

Self-Government of the Indigenous Minority Peoples of West Siberia: Analysis of Law and Practice¹

NATALIA I. NOVIKOVA

1.

The Khanty people are fond of telling fairy tales, especially in the evenings. When, in the forest camp, they are going to bed, an old man continues to tell stories as long as somebody is still awake. One of my friends told me that, as a girl, she tried not to fall asleep while the old man was telling stories, but she never succeeded in hearing the end. Maybe it is never possible to hear the end, because what one usually calls or translates as ‘a fairy tale’ or ‘a story’ actually means ‘a way’ or ‘a way as a destiny’. My good friend and teacher Leonti Taragupta once told me about this. It is interesting to note that this happened when I was asking him about his understanding of self-determination and self-government. Later I worked on legislation in the State Duma (Parliament) and spoke with many aboriginals² about this phenomenon, and I realised that Leonti Taragupta had given a very detailed definition of self-determination. He said, ‘We have all these legal and other problems because we do not want to develop, we do not want to become more refined and delicate, we believe that everything is simply like we see it. If my neighbour forms or influences me, I am responsible for him. This is a way. That is how I understand self-determination’. Self-determination is a system of relationships. The terms are not precise, and one can not put them on like shirts, the terms do not correspond to their inner meaning. In fact, we need the term ‘self-training’ in our situation.

For all participants in the contemporary development processes, it is very important to define the terms ‘self-determination’ and ‘self-government’. Both in the institutions of the state and among representatives of the indigenous peoples, there are different perceptions of what is self-government and for what purposes it is necessary. In the 1990’s, ideas about the need for granting the indigenous peoples community-based self-government emerged among politicians, representatives of these peoples, and Russian scholars who were studying their life. In the context of state law, these changes brought about a decision to prepare the corresponding law.³

The meaning of the International Decade of Indigenous Peoples was expressed in the declared transition from the policies of paternalism to the policies of partnership. It is supposed that indigenous peoples would be able to participate in resolving political, economic, and legal questions, and that they would have the right to determine their present and future. Indigenous peoples present different ways of solving their problems. The UN documents, and first of all the 'International Charter on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights' (adopted in 1966), accept the notion that all peoples of the world have a right to self-determination and a right to being free in managing their natural wealth and resources. In the Draft Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples of the World it is stated that the indigenous peoples have a right to self-determination (Article #3), and that the latter can be implemented as a form of autonomy and self-government within the framework of their internal and local affairs, including various issues of culture, religion, education, information technologies, mass-media, health care, housing, employment, social services, economic activities, land use and the use of resources, environmental problems, admission of outsiders, as well as methods and means of financing the above mentioned autonomous functions (Article #31).

The new Russian legislation includes a certain legal basis, which fixes the status of indigenous minority peoples. The need for such legislation arises from the fact that these peoples, sharing specific approaches to the use of natural resources that are fundamentally different from the ones typical for the other groups of population, are not able to defend their rights adequately through the use of the modern general legislation. One should not ignore the fact that now aboriginals comprise some 1% – 15% of the population in areas of their residence, and thus their rights can not be protected with the help of representative institutions and other existing mechanisms of a democratic state. Aboriginals are not imposing their way of life on other population groups, and they need self-government only for their own development and for resolving problems within their communities. Such problems are primarily those related to developing traditional economies and cultures, languages and providing social security for their members. The use of mechanisms of self-organisation, more or less preserved by many peoples, may create a possibility to optimise the state governance of their development and to establish dialogue between the peoples of the North, organised into com-

munities, state authorities, and industrial enterprises. But the conditions, necessary for developing self-government and self-organisation of aboriginals, can be provided only when the latter are given the right to participate in resource management and when their land rights are legally defined. So self-government, in its commonly used definition, is a state policy, and if a state itself puts the goal of 'protecting natural environment and traditional way of life of indigenous ethnic communities' (as it is fixed in the Constitution of the Russian Federation), then it is the task of the state to back up and develop self-government. Within this understanding of self-government, one can not speak about revival or natural process, etc. Furthermore it is still another problem, how the aboriginals themselves perceive self-government and to what extent they are now ready to accept responsibility.

2.

I think it is especially interesting to study legal aspects of these processes, using the examples of related activities in the State Duma of the Russian Federation and in the governmental institutions of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug.

