

THE POLIARNAIA KOCHEGARKA NEWSPAPER AS A SOURCE ON THE SOVIET MINING ON SPITSBERGEN IN THE 1930-80S: A BRIEF BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SURVEY

Aleksandr Portsel (Murmansk State Technical University)

Abstract

Copies of the Poliarnaia kochegarka newspaper, published by the Russian/Soviet mining trust Arktikugol and stored in the State Archive of the Murmansk Region (GAMO), contain a wealth of material which emerged after a systematic coverage, for nearly half a century, of various aspects of the development of the Svalbard (Spitsbergen) archipelago, from Stalin's times to the late Soviet period. In the newspaper, one can find a wide range of topics and genres, from the official publications both at the state and the local levels to sketches of polar dwellers' everyday life. Poliarnaia kochegarka's articles help readers to trace the development of Arktikugol's capacities and the formation of normal living conditions in the Soviet Arctic settlements on the archipelago. Poliarnaia kochegarka also contains many observations on the Norwegian mines on Svalbard. Its particular interest, however, consists in various historical surveys and the information about the international contacts on the archipelago.

Keywords

Soviet mines on Svalbard, Spitsbergen, Barentsburg, Coles Bay, Grumant, Pyramiden, Soviet press

Periodicals occupy an important place among printed historical sources. They reflect the official opinions and priorities, as well as people's mood at certain times, and occasionally contain valuable information about earlier historical periods. This can justly be said about the newspaper *Poliarnaia kochegarka* (Polar Furnace) published by the Soviet trust Arktikugol. An almost complete set of this newspaper since 1948, plus some prewar issues, are kept at the State Archive of the Murmansk Region (GAMO). What information can this in-house edition provide to those who are interested in the mining history of the Spitsbergen (Svalbard) archipelago?

Mass media are commonly considered to be the Fourth Estate. Its possibilities to impact people's consciousness and to form their behaviour are great, indeed. This has also been understood by Arktikugol. In Soviet times, newspapers were deemed to be of great significance as a tool for mobilizing people's productivity and increasing their political literacy. Yet it was impossible to deliver centrally published Soviet newspapers to Spitsbergen in a timely fashion, for obvious reasons, and after the end of each navigation period radio remained the only means of communication with the mainland. That is why Arktikugol's administration and local Communist party leaders began to produce their own newspaper for the employees of the Soviet mines on Spitsbergen. It was published right on the archipelago, in Barentsburg.

Arktikugol was established in October 1931. Back then, there was no technical possibility to organize the printing of a local newspaper in Russian. Only wall newspapers were being made. The first three issues of *Poliarnaia kochegarka* were published only in

1934. But soon the newspaper stopped because of the shortage of technical staff for its production.

Yet politically the newspaper had a dramatic significance for the workforce. And the local Communist party leaders could not put up with the cessation of its publication. Active measures to revive *Poliarnaia kochegarka* were undertaken. It reappeared again in October 1935. At that point the newspaper was issued every five days. Before World War II, its print run was c. 600 copies.

In May 1941, it was reported from Spitsbergen to M. I. Starostin, the First Secretary of the Murmansk regional committee of the Communist party: “The printed newspaper has reorganized its work and assists greatly in the improvement of the industrial and party-political activity”.¹

After World War II, the publishing of the newspaper at Spitsbergen’s Soviet mines continued. *Poliarnaia kochegarka* started coming out again in 1948 and stopped only in 1991 (having changed its title in 1989 to *Shakhter Arktiki* [The Arctic Miner]). After World War II, *Poliarnaia kochegarka* was issued three times a week. Each issue contained four pages.

The newspaper was printed in Barentsburg. The editorial office of newspaper, as well as the printing press, were located in an old canteen. This is where, in the newspaper’s heyday, one editor and one photographer (at the editorial office), as well as two typesetters, one page designer, one stereotyper, one typographer and one proofreader (at the printing works) were based. *Poliarnaia kochegarka*’s correspondent in Pyramiden was given a room on the ground floor of the local hotel. His typewritten contributions were delivered to Barentsburg by helicopter – or, for smaller items, by occasional radio transmissions (see Belousova 2015).

