



# The Soviet Far East: Growing Participation in the Pacific

by Stephen Uhalley, Jr.



## U.S.S.R.

The Soviet Union is playing a greater role for the Soviet Far East in the economic life of the Pacific region. The Fourth International Seminar for Young Researchers, attended by the author, is a means to underscore economic and political efforts.

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## THE SOVIET FAR EAST: GROWING PARTICIPATION IN THE PACIFIC

by Stephen Uhalley, Jr.

September 1977

For the most part, Americans are scarcely conscious of the Soviet Far East. It is a region that is somehow beyond the ken. The main land mass is either in the far north or is otherwise shielded from the Pacific directly by the islands of Japan. Its principal port city to date has been purposely kept off limits to the few foreigners who have cared enough to be curious, a symbolically inhospitable gesture which only brings about further foreign indifference. Therefore when and if this extremity of the Soviet territorial reach is considered at all, it is more often in negative terms. It is the base for the powerful Soviet navy, which is increasing its presence in the Pacific Ocean. It is the base, too, of one of the world's two largest remaining whaling fleets, which despite the best efforts of valiant Greenpeace volunteers to intercept and harass it, continues, as of 1977, to destroy the Pacific Ocean's dwindling whale population.

In recent years, however, the Soviet Union has been trying to counter the negative image and to promote a greater role for the Soviet Far East in the economic life of the Pacific region. It is doing this by calling attention to the enormous resources and economic potential of Siberia and the Soviet Far East. It is clearly desirous of attracting investment capital and technological assistance from abroad in order to tap these resources effectively and develop the area. These goals are in line, of course, with the general policy of the U.S.S.R. Party General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev made clear in his report of February 24, 1976 on the immediate tasks of the Soviet Party that it was important to promote "new forms of foreign economic ties [with the capitalist world] that go beyond the framework of conventional trade" and "greatly enlarge our possibilities and, as a rule, yield the greatest effect."<sup>1</sup> He was referring to compensation agreements whereby foreign capital is invested in Soviet enterprises

whose ownerships remain Soviet but whose products are shared by the investors.

Similarly, Premier Alexei Kosygin in spelling out the guidelines for the Tenth Five Year Plan (1976-1980) indicated that a characteristic feature of the new plan "will be the greater involvement of our national economy in the international division of labour and the further transfer of *external economic cooperation* to a long-term basis." He said that under "the conditions of *détente* new qualitative aspects are being acquired by our economic relations *with the developed capitalist countries*" and that "the practice of signing large-scale agreements on cooperation in the building of industrial projects" in the U.S.S.R. would be continued. Kosygin reaffirmed that "Compensation agreements, especially those covering projects with a short recoupment period, various forms of industrial cooperation and joint research and development are promising forms of cooperation."<sup>2</sup>

Siberia and the Soviet Far East (the Far East Economic Region of the U.S.S.R.) continue to receive special attention in the Tenth Five Year Plan. Kosygin pointed out: "As you know, an extensive programme of work is envisaged on the Baikal-Amur Railway project, some sections of which are to be put into operation during this period. We attach special importance to this project, because it is designed to become a powerful lever of economic growth for our Far Eastern areas."<sup>3</sup> He added:

The eastern regions, especially Siberia, where industrial production is to be raised by nearly 50 percent, will develop at priority rates. Energy-intensive industries, the fuel industry and agriculture, and simultaneously the entire social infrastructure, including housing, public utilities, cultural

and community institutions, and urban transport, will be expanded at especially high rates in Siberia and the Soviet Far East.<sup>4</sup>

The Soviet Far East is a vast territory; it is in fact, the largest region in the Soviet Union. Its 6,216,000 square kilometers constitute almost 28 percent of the U.S.S.R. But its population of 6,168,000 represents less than 2.5 percent of the country's total population. There is an average density of less than one person per square kilometer, and most of this sparse population is concentrated along a narrow southern fringe of the region. Settlements are highly urbanized (about 73 percent of the population, which is 14 percent above the national average) reflecting the poor agricultural possibilities of its countryside.<sup>5</sup>

