of the government towards the indigenous peoples of the North must not consist in charitable help, but in the creation of the economic, political, and legal preconditions for their self-realisation as genuine masters of their own life and development.

The present system of administration of the Northern areas needs to be entirely rearranged, since it is incapable of solving the existing acute and complicated problems. Therefore it seems more and more urgent to decide whether to revive the special State Committee on Northern Indigenous Affairs that did so much good to the peoples of the North in the 1930's.

Recently a lot of foundations have come into existence. There are so many of them that it is difficult to list them all down. They all collect considerable amounts of money and they all serve the noble end of furthering the development of the peoples of the North. But the question is: did the peoples themselves ask for the creation of such foundations and for this furthering? Do they know anything about the amounts of money being collected or about the way they are being spent?

The small peoples of the North live side by side with other nationalities. Many of the problems that we have mentioned are problems concerning the whole North and all its inhabitants. We must not aim at isolating ourselves. Our relations with other peoples must and will expand, and we

must realise that in the future we shall become still more interdependent. But the basis of the relations between peoples must be mutual respect and the preserving of human and national dignity.

The main task of our association must be:

- to defend and implement the sovereign rights and interests of the peoples of the North on all levels of administration;
- to preserve and develop the cultural distinctiveness of our peoples;
- to establish and expand international relationship with Northern peoples of other countries.

In order to realise these tasks it is advisable to elect an Association Council. The Organising Committee proposes that it should consist of highly qualified representatives from all the peoples and numbering 35 persons.

Comrades!

In my report I have mentioned only the most cardinal problems. I hope that the delegates will supplement my report and shed more light on common as well as regional problems.

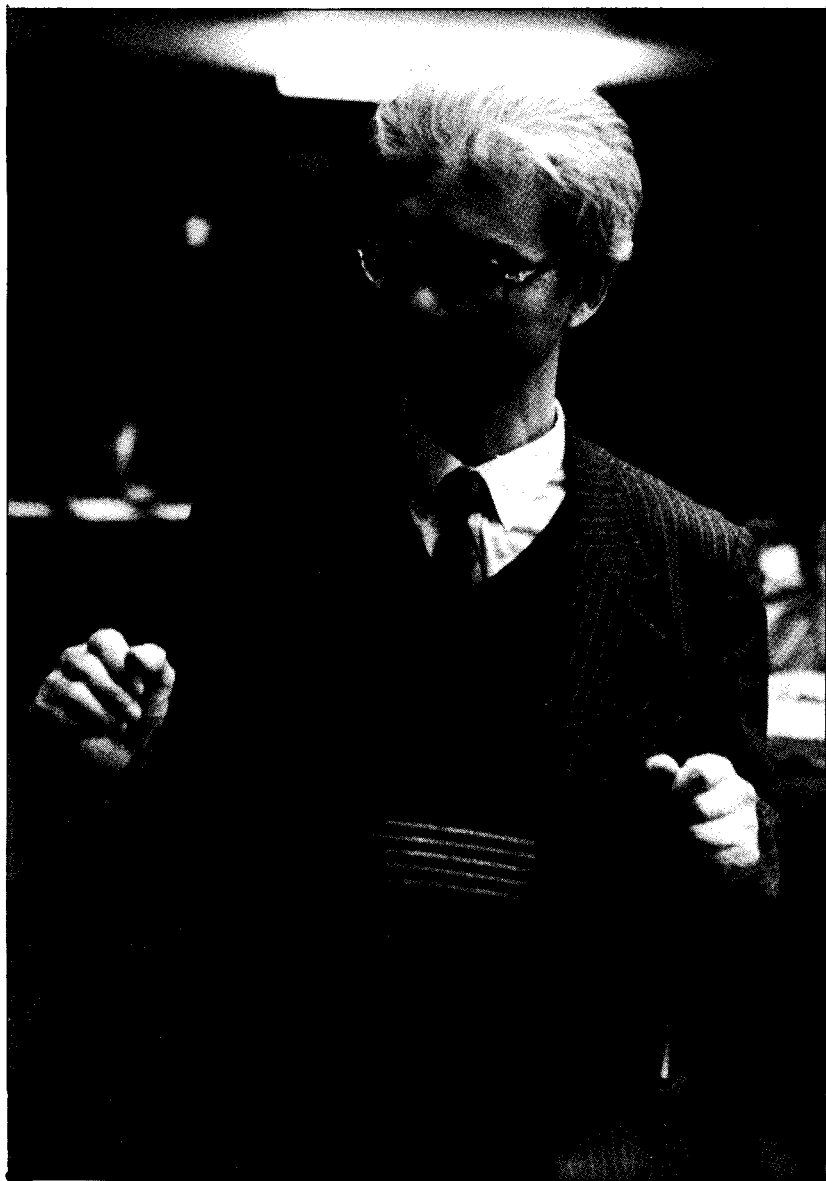
But it is our main task to work out a common platform for our movement and with a maximum of competence and responsibility toward the destiny of our peoples, decide the questions put forth at this Congress.