In 1934-37, *Poliarnaia kochegarka*’s editor-in-chief was Nikolai Lazarevich Irkaev (1906-78), a well-known Erzya author.² In 1948, the editorial functions were first fulfilled by a certain Okunev (whose initials are unknown), and afterwards, by M. P. Iarovoi. In 1950, the newspaper was run by I. A. Solov’ev. At the turn of the 1950s-60s, V. Litvinov was put in charge. In the early 1960s, the paper was managed by A. Likhobabin, and later, until 1967, by V. Siniakov. In 1967-69, Stanislav Naumovich Dashchinskii (1938-2002), one of the best-known journalists in Murmansk, became the newspaper’s chief editor. In 1969-70, he was replaced by P. Shmelev. In 1970, E. F. Savitskii was appointed chief editor, followed by Vladimir Leonidovich Shirikov (in 1978-81), Czesław Ivashko and N. S. Ritchenko (in the mid-1980s).³

What was the newspaper writing about? In the long years of its functioning, a certain tradition of placing publications on specific pages developed. The front page, as a rule, was reserved for official information about the activities in the mines. The second page was usually taken up by discussions of various aspects of Soviet miners’ life. Among the contributors, there were both the mines’ leadership and ordinary employees.

Page three was normally devoted to international affairs. Often here one could find reprints from the TASS information agency and other central Soviet mass media, so that miners could be au courant with affairs abroad. We have to remember that up until the

¹ GAMO. F. P-17. Op. 1. D. 43. L. 8. At GAMO, two issues are held for 1935 (of 17 and 25 October) and seventeen more for 1940-41, see Portsel 2018, 26.

² For more on him, see Portsel 2018, 25–26.

³ On Shirikov (1944-98), see Krivtsov 2018.

mid-1970s, Soviet miners on Spitsbergen had no access to information sources, other than *Poliarnaia kochegarka* and brief radio broadcasts.

Page four usually covered sports and cultural events in the Soviet settlements, as well as the archipelago's history. Humorous and satirical features could also be found here.

What can be interesting for a researcher in *Poliarnaia kochegarka*'s content?

1. Official documents

Needless to say, official documents occupied a prominent place on the newspaper's pages. First of all, there were documents of the highest state structures. Thus, in 1977, the text of the new Soviet Constitution was published in several issues.

The information about the visits of important people to Spitsbergen was highlighted in the newspaper as a matter of course. For example, the visits to Barentsburg and Pyramiden of the Soviet Ambassadors to Norway (D. S. Polianskii in 1985 and 1986 and A. V. Teterin in 1988) were mentioned.

Much space was allocated to the official materials supplied by the leadership of the mines and the trust's public institutions. Those were the editorials where the tasks of the working collective were prioritized, as well as conference materials and the information about the decisions taken at various meetings and by elected public bodies. In the 1960s, for example, there was a regular heading entitled "Notes from the Meetings of the Trade Union Committee".

Statistical data were introduced here too, but very occasionally. In particular, there was information about financial rewards given to innovators and inventors (see no. 41 of 1949).

Greetings from the relevant ministries and Arktikugol leaders to mine workers on the occasion of miners' labour victories were also published in the newspaper. The trust and mines' management regularly informed the newspaper readership about the achievements of and prospects for the mines' development. For example, the trust's Director for the Production V. Trifonenkov wrote about this in detail in 1980 (see "Rubezhi sozidaniia" [Creation's Frontiers] in no. 96 of 1980). In 1986, Arktikugol's Director General N. A. Gnilorybov gave a one-and-a-half page description of the prospects for the mines' development during the 12th Five-year Plan ("Osnovnye zadachi trudiashchikhsia tresta Arktikugol na 1986 god" [The Main Tasks for the Arktikugol employees in 1986]", see no. 12 of 1986).