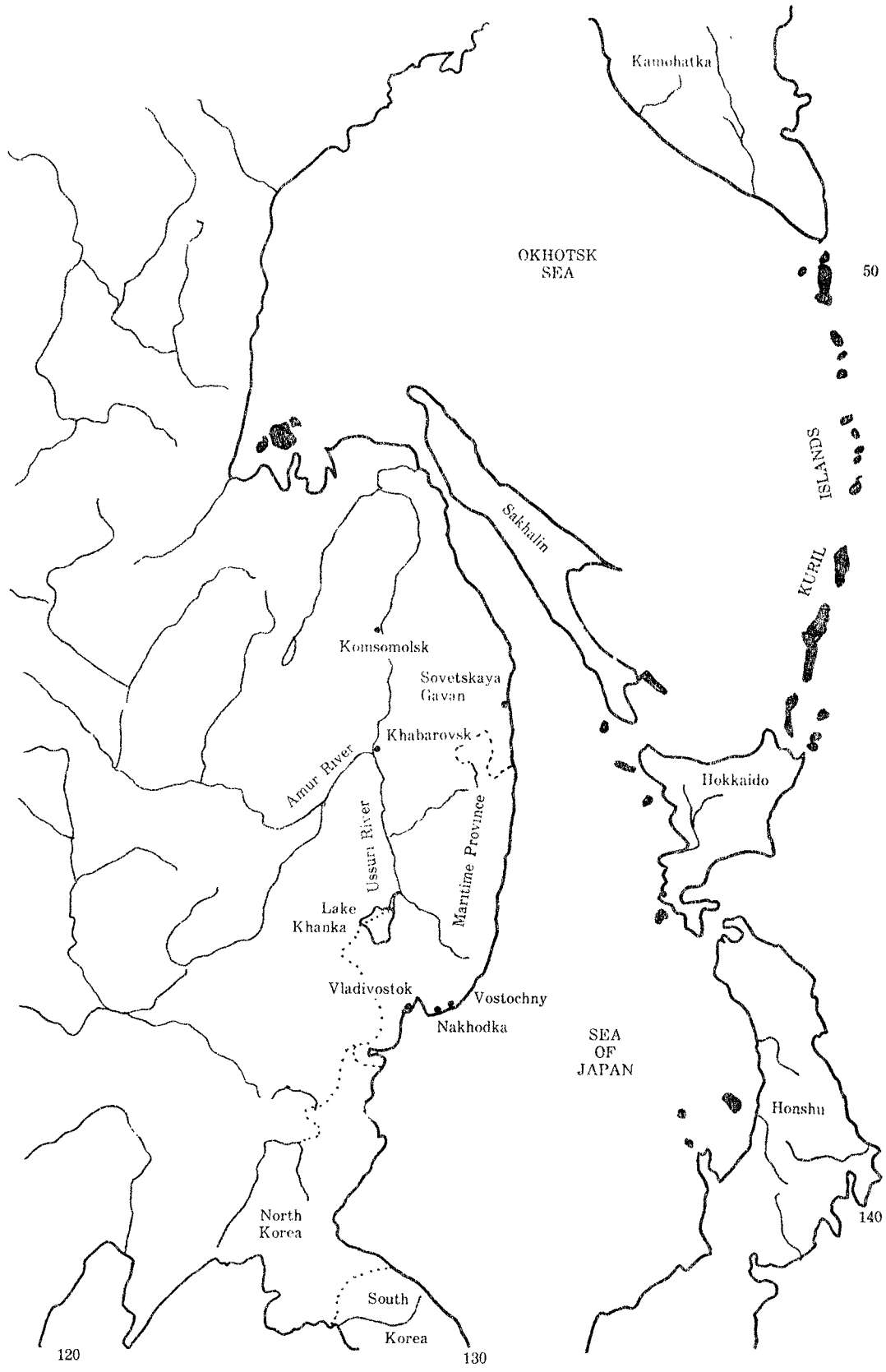
Although the Soviet Far East is part of the Russian Republic and is predominantly composed of Europeans, there are a number of minority peoples who live throughout the region. The most numerous are the Yakuts, a people of Turkic stock, who in 1970 numbered about 300,000. Most of these people live in the large Yakut Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic (A.S.S.R.), where they comprise 43 percent of the total population (as against 47 percent Russians). In the smaller nationality-based political subdivisions Russians are even more prominent. In the Jewish Autonomous Oblast in Khabarovsk Province (Kray) the population consists of only 7 percent Jews, as against 84 percent Russians. Similarly in Chukchi National Okrug and Koryak National Okrug in the extreme northeast the Russians represent 70 and 63 percent of the respective populations.<sup>6</sup>

The Soviet Far East's Russian population has been growing ever since the mid-nineteenth century when the opportunity to take control of the easternmost sections of the Asian land mass presented itself. Russians had long chafed under the unfavorable conditions of the Treaty of Nerchinsk in 1689, which had been imposed on them by the then powerful Chinese empire under the domination of the Manchu (or Ch'ing) dynasty. The Treaty of 1689 interrupted the sweep of the Russians across Siberia by denying them navigation of the Amur River and by defining the Sino-Russian boundary far to the north along the Argun River and the Stanovoy Mountains. In the Treaty of Kiakhta in

1727 the Manchus conceded some 40,000 square miles of territory along the boundary of present day Mongolia.<sup>7</sup>

The weakening Manchu dynasty in the nineteenth century, however, invited encroachment from the interior just as it was being pressured by Western maritime powers along the coast of China. In 1850 the Russians defied the 1689 Treaty and sent an expedition to explore the Amur basin and to establish a post at the mouth of the Amur River. This was soon followed by additional military posts extending as far eastward as Sakhalin Island. Taking full advantage of China's distress in the 1850s Russia imposed the Treaty of Argun in 1858, which established a new boundary along the Amur to the Pacific, and placed the territory south of the Amur and east of the Ussuri rivers under joint Sino-Russian occupation. Only two years later, however, the area east of the Ussuri was given to Russia by the Treaty of Peking. Hence, this concession among others has become one of the issues of the current Sino-Soviet dispute, with the Chinese insisting as a matter of principle that the Russians acknowledge that the acquisition of the territory in question had been by means of the notorious unequal treaties.

In 1855 the first Russian settlers, mostly discharged Cossacks from Transbaykalia, penetrated into the Far East. These were later joined by others coming overland from as far west as the Ukraine. Usually these pioneers were given large tracts of land as an inducement to move. Another much greater stream of settlers followed the long sea route through the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia to their destination in the Ussuri area. This wave culminated in the mid-1880s. Most of these pioneers hailed from the Ukrainian and North Caucasian steppe regions. It was believed that since these people had lived in roughly similar environments they would most successfully make the transition to the new virgin lands of the Maritime Far East. Another characteristic of this wave of settlers is that they were primarily middle class land owners, who were able to meet the restrictive requirement of paying the costs of the sea voyage and they had at least 600 rubles per family upon arrival. With the completion of the Trans-Siberian railway in 1900 use of the ocean route quickly subsided.<sup>8</sup> The new families that arrived encroached on the large Cossack estates, and eventually a new



type of settlement using intensive agriculture came into being.