At present there are two Federal Laws, passed in Russia and directly devoted to the legal status of the indigenous minority peoples and their communities. On April 30, 1999 the President of Russia signed the Federal Law 'On Guarantees of Rights of Indigenous Minority Peoples of the Russian Federation'. This law was the first attempt in Russia to legally regulate all aspects of life of indigenous peoples. But, in order to be accurate, one should mention that the law describes self-government only as territorial public self-government, having no links with land rights and rights over resources.

The law 'On General Principles of Organisation of Communities of the Indigenous Minority Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East' was passed in the summer of 2000. V.M. Etylin, Vice-President of the Association of Indigenous Minority Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East (RAIPON), and the author took part in the first stage of the work on its draft version.

The specific features of our approach were that we defined a community as an institution of self-government, economic enterprise, and as a land-owner. In addition, one of our draft articles was directly devoted to folk law.

This approach was supported by many activists in the aboriginal movement, and by the Association of Indigenous Minority Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East. Members of the Co-ordination Council of the latter organisation visited the meeting of the Committee of Nationalities' Affairs of the State Duma in 1996, demanding that their right for self-government be legally established.

It was noted in the draft law that a community was not the only form of self-government and self-organisation of indigenous peoples of the North, and that the document was thus addressing a small fraction of the population – only those who would unite in communities by their own will. Currently existing communities are not, from my point of view, archaic manifestations. They are certain forms of social relationships that have been chosen by people by their own will because they correspond to their current position and life conditions.

The work on the draft law continued for several years. But in recent times V.M. Etylin and myself could not influence this process, and we were able only to watch it from afar. The draft has been changed so drastically that it has almost nothing in common with our original version. The very ideology of the law had been changed – now there is no provision for definite land rights or self-government left in it. On July 6, 2000 this version of the law was passed almost unanimously on its first hearings in the State Duma. As I was told the same day by one member of the Duma apparatus, V. Zhirinovski was the only one who opposed the law and he himself had recently tried to propose a law to protect ethnic Russians but his project had also not been approved. According to V. Zhirinovski, indigenous peoples are already living quite well and thus no laws are needed to protect their rights.

Further work on the draft law was phenomenally quick. On July 7, 2000 it was adopted by the Council of Federation, and on July 20 signed by the President. I am afraid that this amazing speed is due to the fact that the law bears little significance. From my point of view, its best part is the preamble, stating that the law fixes general principles of communities' organisation and activities. According to the law, communities 'are organised in order to protect the natural environment, traditional way of life, rights and legally defined interests of the above mentioned indigenous minority peoples'. The preamble also defines the legal foundations of the communal form of self-government and state guarantees of its implementation. But the body of the

law looks more like a community charter. The word 'self-government' (in relation to community) can be found in the law only once, when it is said that 'in areas of compact residence of minority peoples, institutions of local self-government, in reaction to requests from the communities of minority peoples and from the unions (associations) of their communities, can transfer to the latter certain powers and authorities of the institutions of local self-government'. The word 'land', not to mention 'territory', can not be found anywhere in this law.

One can find several general aspects in approaches to self-government. Self-government is often related to the communities' activities both in legislation in the subjects of the Russian Federation and in the life of aboriginals, and this can be said not only about Russia, but also in relation to many other countries.

3.

Not being a lawyer by training, I nevertheless dare to present several suggestions regarding the need to separate local self-government and community-based self-government of the indigenous minority peoples of the North.

In our initial concept of the federal law we differentiated between powers of institutions of local self-government and of communities. This was done because institutions of local self-government exist for the total population, residing within a certain territory. Thus attempts to organise 'national (ethnic) districts' with their own institutions of power are of little efficiency, from the point of view of protecting indigenous peoples' rights.

The federal law 'On General Principles of Organising Local Self-Government in the Russian Federation' (1995) defines local self-government as 'self-dependent activities of the population, based on their own responsibility and aimed at resolving, directly or through the bodies of local self-government, questions of local importance; these activities are in the interests of the population, its historical and other local traditions' (Article #2). And further, Article #27 of the Law envisages the possibility that the population can also participate in local self-government in forms, other than those described in the given law.