2. Publications about the mine output and its leaders

It was mandatory for the newspaper to publish the production pledges of the trust's labour collectives. Thanks to such documents, we can identify the main trajectories and priorities of the development of the Soviet mines on the archipelago.

Also, the newspaper was obliged to publish decisions concerning the state and institutional awards to Arktikugol's best workers. Since 1948's no. 10, on the front page in almost every newspaper issue there was the so-called "Board of Honour". The names of the mines' best workers, judging by the previous month's results, and the information about the exact nature of their achievements, were published here.

The best practices were popularized widely in the newspaper. The articles about them were written not only by journalists and "rabcors", or people's correspondents (the term for ordinary citizens who were not professional journalists but regularly sent their

materials to the newspaper). In many articles, the best workers themselves told the public about how they had managed to achieve such good results.

Sometimes it is possible to get biographical information from such publications. Thus, in 1980 the information about M. E. Plisetskii and the early years of Arktikugol, whose top manager he had been in the 1930s, was placed in several newspaper issues (see “Odin iz pervykh” [One of the First] in nos 26–29 of 1981). During the 1980s, there existed a regular heading “Tvoi luchshie liudi, Arktika” [The Best People in the Arctic]. Here, for example, appeared the articles “Talant sovremennogo rukovoditelia” [The Talent of a Modern Leader], about V. A. Gureev, the Barentsburg mine director in the 1950-80s (see no. 2 of 1986); “Svershenie mechty” [A Dream Fulfilled] – about E. M. Zinger, a famous glaciologist (see no. 57 of 1986); and others.

Much space was given to the articles aimed at the increase in the efficiency of the mines’ production. Special regular headings were devoted to it – for example, the one called “Zadacha dnia – osvoenie novoi tekhniki” [Task of the Day – Mastering New Technology].

Safety issues and accident prevention were focused upon, too. There were regular headings, such as “Bezopasnost’ truda – delo kazhdogo” [Labour Safety Is Everyone’s Duty], “Okhrane truda – postoiannoe vnimanie” [Permanent Attention to Labour Safety], “Tekhnike bezopasnosti – postoiannoe vnimanie” [Permanent Attention to Accident Prevention] and others. Using these publications, it is possible to understand the problems of organizing production in the mines, as well as such problems’ solutions, and form an impression about the mines’ technological development.

Critical materials were also published in the newspaper. Thus, no. 3 of 1948 was fully devoted to the struggle against mismanagement in the Arktikugol mines. Later there appeared a regular heading “Pod ostrym uglom” [At a Sharp Angle]. Such critical materials did not lack the attention of the trust’s governing body. The headings “Vozvrashchaias’ k napechatannomu” [Revisiting Old Issues] and “Po sledam nashikh vystuplenii” [Following Up on Our Publications] existed in the newspaper since its first months. In these sections, officials would respond to the issues raised by critics.

3. Information on international affairs

The newspaper often reprinted TASS reports about the most important international events and agreements, as well as the official comments on them. For example, in 1949, a double issue of the newspaper was fully occupied with the declaration of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs about the North Atlantic Treaty (see no. 13–14 of 1949). Later, *Poliarnaia kochegarka* published the text of the treaty (see no. 33 of 1949) and the Soviet government’s memorandum on this occasion (see no. 38 of 1949). Another example: in 1968, in the course of the Warsaw Pact’s reaction to the Prague Spring, the newspaper published the address of 21 August 1968, by a group of members of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, the Czechoslovak Government and the Czechoslovak National Assembly (see no. 66 of 1968), as well as the official information about the events taking place in Czechoslovakia.

Often, newspaper issues contained not only just dry information but also stories about people’s lives in different countries. Soviet Arctic dwellers had a great appetite for the history of the Norwegian settlements of the archipelago, as well as news items about modern life there. The newspaper devoted many articles to this theme. For example, in his “Traditsii dobrososedstva” (The Traditions of Good Neighbourliness; nos 62–66 of

1981), one G. Ivanov recounted in detail the history of Norwegian mines and the interrelations between the Norwegians and the Soviets on Spitsbergen.