Dear comrades!

History does prove to us that when the peoples of the North moved from historical time to the time of civilisation there were quite a lot of enlightened persons and scholars from other nationalities of our country who were devoted to the North and who were gifted and unselfish.

We are now standing at a turning point in our history - perhaps even at the most significant, and we do believe that also at this very difficult moment we shall be able, together with other peoples of our country, to solve the extremely urgent and complicated problems of our native North.

Thank you for your attention!



Vladimir Sangi, the first President of the "Association of the Small Peoples of the Soviet North" (photo: Jens Dahl).

Declaration of the Congress of the Small Peoples of the North

We, representatives of the indigenous population of the North, Siberia and the Far East, declare the founding of the Association of the Small Peoples of the North. Its objective is to unite our forces in the struggle for survival. The time of illusions is over. It is time for serious reconsideration and concrete action.

It cannot but concern us, that only seven out of 26 peoples of the region have their own national autonomy. The process of consolidation and revival of national self-awareness is being complicated by the absence of state, economic and legal structures for the *Evens, Nanis, Saamis, Selkups* and other representatives of the Soviet North.

For that very reason the Congress considers it necessary - together with a re-establishment of national regions and village councils - to return to such kinds of self-determination as clan and tribal councils and councils of elders.

A lethal wound has been inflicted upon the nature of the North of which we are a part. Being in favour of a cardinal revision - with our participation - of the principles of industrial exploitation of the territories, we demand a legal priority to be given to the traditional ways of utilising nature. It must be compulsory for any large-scale project for exploitation of natural resources that it should first be looked upon by the expertise of the regional associations of small peoples uniting in its ranks the true masters of the land. The exclusive right to have the disposal of the tundra, taiga, rivers and lakes, even to the establishment of special zones for development of traditional professions should be handed over to the Council of People's deputies.

That would be the first real step towards saving nature and consequently also the peoples themselves.

We are concerned by the fact that our children and grandchildren - valid representatives of the unique civilisation of the Northerners in the approaching millennium will enter life unprepared to carry out this mission. Closure of small schools and the over-all application of the boarding school system in upbringing has made the source of our distinctive character dry out and has undermined the continuity of the generations.

The teaching of specialists for the national economy from the ranks of the aboriginal peoples is carried out in an outrageously bad way. The Congress considers it necessary to re-establish the University (Academy) of the Peoples of the North in Leningrad.

We state with bitterness that in spite of long standing calls for action, the health condition of the Northerners still remains critical. The occurrence of tuberculosis, and the infant mortality in the region is nearly twice the average level of the Russian Federation. Without a radical improvement of the work of the medical sector, for which the state should assume responsibility, the physical extinction of the Peoples of the North will continue.

The Congress recognises the right of all peoples to be different from one another and expects the government also to guarantee their spiritual rebirth. Special attention should be paid to development in deeds, not in words, of national cultures, literature, mother tongues, customs, traditions and feasts.

We acknowledge the help rendered to us by Russians, Ukrainians and other neighbours in the Union and consider it possible to establish a section of the Association for Northern patriots and old dwellers, who sincerely wish to contribute to our progress.

The struggle for one's rights is unthinkable without a comprehensive consolidation with aboriginal peoples of all circumpolar countries. We reach our hands to them in friendship in hope for mutual understanding and assistance.

The Congress favours the immediate ratification by the Supreme Soviet of The USSR of the "Convention Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries", adopted by the International Labor Organisation in June 1989 and the observance of its principles in regard to the native population of the Soviet North.

We call upon all of our contemporaries to awaken from their lethargic sleep, take courage and actively join in for the restructuring their lives. Only by our own efforts and ingenuity, enforced by our loyalty to our national customs and socialist ideals will it be possible to save our future.