In the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug, the regional law 'On General Principles of Organising Local Self-Government in the Khanty-Mansi Auton-

onomous Okrug' was passed only 4 months after than the Federal one in 1995. This law defines a community as a way of organising local self-government 'within part of the territory of a municipal entity' (Article #43). The law of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug regulates in detail the activities of the communities, aimed at 'preserving and developing unique ways of life and traditional branches of economy of the indigenous minority peoples of the North, as well as cultural and socio-economic development of these peoples' (Chapter VII). The specific feature of community-based self-government is that it regulates the lives and activities of a limited number of persons and that in real life it can pursue fundamentally different goals, compared to those of the majority population of a municipal entity (district, or *raion*).

The issue of relationships between communes and local and state government bodies remains very complicated and acute. Today, the *okrug* has very few self-governing communes, and the *okrug* Administration opposes their registration. For instance, A.S. Sopochina describes the case of the 'Khanto' commune: 'The District and *okrug* Administrations do not like it at all that a commune as a body of self-government of aboriginals who live traditional lives and claim their own historic ways that are unknown and frightening, emerged. The main argument of our opponents is what to do with those aboriginals who do not live according to the traditions of their ancestors. We answer that a person joins the community of his own free will. If a person joins the commune, he must comply with its Charter. If a person, for one reason or another, does not want to join the commune, let him live according to the local government laws of the majority population. It is not our fault that there is a separation of our people into those who live traditional lives on clan lands and those who live miserable lives in towns and settlements'.

The right to self-government, as well as the land rights and rights to using other resources, are principal slogans of the indigenous movement, but there are very broad differences in opinions regarding the aims of implementing such slogans. Meanwhile the indigenous peoples present various ways of solving their problems. The only thing common is, probably, their desire to have access to resources and the opportunity to participate in monitoring resource use. This is precisely what can provide communities with the necessary independence, but this particular issue is the most complicated one. And the complications result not only from the fact that the present legislation has not allocated territories to the communities, but also from the situation

where aboriginals, even those residing in one neighbourhood, often occupy different social positions in life and thus many of them do not trust each other. The Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug law on self-government states that one of the principles of organising a commune is a 'spiritual unity of the commune members' (Article #45), but this happens rarely in real life.

The example of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug can show us how people finally recognised the necessity for self-government, using different routes. The communities 'Khanto' and 'Yaun Yakh' fixed self-government in their Charters right from the moment of registration, while the majority of other communities were formed as economic enterprises. The need for resource co-management seems obvious to communal self-government. The urgency of this question in Western Siberia is first of all caused by the ongoing advance of the oil industry on aboriginal territories, called here 'clan lands'.

I was present at the meeting of the 'Khanto' community when the question of a geological survey to be conducted on their territory, was discussed. Two members of the community signed agreements to allocate certain lands within their clan territories. But since the community's Charter states that these questions are under the authority of the community as a whole, those decisions were challenged and a new agreement was prepared and signed. Of course, this mechanism is not ideal, and there is a real danger that sometimes those, who would like to give up their lands to the oil industry, may find themselves in a majority. But in the situation where in the *okrug*, especially in its eastern parts, there are not so many areas left for traditional natural resource use, community-based land ownership and self-government may help the aboriginals to realise their socio-economic and cultural interests.

Communities may not take up power from the beginning, but come to self-government after having experienced successful economic development. This will probably happen with the 'Karym' community in the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug.

This community unites relatives – brothers and cousins with their families. The 'clan lands' have been legally allocated to them on the basis of the 'Regulations of the Status of Clan Lands', adopted in the Autonomous Okrug in 1992. Members of the community hunt, fish and collect wild plants. A trading station operates within the community, and it not only sells the products of the community, but it also sells fish and plants from the inhabitants of the nearby Shugur settlement. With the help of the State Committee for