On the pages of *Poliarnaia kochegarka*, quite often we can find information about the visits of Norwegian officials and ordinary Norwegian miners to the Soviet settlements (see, for example, “Vse flagi v gosti k nam” [All Kinds of Guests Are Coming to See Us] in no. 58 of 1967; “Plany družby” [Friendly Plans] in no. 13 of 1969; “Po zakonam družby” [Following the Laws of Friendship] in no. 30 of 1969; and others).

Information about the visits of Soviet delegations to Longyearbyen was also placed here (see, for example, “Poleznyi visit” [A Useful Visit] in no. 18 of 1969; and “Znakom’tes’: Barentsburg – Longyearbyen” [Barentsburg Meets Longyearbyen] in no. 73 of 1969). In them, there was a great deal of interesting data about the life of Norwegian neighbours. A large article by V. A. Gureev, “Longyearbyen: Shakhta i liudi” [Longyearbyen: The Mine and the People] (no. 37 of 1969), written after the Russian miners’ visit to Svalbard’s Norwegian mines, is of a similar kind.

Rules of behaviour for Soviet people abroad were also elucidated in the newspaper, see “Pravila, obiazatel’nye dlia vsekh” [The Rules Obligatory for All], no. 14 of 1980.

4. Publications about the history of Spitsbergen and polar research

The interest in the history of the development of the archipelago and the Arctic was great among the readers of *Poliarnaia kochegarka*. That is why articles on these topics were published often. Many of them were placed in the newspaper in connection with Arktikugol’s anniversaries. Here are a few examples.

In 1949 (nos 49–50), two pages were occupied by the memoirs of Arktikugol veterans, under the title “Tak vosstanavlivaetsia sovetskii Barentsburg” [This Is How Soviet Barentsburg Recovers].

The article “Ostrov Shpitsbergen: Kratkaia istoriia izucheniia i osvoeniia” [The Island of Spitsbergen: A Short History of Its Study and Development] (nos 18–19 of 1951) sheds light on the most important events in the archipelago’s history between 1596 and 1924.

In 1966–1967, in 14 issues, a chronicle of the main events in the history of Arktikugol was published (see V. Kirillov, “Vnov’ rozhdeniye” [The Reborn] in nos 83–86, 89–92, 95, 98 and 101 of 1966, as well as nos 2, 9 and 24 of 1967). This subject was further expanded upon in “Khronika nezabyvaemykh let” [Chronicling Unforgettable Years] (no. 86 of 1967).

In 1969–1970, the newspaper again published a large selection of materials “Iz istorii osvoeniia Shpitsbergena” [Conquering Spitsbergen: A History], partly prepared by the Soviet vice-consul on Spitsbergen B. Smirnov (see nos 92, 94, 96, 97 and 99–100 of 1969, as well as nos 1, 2–5, 18–20, 23, 24, 27, 32, 38 and 43 of 1970).

In 1986 (no. 67), 1987 (no. 6) and 1988 (nos 82, 84–86 and 88), the newspaper published the articles by N. A. Gnilorybov “Nam – 55” [We are 55 Years Old], “V vysokikh shirotakh Arktiki” [In the High North], “Otkrytie i osvoenie Shpitsbergena” [The Discovery and Development of Spitsbergen]. In them, not only the main stages in the development of the mines were outlined, but also statistical data and documents cited, in particular the decree of the Council of People’s Commissars of 29 July 1920, which initiated the establishment of the Soviet coal mines on Spitsbergen.

N. Gusev (the chief engineer of the Pyramiden mine, and subsequently of the entire Arktikugol) repeatedly published articles on the history of Spitsbergen and its mines. Let me name a couple of his publications: “Rukami sovetskikh poliarnikov” [By the Hands

of Soviet Polar Dwellers] (no. 15 of 1948), about the restoration of the Pyramiden mine after World War II; and “Kak prinimali shakhtu” [How We Took over the Mine] (no. 68 of 1980).

