

ANTARCTIC

Meeting at Pravda with Members of the International Trans-Antarctic Expedition

They crossed the Antarctic from west to east by way of the South Pole, and to this day the journey they completed seems impossible. At the beginning, the entire enterprise seemed foolhardy, banding together six people from different countries who were complete strangers to each other, spoke different languages, and differed sharply in temperament, customs and way of life. Nevertheless, in late July of last year the American Will Steiger, the Japanese Keizo Funatsu, the Frenchman Jean Louis Etienne, the Englishman Jeff Somers, the Chinese Chin Dakho and the Russian Viktor Boyarksi set out on their trek.

Along their route, which stretched over 6000 kilometers, aircraft had been used to set up food depots. Everything needed on the long journey was transported by dog sled, the men travelling on skis. On foot... It's easy to talk about this now, but during the expedition there were times when headquarters did not know for several weeks if the men were alive: radio signals could not penetrate the atmospheric interference.

Pravda published regular reports on the progress of this unprecedented expedition. One of our people accompanied them to the Antarctic, and another met them seven months later on the opposite "shore" of the frozen continent. Just imagine: travelling virtually on foot for more than 200 days. The dogs' paws were worn to the bone, leaving an endless trace of blood. The men's cheeks hollow, their eyes inflamed from the snow, their nerves frayed and stretched to the limit.

But they endured and survived, and the world has paid them the homage they deserved. Upon completing their journey they were received by G. Bush and F. Mitterand and