Russian efforts to dominate other areas in north-east Asia had mixed success. The Russians were compelled to give to Japan the South Manchurian Railway (which the Russians had built), Port Arthur (which had been leased in 1897), and the southern half of Sakhalin, which had become Russian in 1875 in exchange for Japanese title to the Kuril Islands.<sup>9</sup>

World War I and the Russian Revolution provided the Japanese with the opportunity to invade the Russian Far East. In 1918 they occupied Vladivostok (which by 1872 had become the chief Russian naval base in the Far East), took the Chinese Eastern Railway (which the Russians had secured permission to construct, maintain, and use across Manchuria), and they penetrated along the Trans-Siberian Railway as far as China. President Woodrow Wilson's reluctant dispatch of American troops to this area was not for the purpose of seeking to help unseat the new Soviet government. The Americans took no part in the civil war. But they did provide security to many inhabitants during this confusing period inasmuch as they guarded the Suchan coal mines in the Maritime Province and sections of the Trans-Siberian Railway. That they stayed as long as they did, according to George Kennan, is due to American suspicion of Japanese intentions rather than to hostility toward the Bolsheviks.<sup>10</sup>

Following World War II the Russians repossessed southern Sakhalin, took the Kurils, and returned to their erstwhile dominant position in Manchuria. The last position they were constrained to relinquish sometime following the establishment of the People's Republic of China, and they were obliged to return much of the equipment they had removed from Manchurian factories after the war. These gestures were more than worth the price for the friendship of the new Chinese regime, for it seemed to promise security for exposed territories of the U.S.S.R. in the distant East. However, any such comfortable sense of security has diminished since the Sino-Soviet relationship has turned from amity to enmity.

The relationship between the socialist giants began to cool in the late 1950s, particularly when

the Soviets welched on a nuclear sharing agreement. Things worsened considerably with the sudden termination of Soviet aid to China and the withdrawal in 1960 of Soviet advisers and technicians. The relationship became embittered following the 1963 Soviet decision to participate in the nuclear test ban agreement. It broke into open, if limited, warfare in 1969 over an island on the Ussuri called Chenpao by the Chinese and Damansky by the Russians. The Soviets had obviously hoped that the death of Chairman Mao Tse-tung in 1976 would provide an opportunity to repair the serious split. After several months of patient waiting, however, the Soviets apparently despaired, and after absorbing considerable and continuous verbal abuse from the Chinese, once again began publicly returning charges.<sup>11</sup>

Thus the tension between the two countries remains an element in the life of the Soviet Far East. It accounts in part for an unusually large military presence in the region, both on land and at sea. It may be a detracting factor in the continuing effort to attract more settlers from the Soviet West. From what I saw and heard in speaking with various Russians in the Maritime Province in August 1977, there was little apprehension regarding any threat from the Chinese. Most respondents seemed annoyed with the Chinese and perplexed by their behavior, but the Russians did not seem to feel insecure. (Indeed, they expressed surprise when it was suggested that the Chinese had perceived the Soviets to be a threat, at least in 1969 and the early 1970s.) But the general tension in the relations with populous China may deter some in the western parts of the U.S.S.R. from moving to Siberia and the Far East. Nevertheless the population has been growing; and at rates faster than the rest of the country. Yet, although employees in the Soviet Maritime Province receive 30 to 40 percent higher wages and salaries than their counterparts in European Russia, there is a labor shortage.

There are other reasons, of course, for the restrained population growth. Climate is one factor. The northern interior valleys of the Soviet Far East boast (!) some of the coldest winter temperatures on earth and the greatest annual temperature ranges. January temperature averages in the Yana River Valley are  $-48.9^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $-56^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) and have dipped as low as  $-68^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $-90^{\circ}\text{F}$ ), which is about the temperature of dry ice.<sup>12</sup> It is little wonder that populations congregate only in the southern fringes and

certain coastal areas of the Siberian land mass. But even here the weather can be unpleasant. The coastal areas, such as those of the Maritime Province, do not get as cold as the interior but the wind chill factors are much lower. The coast is cold for the latitude during the winter because of the winter monsoon that blows incessantly from land to ocean. Compare Vladivostok's January average of  $-15^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $5^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) with Boston at a similar latitude where the average is  $27^{\circ}\text{F}$ . Conversely, in the summer the coast is still cold for the latitude because the summer monsoon brings cool sea air to the land.

Patterns of precipitation present a problem. Spring and early summer are dry, and this often produces drought conditions just when crops are undergoing their greatest growth period. These droughts tend to be more severe in the westernmost basins. Then, compounding the agricultural difficulties, rains are heaviest during July and August, and this sometimes hampers the harvesting of the struggling crops. This is not an uncommon experience for much of the U.S.S.R., but in the Soviet Far East the extremes are greater than elsewhere. In Vladivostok, for example, there is 15 times as much precipitation in August as in January.<sup>13</sup>

Snowfall tends to be light in the winter in the Soviet Far East but this, too, is far from a blessing. The snow is dry, and many places are blown clear of snow much of the time. Unfortunately this causes the soil to freeze deeply and subjects it to repeated freezing during late fall and early spring, all of which is damaging to wintering crops.