Many memoirs by other Arktikugol veterans were also published – and reprinted for the most part in the collected volume *Polveka vozle poliusa* [Half a Century Near the North Pole], compiled by the editor of *Poliarnaia kochegarka* V. L. Shirikov and published in Murmansk in 1983. But the newspaper version of the memoirs is far more detailed. Here are some examples.

In “Zaboty voennoi pory” [War Time Troubles] by A. Politov (no. 51 of 1981), a former Communist party chief at the mines (*partorg*) describes the evacuation of Svalbard’s Soviet settlements in 1941.

Thanks to the articles by representatives of Aeroflot in Longyearbyen – such as “Takaia nasha rabota” [This is Our Job] by E. Magerov (no. 49 of 1981), “Desiat’ let v nebe Arktiki” [Ten Years in the Arctic Sky] by M. Pirozhkov (no. 71 of 1985) and others – a history of air transportation from Moscow to the archipelago can be traced.

The article “Vsegda v poiske” [Always Searching] (no. 26 of 1967) by L. Murashov, a chief geologist of Arktikugol’s geological survey expedition, was devoted to the history of Soviet geologists’ work on the archipelago.

The interview by the mines’ veteran N. K. Sudnik “Kak vse eto bylo” [How It All Happened] (no. 10 of 1980) is about the establishment of a farm on the mines during the postwar years. The same topic is covered in E. Speranskaia’s memoir “Zimovka na Grumante” [An Overwintering on Grumant] (no. 21 of 1980).

In 1987 (nos 58-60 of 1987), the memoirs “Barentsburg shestidesiatykh” [Barentsburg in the 1960s] by V. A. Gureev were published.

The newspaper also published material about the history of Arctic exploration, including the largest Russian and foreign expeditions. Thus, in the section “Iz letopisi Arktiki” [From the Arctic Annals] an article by A. Barkhatov appeared (“K vershinam Shpitsbergena” [To the Heights of Spitsbergen], no. 70-71 of 1983), on many geological expeditions on the archipelago, beginning from 1899.

In his article “Pomnim vas, geroi poliarnykh morei” [We Remember You, the Heroes of Polar Seas!] (no. 39 of 1967), V. Kirillov describes the rescue of the steamer *Malygin* and the loss of the tugboat *Ruslan* near Spitsbergen in 1933.

A. Pechurov, one of the most authoritative Soviet experts on the history of Spitsbergen, contributed many articles, e.g. “Nerazgadannye tainy poliarnoi ekspeditsii” [The Unresolved Mysteries of a Polar Expedition] about G. L. Brusilov’s journey on board “*St Anna*” in 1912-14 (see no. 68 of 1986).

In his article “Put’ v Arktiku” [A Way to the Arctic] (no. 87 of 1986), the chief of IX Polish Polar expedition Grzegorz Gregorzcyk outlined the history of Polish research in the Arctic and on Spitsbergen.

The famous glaciologist E. Zinger often published chapters of his future books about Spitsbergen. Thus, in the 1970s, a series of his articles appeared in the newspaper under the heading “Dal’she tol’ko poliush” [Next to the North Pole].

5. Publications about the living conditions

This is one of the most interesting topics in *Poliarnaia kochegarka*. For those who study everyday life in the Arctic, these newspaper articles are a valuable source. They allow

one to get a first-hand information on the social conditions of the Soviet communities on Spitsbergen in the course of many decades.

People listed their long-standing worries, discussed their experience of overwintering and shared stories about their fellow Spitsbergen residents. The difficulties in the life of Soviet settlers can easily be identified. We can also see in these publications how people overcame such difficulties. When articles' authors wrote about their everyday problems, they were keenly aware that those were the "days of the great construction projects", in the words of a pre-World War II Soviet mass song called "Marsh entuziastov" [Enthusiasts' March].

