

OIL AND GAS

Arctic Landing

To demonstrate his point, Yu. Topchev, chief engineer of "Glavtyumengazprom" draws a yield curve for West Siberian natural gas fields. "Of what importance is Yamal to the national economy today? The Urengoi and Nadym fields have already reached designed capacity, to be followed soon by Yamburg. After that an inevitable drop in yield will occur. We are committed to ensuring a substantial growth in yield. In the next five-year plan period, Tyumen must account for 90% of All-Union natural gas production. This can only be achieved through the exploitation of the fields in the arctic peninsula."

And so, Yamal. According to geologist's estimates, the world's largest reserves of hydrocarbon raw materials lie hidden in the interior of this arctic peninsula. But their development is a unique task for designers, builders and gas producers alike. It's not by accident that Yamal is considered to be a "hard nut to crack". Extreme climatic conditions, such as strong winds, continuous snowstorms and frost, make it impossible to work for two out of every three winter days. Labour productivity is almost half as much as that for the same work performed on the mainland. Add to this the surprises of permafrost and the humidity of the soil, 60-70% of which consists of ice. It's under such conditions that work must quickly proceed on a colossal construction project which, as pointed out in the executive directives of the USSR State Planning Committee [Gosplan], will yield Yamal gas to consumers in the first quarter of 1991.