Agriculture in the Soviet Far East is strictly limited. Even in the few good southern basins where the soil is fertile and the growing season is tolerable, the season is often shortened or visited by early summer drought and even occasional mid-summer frosts. Much of the land requires more extensive irrigation *and* drainage systems than have as yet been developed. Only 2.4 percent of the entire Far East Region, representing 4.6 million hectares, is considered to be agriculturally usable. Of this, only 2.6 million hectares is arable land; the rest is devoted to grazing. Industrial crops use a third of the arable land. These are mostly soybeans (90 percent of the U.S.S.R. soybean crop is grown in the Soviet Far East), sugar beets, flax, hemp, and sunflowers. Grain crops occupy only 42 percent of

the sown area, which is less than any other economic region in the U.S.S.R. except Central Asia. The grains are primarily spring wheat, oats, buckwheat, and barley. The Khanka Lowland of the Maritime Province has the best growing season and it produces the greatest variety of crops. Almost all the sugar beets are grown here. The area is an interesting meeting place for the usual crops from European Russia, and those produced by Chinese and Korean farmers, such as rice, soybeans, millet, and grain sorghums.<sup>14</sup>

The real wealth of the Soviet Far East is in its yet scarcely tapped mineral resources. Unfortunately, as far as is known at this time, this does not include exceptional reserves of oil—which appear to exist only in Sakhalin. Here about 3 million tons are produced annually; supplying about 40 percent of the Soviet Far East's needs.<sup>15</sup> There is a geological possibility of oil in the Zeya-Bureya, Upper Bureya, Middle Amur, and Suifun depressions, as well as in the Sakhalin shelf zone.<sup>16</sup>

On the other hand, there are considerable reserves of natural gas both in Sakhalin and in Yakutia. In the latter area there is an estimated 12.8 trillion cubic meters of this energy source. Even greater are the coal reserves of the Soviet Far East, the largest of which are the Lena basin coal fields with over 2,600 billion tons. But there are many deposits throughout the region. Most of those being worked are close to population centers. Yet for all the mining that is being done so far in the Far East the aggregate represents only about 3 or 4 percent of the U.S.S.R.'s total production. The area with the greatest potential is probably the South Yakut fields at Chulman and Neryungri. This area is already served by a trunk line of the Trans-Siberian Railway, but it is expected that the Baikal-Amur (BAM) Railway, when completed, will provide much greater access to such reserves.<sup>17</sup>

Much of the South Yakut coal is of good coking quality, a matter of special significance, for the Aldan iron-ore area, with about 3 billion tons, is only 100 kilometers from Neryungri. In the general area, moreover, there may be 40 to 50 billion tons. There has been serious talk of making this area into a large base for iron- and steel-making. In the meanwhile, the Far East does not produce sufficient steel for its own needs.<sup>18</sup>



The Soviet Far East is rich in tin ore, tungsten, and fluorite ores. It is the U.S.S.R.'s major producer of both gold and diamonds. It also possesses an estimated 30 percent of Soviet timber reserves and supplies a substantial proportion of the country's furs. Finally, it is the U.S.S.R.'s most important fishing region, supplying about 30 percent of the annual fish catch.<sup>19</sup> It is especially rich in salmon, crab, and flatfish, and the whaling fleet from Vladivostok ranges widely in the Pacific—to the alarm of conservationists throughout the world. (Incidentally, I spoke to one Soviet scholar from Vladivostok about whaling. He said that Russians were sensitive to criticism about whaling, and were themselves concerned about this ecological issue. He predicted that next year the Soviet Union would bring a halt to its own whaling industry!)

One is persuaded to agree with geographer Paul Lydolph that wholesale settlement of the Soviet Far East is unlikely, despite the additional considerable investment in the BAM Railway project.<sup>20</sup> The Soviets will probably continue to get a low return for their capital investments. This is because the region does not supply all its basic needs, which, in turn, causes a traffic imbalance that intensifies the farther east the trains travel, as the necessary supplies proceed toward their destinations. Only those mineral resources have been developed thus far that fit rationally into this east-west traffic pattern, although some irrationalities are present. Basically, however, only the gold, diamond, and tin resources are plugged heavily into the westward flow of traffic since these materials can be transported economically by rail.

Therefore it does indeed seem prudent that the Soviet leaders seek to reorient the economy of the Far East Region away from European Russia and toward the Pacific basin, especially Japan. Dr. Boris Slavinsky of the Far East Science Center in Vladivostok has stated it saliently: "Thus, the availability of huge and varied natural resources in the Soviet Far East, the grandiose scale of development of the productive forces of the region, and the proximity of a vast market in the countries of the Pacific basin are all essential to the speedy development of the external economic ties of the Soviet Far East."<sup>21</sup>

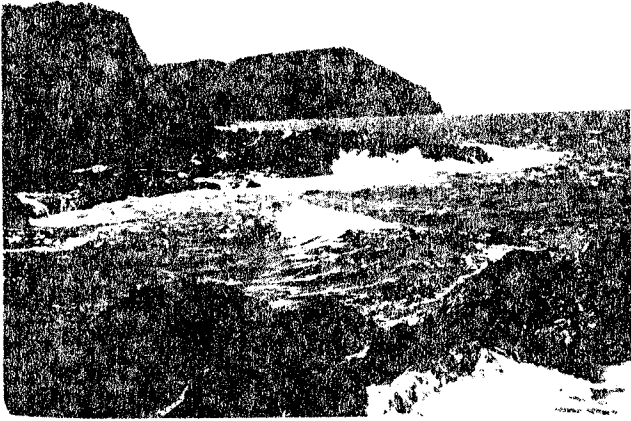
The reorientation process is already under way. One perceives this clearly by observing developments in and near the port city of Nakhodka which

is located more than 100 miles to the east of Vladivostok. Nakhodka was formally given municipal status only 27 years ago, in 1950. The name Nakhodka means "lucky find," for it was discovered fortuitously in 1859 by the Russian surveying ship "America" during a severe storm in the Sea of Japan. Nakhodka Bay indeed is both large and well protected, surrounded by attractive forested hills not unlike the Northern California coastline. It was not until 1939, however, that the Soviet government decided to build a port in this magnificent bay. World War II forced the postponement of the beginning of construction until 1945. The first two docks were completed in 1947, at which time 170,000 tons of cargo were handled by the new facilities. In 1977, 30 years later, there are now 18 docks covering some 3.5 kilometers. About nine million tons of cargo (exclusive of oil) are now handled annually.

