

In the Arctic everything is temporary - both buildings and men. For the simple reason that there is nothing more permanent than temporary solutions. I saw, for example, that fast-frozen tents and wagons that had been erected for a season have been standing many years. It is the same with the people. They go as a rule for a short time but many get stuck for a long spell. What keeps them here? Is it money? Romance? The beauty of the white silence? Or perhaps most of all a sense of their own importance? One way or another, once you get the Northern bug, there is no cure. I have talked to dozens of Arctic hands and not one would admit that he was planning to live here to a ripe old age. Each dreamed of soon going home, or to the capital or "south"... But few have any idea when they will carry out this intention. There are some who pack their bags twice a year, but they linger again and again for the last sunset. It happens that a person may spend dozens of years here, all the time under the impression that it is all temporary. And this is not a coincidence - such is the style, the psychology, the mode of life.

On Zhokova I., for example, besides the Arctic party of the Moscow geodesic expedition, the polar station of the Tiksi hydrometeorological service and a base of the Arctic and Antarctic Scientific Research Institute are also situated. All three settlements, while not far, are removed from each other. And they are completely independent.

The reader has probably got the point by now: would it not be better to bring them closer together and to create a common life support system? Combining the food service alone would cut the need for cooks at least in half. And how much could be saved with a single engine room, radio room and air-dispatcher's room... But this is just rhetoric of course. In terms of common sense, it might be. But circumstances make it impossible.