Statutes of the Association of the Small Peoples of the Soviet North

General Provisions:

1. The Association of the Small peoples of the Soviet North is a political organisation uniting the small peoples of the North to take an active part in development of the economy, to improve the social and the cultural living standards of these peoples, and to defend their rights.
2. The Association carries out its activities in cooperation with the organs of the State as well as public organisations, according to the Constitution and the laws of the USSR, the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic and in accordance with these statutes.
3. The Association defends the interests of the small peoples and helps them to implement their political, social, economic and cultural rights, preserve their cultural character and maintain their traditional way of life as well as be in control of the preservation of natural resources in the territories they inhabit. Further, the Association:
 - participates in international and national congresses and symposia about issues within the competence of the Association;
 - cooperates, according to the established order, with the ILO and international NGOs on issues with relevance to the Association;
 - establishes, in accordance with the rules, enterprises, institutions and organisations in consonance with the aims and tasks of the Association;
 - participates in accordance with the established order in the funding of complex scientific research programmes on the development problems of the small peoples of the North;
 - carries out work of an informative, cultural and educational character according to the tasks of the organisation.
4. The tasks and functions of the Association are defined by its Programme.
5. The Association is a legal body.



ICC President Mary Simon and the new President of the 'Association of the Small Peoples of the Soviet North', Vladimir Sangi (photo: Jens Dahl).

On Membership and the Rights and Obligations of the Members of the Association

6. In autonomous republics and *okrugs*, *krais* and territories, rayons and settlements, national and territorial associations are erected.
7. Any person belonging to one of the small peoples of the North may become a member of the Association. Representatives of other nations also may become members if their activities have to do with the interests of the peoples of the North and the areas inhabited by them, and if they recognize the Statutes and the Programme of the Association and take active part in its activities.

Leadership Bodies of the Association

8. The Congress is the supreme executive body of the Association. The Congress is convoked by the Council of the Association at least once every three years.
 - Members of the Association are notified of the time, place and agenda of the Congress no later than forty days before it convenes.
 - The terms of representation and the order of election of delegates to the Congress are defined by the Council of the Association.
9. The Congress of the Small peoples of the North:
 - endorses the statutes of the Association and makes revisions and supplements;
 - defines the main tasks and main directions of the activities of the Association;
 - elects by open voting and by simple majority the Council and Control Commission of the Association and the President of the Council;
 - hears, discusses and endorses reports made by them;
 - deals with other matters that have a bearing on the activities of the Association.
10. The Congress is entitled to make decisions if a quorum of at least 2/3 of the delegates is present.
11. The Council is the executive organ taking care of the operative management of the activities of the Association between congresses. The Council is elected by the Congress. The Council of the Association will have its headquarters in Moscow.

12. The Council of the Association:

- represents the Association in its relations with the state, cooperative and public organisations and individuals, and also with foreign and international organisations and foreign citizens;
- organizes and sees to it that the decisions of the Congress are fulfilled;
- administers the financial and material resources and property of the Association;
- prepares and approves the Budget (both the income and expenditures) of the Association and the execution of such;
- works out and confirms plans and programs for its activities, its annual plans and also reports on its performance;
- undertakes the management of its own firms, institutions and organisations.

13. The Council is in quorum if at least half of its members are present. Decisions of the Council are passed by open voting by a majority of those present.

14. The President of the Council of the Association:

- is elected by open ballot at the Congress by a simple majority;
- opens, on the basis of decisions by the Council and on its behalf a bank account, concludes and negotiates agreements, signs finance and bank documents, carries out control of the work of the apparatus of the Council, possesses the right to hire and dismiss staff.

15. At the Council, working groups dealing with the main tasks of the Association are set up and these are entitled to invite scholars and specialists under terms to be negotiated. In its work the Committee is guided by these statutes and by principles worked out by the Council.

16. The Control Commission:

- controls the financial and economic activities of the Association and its organisations;
- controls the observance of time limits and the correct management of the apparatus of the Council and its work with letters and requests from the public.



Indigenous delegates at the First Congress of the Small Peoples of the Soviet North held in Moscow, 30-31 March 1990.

Finances of the Association

17. The sources of income of the Association are:

- voluntary contributions by state institutions, enterprises, cooperative and public organisations, associations of workers in art and literature, charitable foundations, individual citizens and also international organisations and foreign citizens;
- the means acquired in compliance with the rules from sale of publications of the Association and also from claiming a part of the profit of industrial enterprises and minor associations that produce consumers goods and souvenirs using the symbol and the emblem of the Association;
- assets acquired by running the activities of the Association.

18. The money of the Association is being spent in compliance with the objectives and budgets approved by the Council of the Association.

19. The Association is entitled to establish funds for carrying out concrete socio-economic, cultural and other programmes.

