

"Yamburg has become a testing ground for what are essentially new methods of equipping northern gas fields," commented R. Suleimanov, General manager of the "Urengoigazdobycha" (Urengoi Gas Extraction) Combine. "This field has no equal in terms of the technology that has been employed."

In contrast to Urengoi and Medvezhye, where the "gas factories" were constructed on the spot, at Yamburg the main emphasis was on huge assembly units, which consisted of energy and gas equipment, instruments and automated machinery. These units were put together at the facilities of "Sibkomplektmontazh" (Siberian Equipment Supply and Assembly) in Tyumen. The gas-processing plant, which was erected on pontoons, had to be towed over a distance of 2600 kilometers along the Tura, Tabola, Irtysh, and Ob rivers, and across Ob Bay. The sailors had experience in this kind of water marathon. The first two Yamburg plants had covered the distance without any complications at the peak of summer. But then it was necessary to wait, while the cold transformed the swampy tundra into a hard shell of ice, across which the 300-ton monsters could be dragged.

"We figured it out this way. A caravan of fifteen superunits would set out along the river behind the shore - ice, receding towards the ocean in Ob Bay, which was not yet open to navigation. Three icebreakers came to assist. The goal was to shorten the construction of the northern plants by one year." The decision was taken after consultation with the river sailors.

The step that the river sailors and the construction workers decided upon -- not without some hesitation -- was accompanied by a certain risk. No