Development of the North (*Goskomsever*), the community has built a small meat- and fish-processing plant. Initially the 'Karym' community was established as a community-enterprise. Its chairman, Evgeni Vakhruoshev, and other members say they organised the community in order to survive. At first the chairman of the community thought there was no way of implementing self-government. But in the 6th year of its existence, the community achieved a considerable level of well being. Now it can be more confident in contacts with oil industry workers who might probably work on its lands in the future. The community can also think about self-government, since its relations with the institutions of self-government at the settlement and rural district levels are turning into conflictual ones. At first glance, the activities of the Vakhruoshev families are guided by principles, different from those of most 'forest people'. They want to enjoy an 'affluent life style', and for them the community provides the possibility of such a life – if not for them personally, at least for their descendants. But if one studies their life and attitudes towards nature and land more in depth, it becomes clear that the prime goal of their activities is not 'profit for the sake of profit'. They want to have the opportunity to hunt and fish in such a way that enough animals will always remain for their children and grandchildren. These are not mere empty words for them. This is the reason why they need self-government. I visited this community several years ago. At that time they were finishing the construction of the meat- and fish-processing plant, designed mainly for preparing smoked foods, they also built houses for young families. All the construction work was carried out collectively, by all members of the community. Professional workers were hired for the plant. Against the background of these activities, the living apartments of the community's chairman, Evgeni Vakhruoshev, looked somewhat strange – he was residing in a tent. He explained to me that all the construction work was necessary for the future. But in any case he would never leave the community, and so his house would be built as the last one. E. Vakhruoshev is chairman of the community, and he is also the family elder; probably, the latter circumstance plays a crucial role in establishing and maintaining his power in the community. Abiding by folk law when organising work, dividing incomes, establishing systems of governance in the community, as well as great the personal merits of all the community's members, create the basis for the community's successful functioning. But the fact that the 'Karym' community is unique in the

Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug and practically the only one that is economically efficient, gives rise to some thoughts.

I think that for many aboriginals at this time, self-government is a way to survival, not only physical, but cultural survival as well. Currently the necessity to unite in communities in the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug is caused primarily by the oil industry workers' advance on aboriginal territories. In this case I am speaking about communities as institutions of self-government, because only such communities can participate in resource management and sign valid agreements about the use of resources.

Nevertheless, the negative experience of collectivisation is for many aboriginals an insurmountable obstacle on the way to forming a community. Those aboriginals, who preserve traditional ways of life and who live in forests, are afraid that organising into communities would unite them with those who reside in settlements, who are often unable to carry on traditional economic activities and interested only in getting compensation for the industrial development of their territory.

At the time when I was working on the draft law about communities in the State Duma, I visited eastern parts of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug and worked there with the late O.P. Aivaseda. At that time his family owned the largest reindeer herd in the *okrug*. He helped me a lot in my work, explaining to me in a surprisingly detailed way precisely what I wanted to ask about, before I could even formulate my questions. He knew about my work in the State Duma, and one evening he told me sadly: 'You would write your law, and they would eat my reindeer'.

Often the state itself pushes people to organise communities, for example, in those areas where there is already a deficit of reindeer pasturelands because of industrial development. There the Khanty people are given so-called 'clan community lands', but in fact several families live on such lands and are not organised in any way. For instance, this is the current situation in the Trom-Yagan basin in the area of the Tian oil field. People here can not actually form a community because there is no leader and no people who have the education and experience, necessary to lead a community. One needs to know certain things just in order to register the community and to prepare all the required documents, especially its charter, but people are unable to acquire this knowledge either in the school or in the forest camps. Solving the problem of self-government on an individual level seems also to be very complicated

for representatives of peoples who have different ways of life, compared to other population groups, and who are minorities in areas of their residence.

In the public opinion there is a stable perception that the industrial development of the North serves state interests, while aboriginals with their land claims are only obstacles on the way to realising these interests. At the same time the aboriginals are viewed as if they were not citizens of the state with constitutional rights. Even the issue of state oil interests has become more and more problematic in recent times. The latter can at least be improved by transforming these enterprises into joint-stock companies. Their constant tax debts, not to mention the losses and problems they create in the environment, break state environmental legislation and they get away after paying certain penalties. The anthropology of oil companies is another theme, deserving special investigation. Here I want only to stress that in the *okrug* oil industry employees make up the majority of the population, while many other population groups are close to them in their interests. Aspirations of the former are predominant for the institutions of power. And if one adheres to the European model of democracy, based on the views and aspirations of the majority population, aboriginals in the North can not have real self-determination, accepted by the state and other population groups, even in principle.

In the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug this problem is far from being resolved, and it requires special legislation. It also requires more active participation from the aboriginals themselves, trying to move in that direction. At this moment it looks like in the Okrug the very idea of community-based self-government is for the most part an idea of the state and of some leaders in the indigenous peoples' movement.

4.

