

# Soviet mushers plan Bering Strait race

by Valery Ivanov

Sovetskaya Chukotka

ANADYR, USSR — Chukchi sports quarters will use the experience of Iditarod traditional dog sled races in Alaska to hold similar long-distance races between the border areas of the USSR and the United States.

In 1989, Soviet and American skiers and dog sled mushers traveled from Anadyr, capital of the Chukchi Autonomous Area, to Kotzebue, a community in Northwest Alaska. It was then that the Chukchi Sports Committee and the Iditarod Organizing Committee decided to sign an agreement on unprecedented dog sled races between Chukchi Peninsula and Alaska.

The coming races were named Hope-91.

Preparations for Hope-91 are in full swing in the Chukchi Autonomous Area. Its sponsors are the Association of Native Residents of the Chukchi Peninsula and the Kolyma Area, the Russian Federation's Sports Committee, the Chukotka agricultural entity and the local cooperative joint stock company.

Various badges, pennants and placecards have already been made. Volunteers are being recruited to service the route of more than 1,500 miles.

These include polar station workers, hunters, reindeer breeders, radio operators, land rover drivers and teachers.

Within several months, the organizers will have to install markers along the route, repair the old and build new camps and set up a communication system.

Hope-91 is to start in Anchorage or Nome in March and last six weeks or so. The mushers will go along the Pacific coast of the Bering Strait. Then Anadyr pilots will take them to the Chukchi Peninsula.

From Uelen the racers will travel through four Chukchi districts to finish in Anadyr.

About 50 sleds will take part in the races. The Soviet participants will represent the Chukchi Autonomous Area, Yakutia, Kamchatka and Magadan Regions and the Kolyma area.

Two Soviet dog sled drivers, a Russian and a Chukchi, have left for Alaska to train at the farm owned by well known Iditarod winner, Susan Butcher. American experts are advising the Soviet side on veterinary and organizational needs.

Chartered flights between Nome and Provideniya or between Anchorage and Anadyr have become frequent in recent time. A regular airway from Magadan to Anchorage via Anadyr opens in 1991.

As distinct from cautious businessmen, children are willing to develop friendly ties. Several groups of children scouts from Nome and other Alaskan towns visited Provideniya, a community on the Chukchi Peninsula.

Last year, Anadyr and Bethel became sister cities and are now actively exchanging delegations of teachers and school children.

These exchanges are arranged by the Society of Friends of Alaska and the Families' Association of Anadyr and by municipalities, scouts' divisions, and other organizations in Alaska.

American teachers presented to an Anadyr school a computer with an English language course. Soviet teachers and pupils turned over to a Bethel school a batch of books.

Alascom is now mounting a TV antenna and other equipment in the

vicinity of Anadyr. Residents of Anchorage and Anadyr will take part in a series of TV linkups scheduled for 1991.

On the American side's invitation, the Association of Native Residents of the Chukchi Peninsula and the Kolyma Area is going to send a group of Chukchi, Eskimos and Koryaks to study at the University of Alaska Anchorage.

Next year, Alaska Eskimos and Indians will arrive in Uelen, a Chukchi community, to study wood and walrus ivory covering.

The Chukchi Autonomous Area and Alaska are only just beginning to establish business ties. In particular, a joint fishing venture has been founded. Barter trade is getting under way.

Contacts between children, however, are already actively developing. More than 100 Alaskan college and high school students have visited the Chukchi Peninsula in the last two years alone.