The Legal Status of the Association

20. According to the current legislation and the tasks set forth by the Association, it is entitled to acquire and dispose of property, enter into agreements, erect firms for its needs, appear as plaintiff or defendant before court and arbitrator.
 - The Association, its firms, institutions and organisations are exempt from paying taxes, state customs duties and other kinds of contributions to the state budget of the USSR.
21. The Association has a stamp and a round signet with its name encrusted upon it.
 - The Association has a badge, an emblem and other symbols. These attributes may be used by second parties only with the consent of and in agreement with the Council of the Association.
22. The Association of the Small Peoples of the Soviet North can be dissolved by a decision of the Congress.
23. The Association has its own publishing organ.

Programme of the Association of the Small Peoples of the North of the Soviet Union

The Association of the Small Peoples of the North of the Soviet Union (henceforth: the Association) is a social organisation, its main objective being to defend the interests of the small peoples of the Soviet North. It notes that the outrages of the past decades have led to a situation, where the present level of development of these peoples is characterised by stagnation in the economy of traditional trades, in the infrastructure of production and social life, which in turn is characterised by the forgetting of the cultural and spiritual values of these peoples.

The association finds that these negative trends can only be overcome under circumstances where the small peoples become the true masters of their historic territories and gain real autonomy.

One of the prerequisites of a successful development of the peoples of the North is that they be granted the opportunity to plan their own present and future.

The Association aims to contribute actively to the efforts of the small peoples of the North to implement their rights in all spheres of political, socio-economic and cultural life, for self-determination, preservation of their cultural character, which is inextricably bound up with the recreation of traditional ways of life, and exploitation of nature's resources on the territories they inhabit.

Therefore such a mechanism should be created such that it could stand up for the interests of the small peoples of the North in a concrete way, and secure their decisive participation in the working out of ways for further social and national progress.

To attain these goals the Association will represent the interests of the small peoples of the North in the institutions of state power, in the economy and in public institutions and organisations on matters concerning:

- development of traditional trades and a rational exploitation of nature, taking into account the present-day level of technology, preservation and de-



Members of the Nenets delegation (photo: Jens Dahl).

velopment of their unique cultures, national languages, training of national cadres, optimal employment of the able-bodied, providing housing to nomadic families at places preferred by them for permanent residence;

- improvement of the constitutional status of territories with a compact population of Northerners within the legal framework defined by the Constitutions of the USSR and the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic (RSFSR);

- holding referendums among the small peoples and ethnic groups on the issues of allotment and confiscation of land for purposes not linked with their economic activities, on the subsequent control of the exploitation of the areas used by them for residence or economic activity;

- definition of boundaries of territories with a special status of land in areas utilised by small peoples and ethnic groups for residence and economic purposes, and also the re-establishment and consolidation within these boundaries of clan lands and pastures;

- the involvement of members of the Association in activities attached to monitoring of the ecological situation and preservation of flora and fauna



Yuri Rytkheu, the writer, addresses the Congress (photo: Jens Dahl).

on territories used by peoples of the North for residence and economic activities, and to call upon the public to stand up against underground atomic explosions for whatever purpose, against testing of any weapon or development of materials with a negative impact on the environment, people's health or the natural resources of the traditional trades of the North;

- working out plans of social and economic development of the peoples of the North and -if necessary- the introduction of corrections in such plans providing for the eventual participation in the control of their implementation;

- carrying out expert analysis of economic objectives and the placing of industrial enterprises with an impact on the natural environment, in exercising control over the exploitation of natural resources in their territories, and in carrying out scientific and ecological expert analysis;

- preparation of draft amendments and supplements to legislative acts of the USSR and the RSFSR immediately concerning the life and activities and the protection of the interests and rights of the small peoples of the North;

- the ratification by the Supreme Soviet of the 1989 ILO "Convention Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries" and observance of the provisions of this convention in regard to the small peoples of the North.

The Association intends to represent the interests of the small peoples of the North in economic, state, cooperative and other institutions, before the courts and arbitrators in matters concerning damage inflicted upon nature as a result of economic and other activities in their residence areas, and also in the case of violation of their national rights and sentiments.

Further the Association actively participates in the protection of the cultural, religious and spiritual values of the small peoples of the North and in carrying out control of the implementation of the necessary steps to preserve their traditional cultures as a constituent part of world culture.

The Association will base its activities not solely on Soviet- but also international -experience, in order to bring Soviet legislature on national relations in agreement with the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and other international documents.

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In the last few days of March 1990 indigenous peoples of the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic met in the Kremlin to establish their first country-wide association.

This document is from, and about, this meeting which resulted in the establishment of the "Association of the Small Indigenous Peoples of the Soviet North".



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