Critical materials about miners' living conditions were not infrequent on pages of *Poliarnaia kochegarka*. Selected examples include "Stiral'naia problema" [The Washing Problem] (no. 85 of 1957) and "Uluchshit' kul'turno-bytovoe obsluzhivanie trudiashchikhsia" [Improve the Cultural and Everyday Services for the Workers] (no. 8 of 1958), as well as a special issue called "Rabochim poselkam – obraztsovyi vid!" [An Exemplary Appearance to Workers' Settlements!] (no. 51 of 1951).

Yet more often the newspaper gladdened its readers by reports about the improvement of living conditions in the settlements. For example, in 1957 (no. 94), they were informed that "the first permanent indoor plumbing in the Soviet mines of Spitsbergen", from Elsbreen Glacier to Pyramiden, was put in operation (in the article entitled "El'za – Piramida" [From Elsbreen to Pyramiden]). In 1985 (no. 55), it was reported with pride about the beginning of colour TV transmissions from Moscow to Barentsburg and Pyramiden. Two years later the newspaper wrote about the opening of the swimming pool in Pyramiden (see "Samyi severnyi" [The Northernmost] in no. 53 of 1987).

One of the recurrent issues touched upon in the newspaper was the state of the living quarters, which needed improvement. Among other articles, there were those about competitions for the best-looked-after room in a dormitory. This is how the winners of these competitions were rewarded in the postwar years when there was an acute shortage of consumer goods: "The collectives of Arctic settlers, whose rooms the jury would recognize as the best will be awarded five prizes:

One first prize – a radio set.

Two second prizes – a gramophone with a selection of gramophone records.

Two third prizes – a special furniture set for the room" (no. 11 of 1948).

Later on, monetary prizes were waiting for winners: "In the competition for the best-looked-after room, there have been established two first bonuses of 300 rubles each, one second bonus of 200 rubles and one third bonus of 100 rubles" (no. 102 of 1960).

6. Other information

a) Cultural life in the settlements

There are many publications concerning this aspect of life. Already in the first issues one can find information about amateur talent activities, hobby groups and sports clubs. Annual amateur group festivals, held since 1957, were widely covered. Much space was taken by reports about amateur groups' concert tours to the Norwegian settlements, as well as the reciprocal visits by Norwegian neighbours. Thus, in 1958 (no. 21), a large article, "Put' k druzhbe i vzaimoponimaniuu" [A Way to Friendship and Mutual Understanding], about Soviet polar dwellers' visit to Longyearbyen, appeared in the newspaper. During this visit, the guests gave a big concert and held a game of chess with their Norwegian colleagues.

The newspaper also published concert reviews of Soviet music stars visiting Spitsbergen mines. For example, a team of Moscow performers came to Spitsbergen in 1960 to entertain the locals. Liudmila Zykina, who would become one of the most famous Soviet female singers, was among these celebrities from the capital. *Poliarnaia kochegarka* described the visit in detail in nos 58, 61 and 77 of 1960.

Active in Barentsburg since 1967, the local Club of the Cheerful and Inventive People (Klub veselykh i nakhodchivyykh, aka KVN, after a popular Soviet humour TV show, broadcast since 1961) was a subject of detailed reports.

b) Sports and tourism at the mines

The newspaper also regularly informed its readers about the so-called Island Olympics, held annually at the Soviet settlements since 1949. Sport competitions with Norwegian neighbours were covered, too.

Articles about tourists and for tourists were often published. They were primarily about the rules of behavior when hiking. They included not only the safety instructions, developed by the administration of the Soviet mines, but also an explanation of the rules established for tourists by the Svalbard administration (see “S Arktikoi ne shutiat” [The Arctic is No Joke] in no. 42 of 1969; “Okhota zapreshchena” [Hunting is Forbidden] in no. 46 of 1969; “Pravila povedeniia v pokhode” [Rules of Behaviour When Hiking] in no. 37 of 1980; and “V usloviiakh poliarnoi nochi” [In the Polar Night Conditions] in no. 96 of 1985, as well as others).

c) The education of Spitsbergen’s Soviet dwellers

Much was written in the newspaper about how the education among the Soviet citizens of Spitsbergen was organized. It concerned the political and economic instructions, as well as evening schools. The material about the work of pre-schools, as well as primary and secondary schools in Barentsburg, Grumant and Pyramiden, is also of great interest. It contains unique information about Soviet children’s upbringing on the archipelago.

