

TRANSPORT AIR

When Coming In For A Landing

A black spot, ploughed land right next to the tarmac; just off the runway lies a torn-off wing, a motor and then the plane itself, twisted and upside down.

Aleksei Markiyanovich Goryashko, the chairman of the State Committee for the Investigation of Aircraft Accidents, speaks hesitantly. He finds it hard to say what he has to say:

"On February 28th, at 4.08 hours Moscow time, a TU-134 aircraft belonging to the Byelorussian Civil Aviation Administration crashed at the Surgut airport. When coming into land, in fact just before touching down, the plane veered off course, hit the ground and crashed. A fire broke out, but within three minutes was put out by the airport's firefighting services. Within thirty five minutes all those who had been hurt in the accident had been evacuated and transported to two city hospitals. There have been fatalities. The airport has remained open to traffic. The administrative commission, which has been set up, has offered help to the families of the 'those who died in the crash, as well as of those who were injured..."

Who was on board the doomed plane? Tour of duty shift workers, along with women and children. What about the crew? The copilot and two stewardesses died. How did the airport rescue services react? Every second counted...

"The shift had ended and the men had come outside. They just happened to hear the uproar and saw the flash," air-technician Arkadii Dzhaak told your reporter. "They rushed over there. All they were carrying with them were screwdrivers. They ran up. The