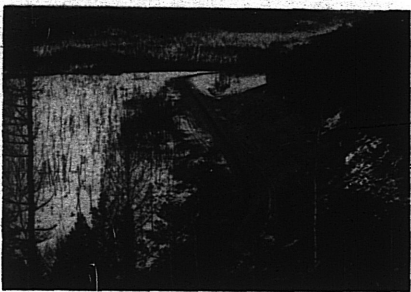


Railway has impact on Soviet north



BAIKAL-AMUR RAILWAY MAINLINE

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The 3,200-kilometer Baikal-Amur railway (BAM), which is now under construction in the Soviet Union, will pass through the areas populated by some native peoples of the Far North and Far East—Evenks, Nanais and Nivkhi. This gives rise to certain problems which are being carefully studied by Soviet experts.

It is worth noting that there was no problem in buying back the land for laying the railway: the land and all mineral resources, are, under Soviet laws, the exclusive property of the state. But we face the problem of deer-breeding in this region. Most local inhabitants believe that the effect of BAM on deer-breeding will be negative. Laying track for the railway, constructing highways and roads for transporting timber, and damaging the soil cover with caterpillar vehicles will reduce deer pastures.

But the economists who have studied the problem and the managers of local enterprises are unanimous that any reduction of deer-breeding in the region is undesirable. In the first place, deer-breeding is a traditional professional of local inhabitants, especially Evenks. It not only provides them with meat, but also is a source of raw materials for various national handicrafts long practiced by local women. Secondly, this branch is profitable. While the production cost of a metric centner of beef is here 207 rubles, the cost of a centner of deer meat is 102 rubles. Besides this, as a result of the construction of BAM the deer meat market will be sharply expanded.

In the opinion of experts, local collective farms should be given new pastures lying far from the railway and the seasonal routes of deer herds should be altered.

The social aspect of the problem seems to be more complicated. At present young Evenks who, like all schoolchildren in the Soviet Union, get a ten-year secondary education, in most cases do not want to become deer-breeders. They say that both the character and content of deer-breeders' work do not require the application of the knowledge received in a secondary school. Besides, this occupation has little appeal to young people because of the nomadic life, nearly the whole year spent with herds in the taiga tear them away from the way of life they have gotten accustomed to, from clubs in their townships, television, etc.

That is why experts who have analyzed the problem off a number of measures to reorganize deer-breeding in the region. In particular, it is suggested that the shift method in deer-breeding should be introduced. This method has shown itself viable on the Chukchi Peninsula and in other northern regions of the USSR. The gist of the method is that deer-breeders' teams do not spend the whole year in the taiga, but periodically change shifts. The team, which has worked for a definite period of time in the taiga, has the opportunity of taking a rest in the township.

In addition, young deer-breeders will be trained as radio operators handling mobile radio stations and as veterinarians. Of course, deer-breeders working as wireless operators and as veterinarians will get higher wages. This will raise the prestige of the occupation in the eyes of youth.

On the whole, Evenks and other native peoples look optimistically towards the construction of BAM according to polls taken by staff members of the Siberian Department of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. They expect better and more consumer goods, better public services, schooling for children and the rise of incomes and living standards.

These hopes are justified. Along with the construction of the railway, local settlements around it are being reconstructed. Large clubs, libraries and gyms are being built there. While now some villages have only eight-year schools (parents send children to other villages to complete secondary education), in the near future ten-year secondary schools will be set up in every village inside the BAM zone.

The experience in developing outlying areas of the USSR show that industrialization and large construction projects have an appreciable effect on the professional progress of native residents. For instance, on the Chukchi Peninsula local inhabitants took part in the construction of the Bilibino nuclear power station, and the Chukchi also showed interest in mastering such trades as gold-digging and assembling power transmission lines. In oilmen's townships in the north of the Tyumen Region one can find representatives of local ethnic groups—Khanty and Mansi working as drillmen and builders.

A similar process is observed in the BAM zone. Laying the railway and its operation considerably extend the range of jobs the local population can choose from. It is not accidental that more than a third of the



EVENK STUDENTS OF THE MEDICAL SCHOOL

NOVOSTI Photographs

graduates of local schools express a wish to work on the BAM construction site.

So Soviet experts maintain that BAM will accelerate the social development of local peoples of the North, will provide an impetus to the reorganization of the conventional branches of the economy along modern lines and will satisfy young people's desire to choose modern professions.

At the same time the upsurge of culture and the improvement of living conditions of all northern peoples in the Soviet Union is a continuous process which is independent of the social program of the BAM zone. ~~Like before,~~ local-school graduates leave for large cities to study at medical, pedagogical and agricultural institutes. A certain number of vacancies with the right to admittance without passing competitive entrance examinations are reserved for representatives of northern ethnic groups in the higher schools of Moscow, Leningrad and Khabarovsk. Primers, textbooks and readers in Evenk, Chukchi, and other languages of the peoples of the North are printed.

At present, a new primer for

Nivkh children is being prepared for printing. It has been compiled by Vladimir Sangi, a well-known Nivkh writer, and Nivkh Galina Otaina, M.Sc. (Philology), Senior Research Associate of the

Far Eastern Branch of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. It is also planned to expand the publication of fiction in the languages of the peoples of the North.