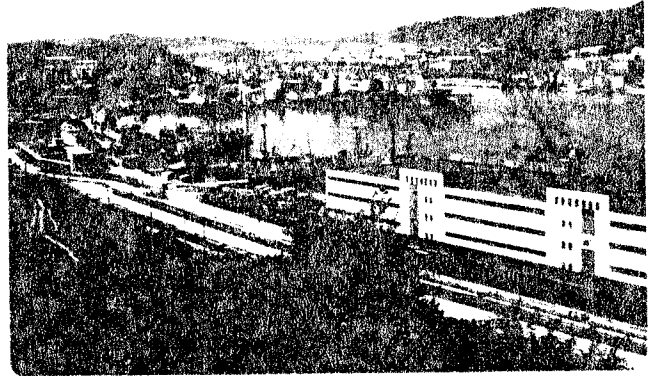
Nakhodka has already become one of the five largest ports in the U.S.S.R. It is heavily oriented toward export-import trade, which comprises 75 percent of the port's activity. Its facilities handle 2,300 ships a year, including 560 foreign ships from 22 nations in 1976. However, 60 percent of the international trade is with Japan alone. According to the port manager, a friendly and competent man named Lukoshkin, Nakhodka handles about 20 percent more cargo than does nearby Vladivostok, which remains a naval base and a center for coastal trade with the rest of the Soviet Far East. Only a little more than half of Vladivostok's trade is export-import, and this includes all seaborne trade with the People's Republic of China.

In 1976 about 21,000 foreign travelers came to Nakhodka, all of them on Soviet passenger ships. About half of these visitors are Japanese. Almost all proceed elsewhere within a matter of hours, generally aboard the Trans-Siberian Railway. No tourists are permitted to stay overnight in Nakhodka. Only a few foreign businessmen and technicians ever do, with the exception of participants in the International Seminar which is held in Nakhodka each year (discussed below) and occasional visitors from the city's sister cities abroad. These are two cities in Japan with which exchanges are arranged, and Oakland, California which has also exchanged representatives. One of the Soviet participants was Port Manager Lukoshkin, who remarked on the continued need for such

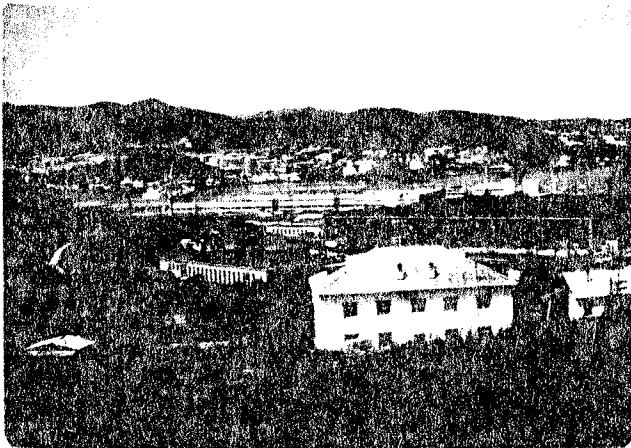




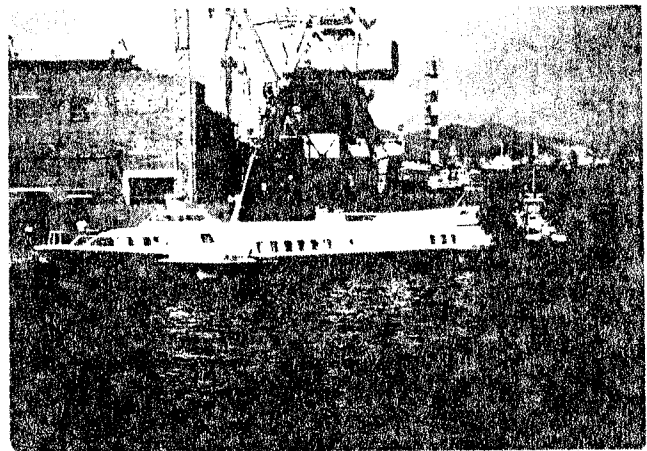
A section of beautiful coastline near Nakhoda.



The busy Nakhodka Harbor.



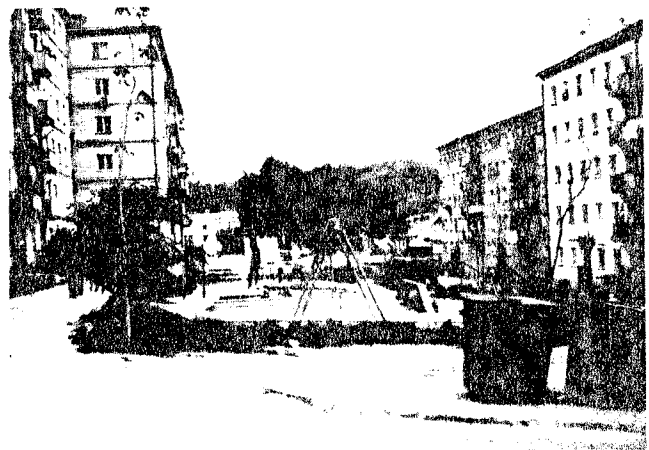
Nakhodka Harbor.



There is a hydrofoil service twice daily between Nakhodka and Vladivostok.