For example, a few articles about the youngest polar dwellers appeared in the newspaper at the end of 1960: “S novosel’em, malyshei!” [Congratulations on a New House, Kids!] by N. Kurilo (no. 93), about a new nursery school in Barentsburg; “Pomnit’ o malen’kikh” [Remember the Little Ones] (no. 96); and “U malyshei Kolsbeia” [Coles Bay Kids] by V. Konstaninova (no. 103).

Materials about secondary school pupils were published more than once, see: “Poslednii uchebnyi den” [The Last Day at School] (no. 42 of 1980); “Znaniia – sila” [Knowledge Is Power] by V. Vrzhes (no. 6 of 1982); “Pered poslednim zvonkom” [Before the Last Bell] by A. Trostianka (no. 44 of 1983); and others. As a rule, these articles were illustrated by photographs.

In 1957, the newspaper announced that “an evening school for the working youth (a branch of the distance learning maritime school in Murmansk) began to function in Barentsburg” (Grigor’eva 1957). Next summer *Poliarnaia kochegarka* told its readers about the results of the school’s first academic year (no. 54 of 1958). Publications about the evening schools at Barentsburg, Pyramiden and Grumant appeared in the newspaper regularly: see, for example, “Uchit’sia, uchit’sia i uchit’sia” [Just Keep Studying] in no. 64 of 1961; and “Rabochii, eto tvoia shkola!” [This Is Your School, Workers!] by D. Iudanova in no. 75 of the same year.

In 1987, the newspaper announced the opening of the Barentsburg branch of the foundation unit (*podgotovitel'noe otdelenie*) of the Donetsk Polytechnic (no. 67 of 1987).

d) Health issues

The section "Sovety vracha" [Doctor's Advice] gives us valuable material for understanding the issues of health protection in the Arctic. For example, in 1949 a few articles by doctors were published in the newspaper: "Travmy glaza i pervaiia pomoshch' pri nikh" [First Aid for Eye Injuries] (no. 44), "Kak predokhranit' sebia ot zheludochno-kishechnykh zabolevani" [How to Protect Yourself From Gastrointestinal Diseases] (no. 89), "Kak okazat' pervuiu pomoshch' pri neschastnykh sluchaiakh" [How to Provide First Aid in Case of Accidents] (no. 114), etc. Some medical recommendations placed here are of practical interest for the readers even today.

e) Catering

It is possible to learn quite a lot about this aspect of life in the Soviet settlements from *Poliarnaia kochegarka*. The newspaper regularly published large articles on this topic, e.g. "Kak rabotaet stolovaia Barentsburga" [How the Canteen in Barentsburg Works] (no. 18 of 1948), "Zabotit'sia o pitanii poliarnikov" [Taking Care of Polar Dwellers' Nutrition] (no. 63 of 1950), "Pitanie poliarnikov: segodnia i zavtra" [Polar Food: Today and Tomorrow] by A. Aleksandrov (no. 19 of 1982) and others. Such publications covered not only the work of the dining rooms but also the farm and the organization of food supplies to the mines from the mainland. See, for instance, "Svezhie ovoshchi u Severnogo poliusa" [Fresh Vegetables Near the North Pole] by N. Zaitsev (no. 82 of 1959), "Poliarnaia ferma na poroge zimy" [The Polar Farm on the Eve of the Winter] by L. Zubkova (no. 75 of 1968) and others.

