

Arctic. It would seem that they could be made sweeter. But no, we cannot. Not long ago, a group of Japanese tele-operators visited North Pole-31 for an entire month. Of course they liked a lot of things: the exoticism of the Central Arctic, the northern day, the sub-ice world, people with an unusual destiny. One would not see all of this anywhere else. But I am expressing their feelings for them, based on the conditions under which they live. They are shameful to both the country and the times. And it is time we spoke of this.

The last plane...what does it mean to them...to those 37 people who remain on the ocean's unsteady ice.

"It gives rise to complex emotions," the head of the station, Hero of Socialist Labour, Vasiliy Semenovich Sidrov, thoughtfully explains, a farewell bottle of champagne in one hand. "On the one hand, it is sadness of parting with the entire world. On the other, it is the joy of the work. The only thing that is left for us during the long months."

But the plane is already turning its propellers. The people who are staying behind stand in a tight group beside the deserted hut. They are quiet now, nothing gives away their emotions. And only when the engines, having attained take-off power, pluck the airplane from the ground, do they suddenly throw their arms up in the air. And I sense that at this instant it has become joyless for each and every one of them.

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