The possibility of implementing self-government also does not mean transferring power to 'ethnic representatives'. Institutions of power of this kind have been organised in some political bodies of the Russian Federation, like the Assembly of the Indigenous Minority Peoples of the North in the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug or the representative of indigenous peoples at the Duma of the Sakhalin Province, etc. The question of organising a Parliament of Indigenous Peoples has been discussed in the Association of Indigenous Peoples in recent times, and leaders of the aboriginal movement work in this field.

According to the Federal Law 'On Guarantees of Rights of Indigenous Minority Peoples of the Russian Federation', the concept 'plenipotentiary representatives of the minority peoples' has been introduced, though it was not defined who could become such a representative and how.

An article about quotas for representation of minority peoples in the institutions of power becomes useless as well, when it is stated that these quotas 'can be introduced by the laws of the subjects of the Russian Federation'. This issue is not a simple one, because even now as well as before adoption of this law, the interests of the indigenous peoples are most often expressed by their elites. The elites may represent interests of their peoples, but they may also think more about their own interests, or about administrative benefits, since the latter often finance the existence of the so-called ethnic elites. Nevertheless, if strict and clear election mechanisms were defined and if all representatives of a certain people could take part in such elections, these methods could be used in many areas.

But in real life, perspectives for aboriginal self-government are determined by the possibilities of their membership in institutions of power, first of all in representational institutions. At the moment, very few persons represent indigenous minority peoples of the North in institutions of power in the political bodies of the Russian Federation, while there are no aboriginals in the State Duma of the Russian Federation. The electoral experience shows that aboriginals are often unable to organise and effectively implement elections, and that is why, for example, they managed to elect only 2 representatives to the Assembly of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug instead of 6 deputies.

But how efficient is formal representation in protecting the rights of the indigenous peoples? The problem is really a complicated one, and many people are not sure that it can be resolved through formal representation. Maybe, a more productive way is for aboriginals to establish their own organisations, devoted to the protection of aboriginal rights at the level of representative institutions of power.

Currently the only organisation that can function in this way is the Association of the Indigenous Minority Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East. Many aboriginals and scholars see its mission in this particular way. But since the Association is virtually the only organisation of the indigenous peoples, it is preoccupied with too many problems and questions, above all socio-economic ones.

5.

In addition to communal self-government, aboriginals suggest other ways of self-determination – cultural, via museums and folklore centres of their own, educational organisations or the use of folk medicine.

During the latest decade one can speak about a flourishing of museum activities in the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug. Many museums have been manifestations of attempts at cultural self-government, and were organised under the responsibility of their founders only. These museums are projects of their authors, and the latter's goals are to a large extent to themselves define the cultural values of indigenous peoples and how these peoples see their cultural development under the present conditions. To tell the truth, recently, the boom has weakened. I think these museums have played their role to a certain extent: in the early 1990's their founders managed to draw public attention to the value of aboriginal culture. The museums also influenced the formation of views among some young representatives of the indigenous peoples. But in general, despite all their achievements, ethnographic museums can not substitute real life. Another attempt at self-government can be seen in the project to establish ethnic summer and camp schools. Camp schools in particular are of special interest, and I had the opportunity to learn about the experiences of one such school, that of Yuri Vella at the Tiutiakh Camp. Children in this school get the same education as school children in the settlement, but thanks to this type of school the children live with their own families and not in the boarding house in the settlement. Such schools provide opportunities to use traditional methods of bringing up children, and the latter become more independent and better adapted to life. Besides, their parents too can remain in the camps, being in psychologically better and more comfortable conditions than in settlements where unemployment and hard drinking prevail. The camp school also created additional jobs for family members. As a result, grandfathers and grandmothers hope that their grandchildren may be able to acquire education and at the same time live in the camp, practising reindeer herding.

Cultural self-determination of these kinds is an attempt to influence politics through bringing up and educating the future generations. If these schools become widespread, they will probably be able to educate a new generation of aboriginals. But up until now all such projects are of an experimental

character and thus can be viewed as attempts 'to act under personal responsibility'. But I think that the education the aborigines would acquire, its contents and form, can substantially influence the development of self-government, and so I think it is necessary to look at the issue of education in the context of indigenous peoples' self-government and its prospects.

Actual opportunities for this kind of cultural self-determination can be brought about only by the state providing guarantees for land rights and rights to self-government, as well as legalising folk law. Bringing up and educating children within the framework of folk law makes it possible to give them skills and habits of independent and responsible living and no self-government can be implemented without this.

