

accident occurred about two hundred metres from the squadroom. The plane was on fire. They tried to open the hatches but they were jammed shut."

The seconds went by...

"I went out on the apron to meet the plane. I caught sight of a fire on the runway. The alarm hadn't yet sounded. I rushed to the squadroom, Sergei Solodov, foreman of the apron crew, told your reporter. "I warned the boys there. They rode up to the fire in the emergency trucks. Three mechanics were already at the plane. They had tried to open the hatches and had failed. With axes they tried to cut through the casing or to break the glass, but their crowbars just bounced back... The airport fire brigade arrived..."

The seconds went by...

"Dzhaak kind of drove up in a rush," said Sergei Necheporenko, an engineer. "They attached a cable to the door and started tugging. Clouds of smoke came out of the opening. I remember that Dzhaak jumped out of his truck and rushed up to the plane. He started to choke. He asked the firemen for a smoke helmet, but one couldn't be found."

The seconds went by...

"Oleg Vilkov, Vitalii Dranitsin and Igor' Medvedev plunged into the plane," recalled Anatolii Batalin. "They carried a man out. Then another. The airport doctor and nurse bent over the victims. It was then that the town fire department also arrived on the scene. Wearing oxygen masks they were able to go inside the plane with impunity."