One of the residential districts adjacent to the port.



Typical residential apartment houses in Nakhodka.

exchanges. He recalled with wistful humor how ill-informed Americans seemed to be about the U.S.S.R. during his own visit to Oakland. The mayor's wife, he said, had sought to explain to him, "since he was a Russian," how a refrigerator worked!

Nakhodka's population in 1977 is about 150,000. It is not unattractive, as port cities go, although the town's architecture is singularly unimaginative and drab. Several residential districts are situated in the hills and valleys that surround and abut onto Nakhodka Harbor. Each of these districts is pretty much a self-contained community with its own shopping areas, schools, recreational and health facilities. Each of the port' subdivisions (i.e., the fishing port, the commercial port, the repair yards, and the coal-loading port) has its own residential district in the immediate hinterland. This is very convenient for the port workers and staff, and it precludes the kind of street traffic congestion which might occur were the city not so providentially laid out.

The city is predominantly oriented toward the sea. The port employs 6,000 of the inhabitants directly. There is a nautical college which trains

many local youth for seafaring occupations. The steamship Baikal which brought me from Yokohama to Nakhodka on a delightful two-and-a-half-day trip up the east coast of Japan and through the Honshu-Hokkaido straits employed a number of Nakhodka citizens. (I'll never forget the surprised look on the Baikal's bartender's face when, as he awaited a bus early one morning several days after we had docked in Nakhodka, I jogged past, greeting him with a hearty *dabruyeh utruh!*)

The people of Nakhodka appear to be healthy and generally in good spirits. I ran into only one bit of trouble with the camera that tested this observation. As I prepared to take a photograph of an old woman selling *kvass*, a man came up to me and said "it was not possible" for me to take the picture. Since the woman had already assented, however, I asked "Why not?" The stranger, seeing the woman's agreement and the favorable attitude of others nearby, merely shrugged his shoulders and departed. Food in the local markets seemed adequate and prices were reasonable. Department stores seemed somewhat sparsely supplied, but perhaps contained what might be normally expected in a provincial Soviet city. It would be the



A young Russian mother and her son.



The old woman, to whom the author refers, selling the popular Russian drink, *kvass*.

visitor from most other ports of the Pacific and Asia who would see the many deficiencies, not the local inhabitants.

Despite the rigidities of the Soviet system the local authorities have proved responsive to reasonably applied pressure from aggrieved inhabitants. For example, there is the celebrated case of the aborted effort to remove one of two prominent small mountains (Brother and Sister Mountains) in the immediate environs. About eight years ago the government began to remove Brother Mountain, but after a couple of years the denizens of the valley just behind the partially removed mountain began to complain that the valley's climate was being affected—adversely. Removal operations continued, and the citizens' protest mounted. Finally the government sent scientists to investigate the complaints, and when the investigations concluded that the local residents were right, work soon stopped. Unfortunately six years of earth removal has made it impossible to restore conditions to what they had been.

Local workers took great pride in showing me a recreational facility they had built with their own effort. It contained a basketball gymnasium,



The author, trying his hand at Russian billiards.

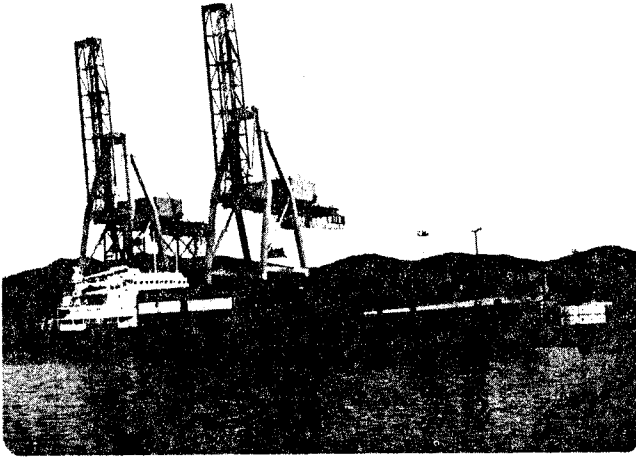


Brother and Sister Mountains on Nakhodka Bay. Eight years of removal at Brother Mountain (center) were finally halted following citizen environmental protests.

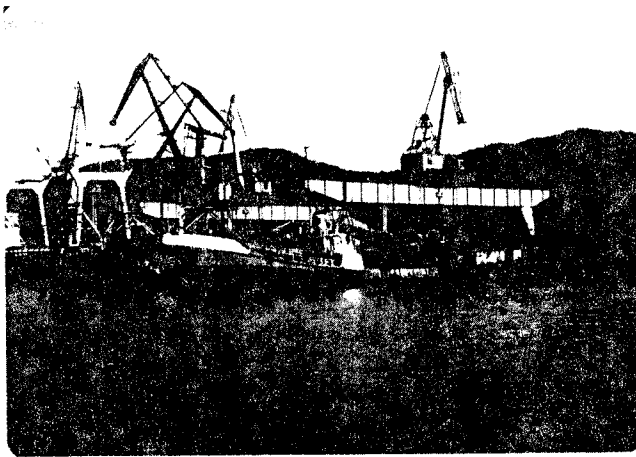
underground rifle range, weightlifting room, and a billiards room. In Russian billiards large wooden balls are used that must be propelled into rather small pockets, so that the ball must be squeezed into them with exceptional skill or luck. I strenuously objected to the name they gave to the most simplistic game possible—in which one shoots any ball at any other ball, and whatever ball is pocketed, including the ball used as the cue ball, counts as a scored point. They called it "the American game"! I won the game, but hardly felt like a hustler.