f) Environmental issues

Ecological problems were covered on the pages of the newspaper, too. Many articles devoted to this topic were published under the regular heading entitled "Zhivoi ugolok PK" [The Pet's Corner at *Poliarnaia kochegarka*]. These included: "Esli vy reshili pookhotit'sa" [If You Decided to Go Hunting] by A. Gaidash (no. 69 of 1969), "Berech' prirodu – zhizn' berech'" [To Take Care of Nature Means to Take Care of Life] by G. Zhdanov (no. 73 of 1986), etc. We can trace how the interest to this topic was increasing, from an increase in the number of articles devoted to it.

g) Readers' creativity

There are many publications by amateur authors: stories, poems, jokes, caricatures, rebuses, crosswords, etc. Material of this kind was located in special regular sections of the newspaper, e.g. "Poklonnikam muz" [For Muses' Fans], "Nash literaturnyi konkurs" [Our Literary Contest], "Subbotniaia stranitsa" [The Saturday Page], "Iumor i satira" [Humor and Satire], "Nash veselyi karandash" [Our Cheerful Pencil], etc.

One of the first examples of the creative activity by the newspaper's readers was "Pesnia shakhterov Zapoliar'ia" [The Song of the Arctic Miners] by P. Dmitriev (no. 22 of 1948). Later, miner poets tackled work-related topics more than once, e.g. "Podnimaem solntse na-gora" [Hauling the Sun Up] by A. Papushin (no. 3 of 1961) and by "Val's poliarnikov" [Waltz of the Polar Dwellers] M. Zhukov (no. 39 of 1961).

Amateur poets also wrote lyrical verse. Here are a few examples: “Ballada o Severe” [A Ballad about the North] (no. 70 of 1961) and “Esli liubit” [If Someone Is in Love] (no. 94 of 1961) by E. Skripnikova, as well as “Severnoe siianie” [Northern Lights] (no. 99 of 1961) by E. Bogatkevich.

A separate topic that deserves a special discussion is **newspaper illustrations**. Since 1951, there were no hand-drawn illustrations in *Poliarnaia kochegarka*. They were replaced by photographs. There were many portraits of Soviet miners and a great deal of photographic coverage from different events. It is especially valuable for the period of 1940-50s, because Spitsbergen-related photo material of the time is rather scarce.

My list of *Poliarnaia kochegarka*'s favourite subjects is incomplete. The newspaper contains a considerable amount of rich and diverse information and merits a closer examination by all interested parties, whoever they are.

Assessing the role of *Poliarnaia kochegarka* in the life of the Soviet mines on Spitsbergen, one of the most respected leaders of Arktikugol, the head of the Barentsburg mine V. A. Gureev wrote: “The miners’ newspaper calls the Soviet miners working in the most difficult conditions of the Arctic towards heroic labour deeds. [...] The newspaper has its own style, which cannot be confused with any other, and has its own readership. [...] It has made a substantial contribution to the strengthening of good neighbourly relations between Norwegian and Soviet miners” (no. 72 of 1968). The newspaper is also a valuable source on the history of the Soviet mines on Svalbard and the development of the archipelago as a whole, especially with regard to XX century.

Works Cited

- Belousova N. 2015. “Pust’ l’iutsa strochki...” [Let the Lines Flow...]. *Russkii vestnik Shpitsbergena* 15 (January–February): 26–27.
- “El’za – Piramida” [From Elsabreen to Pyramiden]. 1957. *Poliarnaia kochegarka* 94 (30 November).
- Grigor’eva, S. 1957. “Poliarniki povyshaiut svoi znaniia” [Polar Dwellers Expand Their Knowledge], *Poliarnaia kochegarka* 91 (20 November).
- Krivtsov N. 2018. “On delal zhivuiu gazetu” [He Made a Lively Newspaper]. *Russkii vestnik Shpitsbergena* 37 (September–October): 11; 38 (November–December): 11.
- Portsel A. 2018. “Zagadki Poliarnoi kochegarki” [*Poliarnaia kochegarka*’s Mysteries]. *Russkii vestnik Shpitsbergena* 37 (September–October): 25–26.



Poliarnaia kochegarka's front page, issue no. 12 of 27 October 1948. Photo by Aleksandr Portsel