6.

At the time when we were working on draft laws in the State Duma, I considered drawing attention to the folk law of indigenous peoples and above all to its ideology, to be one of my goals. The differentiation between 'law' and 'legal system' that exists in the official legislative system of a state, exists in folk law as well. Besides, turning to folk law also results from the fact that the aborigines often do not accept state laws with its reliance on written legal documents.

Unfortunately, little attention is given to folk law in academic studies as well as in practical activities. It is a complex, changing cultural phenomenon that needs to be taken seriously. It should not be imposed if folk law stopped to be the source of norms for a particular society. Currently there are different interpretations of folk law. Nevertheless, there are certain norms, common to all aborigines and differentiating them from other populations, and these norms have been incorporated into international documents. Careful attention to the processes taking place in the 'Fourth World', and to fundamentals of their cultures, can help with the work on special legislation, related to these peoples. In Russian legislation, folk law has been legally acknowledged in recently adopted Federal laws. For instance, Part #2 in the Article #4 of the Law 'On General Principles of Organisation of Communities' ... proclaims the following: 'Decisions on issues of internal organisation of minority peoples' communities and of relationships between its members can be made on the basis of traditions and customs of minority peoples if

they do not contradict the Federal legislation and legislation of the subject of Federation and if they do not cause damage to interests of other ethnic groups and citizens'. One should approach this question with great care because it has virtually not been studied at all. But it is necessary to start working in this direction, because strict regulation, introduced by positive law (the law, adopted by the state), especially in respect of land, brings about negative attitudes of aboriginals, and above all of reindeer herders. Probably it would be more constructive to organise self-government within large territories, occupied by unions of communities, where issues of land use could be resolved in accordance with folk law norms. But at present this outcome is problematic, due at least to two reasons. First, aboriginals are not ready and are not inclined towards such Cupertino and unions. Second, in such a case the whole territory should be given the status, limiting industrial development. For reindeer herding communities and for reindeer pastures such decision may be vitally important.

7.

Judging from historical accounts and field materials there was no problem of self-government in its modern sense in the traditional mentality of West Siberia aboriginals. The choice of how to develop was determined by the natural environment and type of economy. Different peoples (or communities) either maintained relations of exchange or lived in an isolated and autonomous way, not interfering in the life of their neighbours and with the opportunity to develop their economies in their vast territories. Throughout the long period of time, when these peoples were opening up the North, they developed certain mechanisms for relating nature and people. Their folk law was based on agreements between neighbours and on the co-ordination of activities with them. It was not by chance that soon after adopting the 'Regulations of the Status of Clan Lands in the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug', those aboriginals, who wanted to get land, were able to reach agreements with their neighbours quite easily. Of course, I am speaking only about people who preserve their traditional way of life and the ethics of folk law. But it is this group that, with respect to their choice, should be provided with special legislation and should be given the right to self-determination in the form of self-government.

Currently the idea of self-government has acquired importance both in legislation and in aboriginal public opinion, and it is viewed as a possible version of indigenous peoples' existence in the modern world. But so far very little has been done in real life and in a practical way towards this end. Nevertheless, the formation and work of many public organisations of indigenous peoples, above all of the Association of Indigenous Minority Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East at the centre of the country and in the regions where aboriginal populations live, the development of communities, attempts at cultural self-determination, the organisation of representative institutions of power by indigenous people, on the one hand, and the struggle of indigenous peoples for constitutional rights, on the other, may eventually result in the establishment of relations of partnership with the state and society and the provision of living conditions for the indigenous minority peoples of the North that are adequate to the standards at the end of the 20th century. Another prerequisite for this, and maybe the most important one, is the understanding that self-government means self-training.

Notes

- 1 Translated by A.N. Yamskovi
- 2 I am using the term 'aboriginals' because I see it as the most clear and integral definition in the public opinion of a population group that practices reindeer herding, hunting, fishing and food gathering; these occupations serve as a basis for differentiating this group from the general population. In Russia, the legally accepted term is 'indigenous minority peoples', though it is less clear and precise.
- 3 I am glad to use this opportunity to express my gratitude to Zoia Petrovna Sokolova who provided me with the recommendation to be included in the working group on the draft law 'On General Principles of Organising Communities of the Indigenous Minority Peoples of the North'.