Nakhodka is an active, busy city, and the accent is on growth. The city is planning to move its civic center from its present rather picturesque location which overlooks the bay and harbor, but which has space limitations, to the northern district which will provide much more room for new public buildings and recreational facilities. There are five such districts in Nakhodka, and each is planned eventually to accommodate as many as 182,000 people.

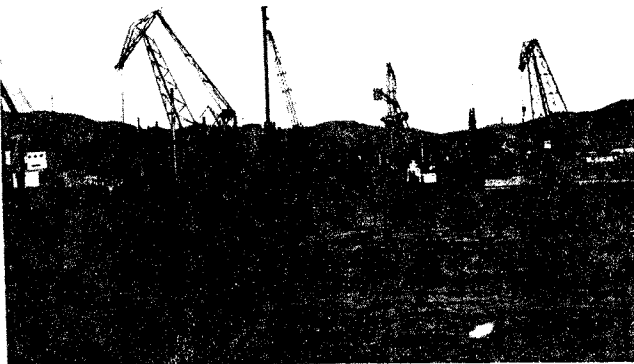
But the most spectacular growth of all is envisioned for the newly developing neighboring Port of Vostochny (or Eastern Port). A major problem in Nakhodka is that the harbor itself is too narrow and short to permit further expansion of dock facilities. As it is, ships must now anchor in the bay awaiting their turn for loading and unloading in the harbor. Thus, Vostochny, on Wrangel Bay, only some 30 or 40 miles to the east, provides the key to major future development. In 1977 four docks are already completed. I saw a coal complex under-going expansion, to which Nakhodka's own coal



Container port facilities at Vostochny.



Loading lumber at Vostochny.



A new pier under construction at Vostochny (August 1977).

handling facility will be transferred in the near future. I saw lumber-loading facilities and new docks under construction. It is expected that the new city of Vostochny will eventually have 60,000 people. The port will have as many as 62 docks within about 10 years and be able to handle 40 million tons of cargo annually. (The busiest port in the Soviet Union today handles only about 13 million tons in a year!)

This ambitious development, along with the BAM Railway which will eventually be connected to it, has not been undertaken lightly. Construction is proceeding steadily despite the labor shortage and the harsh weather, which is especially troublesome for handling concrete. Significantly, Japan is involved in the Vostochny development. The Japanese do not take part in the new port's actual construction, but they are providing equipment under the aegis of the Wrangel-Yamada Company. This is surely persuasive evidence that the Soviet Union is serious about the desirability of forging ties more closely between its easternmost territories—with their vast mineral resources and industrial potential—and the general economy of the Pacific Basin.

Another way in which the Soviets have sought to underscore this desire is by means of a series of annual meetings in Nakhodka to which foreign participants are invited. I attended the fourth of these International Seminars for Young Researchers in August 1977. There were 64 foreigners at the 8-day meeting, and perhaps some 80 Soviet participants who came mostly from Moscow and some from Vladivostok. The foreigners included representatives of organizations that were communist and those that were not, such as the World Federalist Youth, the YMCA (American and Canadian), and a handful of scholars. Curiously, there were no delegates from North Korea or Vietnam.

The conference theme was "cooperation in the Pacific Basin." There were, predictably, some strongly stated ideological pronouncements, but interestingly these came mostly from non-Soviet foreign participants, such as the Latin Americans or from leftist or left-oriented individuals from other countries. The Soviets seemed anxious to avoid issues that would distract from the theme. On the whole, I believe they succeeded. The Soviet



The participants to the IV International Seminar for Young Researchers being welcomed at Nakhodka.

scholars present, who represented one of the meeting's sponsors, the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences, were most helpful in this regard. Dr. Michael Drobyshev unfailingly provided tasteful and timely humor. Also, Mr. Alexander Zharikov, the leader of the Soviet delegation and a member of the other sponsoring organization, the Committee of Youth Organizations of the U.S.S.R., proved to be an exceptionally attractive young man who invariably exercised a moderating influence.

The meeting's final statement was approved by consensus, and was not therefore representative of the views of every participant. On the whole, the statement appears to be quite reasonable, but there are phrases to which most of the Americans present, including myself, objected. For example, a clause which called for the removal of foreign bases from the Pacific is patently unfair because it suggests that the United States unilaterally take such action without a commensurate recommendation regarding the growing Soviet naval power in the Pacific and without regard to other relevant considerations.

That the Soviets would insist upon such a statement without an effort to balance the equation points up a fundamental problem with regard to Soviet intentions. Their policy appears to be Janus-faced. On the one hand, there seems to be a genuine desire to promote détente and to reap economic benefit from this peaceful policy. For the Soviet Far East this means an opportunity for it to become more fully integrated into the economy of the Pacific community of nations. This makes good sense, both for the overall rationalization and development of the Soviet economy, and for making the resources of Siberia and the Soviet Far East more readily available to the rest of the world, and particularly to the Pacific area.

On the other hand, there are the continuing assessments of growing Soviet naval power in the Pacific that give one serious pause, although it is not always clear how much this perception is the result of propoganda created by competing American military services and their respective supporters particularly during times of budget preparation and allocation.<sup>22</sup> Also, at a time when the



A local artist at work on the wharf.



A popular beach near Nakhodka....

Soviets speak so much about turning outward to the Pacific, for all intents and purposes Nakhodka itself remains a city that is scarcely accessible to Western tourists. And while we often allow visiting Russians to roam freely about San Francisco, Seattle, and Honolulu (including Pearl Harbor), it is incongruous, to say the least, that the rare visiting Western scholar (or any visitor for that matter) in the Soviet Far East is denied the opportunity to visit Vladivostok, the Maritime Province's chief city and cultural and educational center. If the U.S.S.R.'s intentions are entirely benign in the Pacific, why such secrecy?

