

Cooperative fishery thrives in Soviet Union

by Arkadi Kudrya

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KAMCHATKA, USSR — I first heard about the Lenin Collective Farm specializing in fisheries from a taxi driver who took me from the airport to Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky. My companion happened to be a talkative man and we discussed many things, including the hard business of fishing.

He seemed really to know a thing or two about the subject, as he himself had worked as a fisherman when he was young.

"The most experienced fishermen here in Kamchatka are living in Seroglazka (Grey Eye), the estate of the Lenin Collective Farm," the taxi driver said. "Many people would like to work there, but they hire with great caution, only if they are sure the newly employed will not let them down."

"But why are they so cautious?"

"For reasons of prestige. They have a good, large-scale business there. I know the 'grey eyes' right away by their venturesome attitude."

My discussion with the taxi driver prompted me to find out some more details about the collective farm, one of the richest in Russia, and its people.

It was set up in 1960 by merging three fishing farms and a motor fishing station that supplied the three with vessels and fishing gear into one. The newly established farm began making money quickly and in 1966 acquired its first ocean-going refrigerator vessel, a BMRT trawler that cost 2.5 million rubles (a ruble is equal to about \$1.50 U.S.). At the present time, the farm's fleet consists of five refrigerator trawlers of the same type, six seiners and other vessels — altogether 26 ships with an aggregate motor capacity of 21,000 horsepower.

From 1960 to 1970 the farm developed a powerful ship repair facility and now offers paid services to state enterprises.

I was informed about the way the farm was doing business by its chief economist, Vladimir Drachev. He said the farm's indivisible fund amounts to 105 million rubles, and it has operated on full economic and commercial accounting since 1961. The annual fish catch amounts to about 175 million metric tons, and fishing and fish processing yields an annual profit of 10 to 12 million rubles.

The farm employs a staff of 2,365. About half of them are ship crew members. The rest work in ship repair facilities and other shore services.

"Unlike state enterprises, we do not establish wage ceilings for staff. If a skipper makes one voyage a year (and that means five months out to sea), he is paid about 12,000 rubles," Drachev said. (Average annual wages in the Soviet Union amount to 2,406 rubles.)

"If he goes on two voyages, he is paid twice as much. Rank-and-file crew members earn about 8,000 rubles a year. We usually catch more fish than they do on ships of the same type run by state enterprises, because we use the capacities in full, keep our fleet in perfect order and employ progressive methods."

"We regard our collective farm as a good home we have built with our own hands. Everything here belongs to us and is ours. One can see well how the collectively earned money is spent. The point is not just in paying people bigger wages. The collective farm also builds houses for its workers, and it has financed the construction of a community center, a sport facility and a poultry farm of its own."

"The farm has amassed a social security fund from which to pay ad-

ditions to base pensions and establish additional privileges for war veterans and merited farmers. Those enjoying such privileges are entitled to a free trip to any point of the Soviet Union and back once a year, as well as to free accommodations at sanatoria and rest homes.

"We think," Drachev said, "that we are a step closer to real socialism than many of those who live beside us."

The farm estate looks beautiful, particularly when viewed from the Avachinskaya Harbour. Chains of fishermen's bright colored, stone-built houses stretch along the sea shore in the foreground of a large volcano whose cone is hidden behind the clouds.

The farms' ships go round the Kamchatka Peninsula, toward Sakhalin and the Kurile Islands to fish for Far Eastern pilchard, cod and herring. Fish is produced all year round, but the busiest time comes in summer during salmon catching. For every 100 kilograms of salmon, fishermen are

paid 7.8 rubles, while the collective farm sells it to the state for 55 rubles.

Most of the skippers employed at the farm have a college education. As a rule, the farm's managers are former skippers with a lot of experience in the fishing business. Vladimir Muzurantov, deputy chairman of the collective farm, worked for six years as a crew member on fishing vessels and as a trawler captain for 10 years.

"In the near future we will replace big ships with modern ones to increase productivity. We are not planning

catch increases for fish and other sea products, because these are limited by the marine resources protection service.

"But we will diversify to add more products. For example, so far we have used only crab meat for commercial purposes. But, you see, crab liver and shell can also be used to manufacture valuable drugs," Muzurantov said.

"There are a lot of valuable sea products that we may well learn to produce once we arrange things properly."

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