This is a paradox that the Soviets must sort out for themselves and should do if it is at all possible. They undoubtedly are of divided opinion among themselves. To the extent that détente appears to be advantageous to the Soviet Union in terms of making more tangible economic progress than without it they are likely to continue this policy seriously. However, if and when world tensions mount and they sense it, or if their militarists can make a plausible case that their national security appears to be jeopardized, then the more militant posture will probably come to dominate once again.

But this is precisely what may trouble potential Western investors in Soviet Far East development most. What happens to their investment and agreements if there is a major shift in Soviet attitude and policy in the years ahead? Heaven knows that dealing with the Russians is often trying



.... where rock music is pervasive.

even under the best of circumstances. And there is problem enough in attracting capital when the U.S.S.R. must compete with an attractive investment area such as South Korea, for example, which is also located in Northeast Asia. Korean development is so rapid and promising these days that the investor can count upon a quick and profitable return.

Such competition would not in itself preclude investment in and more trade with the Soviet Far East. Some prominent and imaginative Western business leaders have expressed interest in more activity in this area. David Heenan, Dean of the University of Hawaii's School of Business Administration, has spoken of the desirability of Western investors beginning to lengthen the acceptable time frame for realization of profits. He is among those who believe that mutually advantageous deals can be negotiated with the Soviets even under the terms of the compensatory agreements which the U.S.S.R. insists upon. Thus it is likely that if the restrictions on trade and investment imposed by the Jackson-Vanek and Stevenson amendments can be lifted there would indeed be an expansion of trade and investment.<sup>23</sup>

The underlying doubts regarding real Soviet intentions will continue to persist, however, until the Soviets take concrete measures to clarify the ambiguity of their stance in the Pacific. Partly this will also necessitate a great improvement in their general relations with Japan, which, despite some recent progress in settling the disputations over



fishing rights, are not very good. So much of their hopes for developing the Soviet Far East rest on Japan that it is somewhat surprising that they have not already made a much greater effort. In fact, Soviet relations with Japan appear to be clumsy. The Russians underestimate Japanese sentiment and determination regarding the four northern islands issue, and they rile the Japanese, who still have bitter memories of Russian treatment of

Japanese prisoners during World War II, by conducting naval and air maneuvers around Japan.

We must hope that the Soviets will succeed in eventually clarifying their policy and that the resolution will be in the direction of peaceable economic interchange and openness. Such full and unambiguous Soviet participation in the economic life of the Pacific might well contribute to the region's stability.



#### NOTES

1. L.I. Brezhnev, *Report of the CPSU Central Committee and the Immediate Tasks of the Party in Home and Foreign Policy*, Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1976, p. 68.
2. A.N. Kosygin, *Guidelines for the Development of the National Economy of the USSR for 1976-1980* (March 1, 1976), Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1976, pp. 45-47. Emphasis added.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 68.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
5. Paul E. Lydolph, *Geography of the USSR*, New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1977, p. 425-427. This has been an invaluable source for geographical information.
6. *Ibid.*
7. E. Stuart Kirby, "The Soviet Far East and Siberia," in *The Far East and Australasia 1976-77*, London: Europa Publications Limited, 1977, p. 976.
8. Donald W. Treadgold, *The Great Siberian Migration: Government and Peasant in Resettlement from Emancipation to the First World War*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957, p. 111.
9. The best books available on Sakhalin and the Kurils are by John J. Stephan, *Sakhalin: A History*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1971 and *The Kurils*, London: Oxford University Press, 1975.
10. George F. Kennan, "The United States and the Soviet Union, 1917-1976," *Foreign Affairs* (July 1976) pp. 671-72.
11. The loss of Soviet patience was signalled by the article "The Peking Road to the Breakdown of International Détente Under the Cloak of Anti-Sovietism," written under the pseudonym, V. Alexandrov, *Pravda*, May 14, 1977.
12. Lydolph, p. 442.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 446. This is a phenomenon that did not seem to register during my almost two-week visit to nearby Nakhodka in August 1977, for as I recall it rained only one or two nights during that entire period. The weather was generally warm and clear, which was also out of keeping with expectations. I swam in the admittedly rather cold ocean water at different points along Nakhodka Bay and nearby coast on five different days; the sky was almost always clear and sunny. But then, we have been having strange weather patterns throughout the world in the past couple of years.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 448-450.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 451.
16. Boris N. Slavinsky, "Siberia and the Soviet Far East Within the Framework of International Trade and Economic Relations," *Asian Survey*, Vol. XVII, No. 4 (April 1977) p. 316.
17. Lydolph, p. 450.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 450-51; Slavinsky, p. 315.
19. Slavinsky, p. 316.
20. Lydolph, p. 465.
21. Slavinsky, pp. 320-21.
22. For example, the 1977-78 addition of *Jane's Fighting Ships* reportedly holds that "the fast expanding Soviet navy has three times as many submarines as the United States, packs a 5,600 mile missile punch that could hit San Diego or Hawaii from its home waters and soon may threaten the West's raw material supplies and markets." UPI, London, August 25, 1977. For a sober analysis of the subject about one year ago see Vice Admiral Julien J. Bourgeois's "What is the Soviet Navy Up To?" one of the Security Series Policy papers of the Atlantic Council of the United States.
23. See the thoughtful articles by Daniel Yergin, "Soviet Trade: An Opportunity Drifting Away," *The New Republic* (June 4, 1977), pp. 16-17, and "Politics and Soviet-American Trade: The Three Questions," *Foreign Affairs* (April 1977), pp. 517-538.