

Only five hours were needed to make the journey to Yakutiya. Upon landing in Polyarnyi, the "Mriya" was immediately engulfed in a crowd of people and remained so for three entire days as the unloading proceeded and the crew rested. Aviation workers, miners, students from schools and kindergartens, in groups and singly, decked out as if for a holiday, came to have a look at this equipment never seen before: a giant airplane and a powerful tractor. The "Mriya" met with the same interest on the Kamchatka Peninsula, where it flew to pick up cargo before setting course for its home base.

The expedition to the Arctic is not only of economic importance but also of major experimental significance since it furnishes valuable material for studying the scope of the transport capabilities of the new very heavy cargo aircraft. Incidentally, with this journey the "Mriya" topped its own world record - set in 1989, for maximum weight on take-off.

Most likely, the Antonov people's farewell to the tractor builders of Chelyabinsk and the diamond miners of Yakutiya is not forever. Both the one group and the other will have need in the future for the services of these giant aircraft. While this type of transport operation is not cheap, it depends on how you figure it. If the choice is to get the equipment in six months or in five hours, and already assembled, cost considerations, including that of the fuel, must take a back seat.

Up to now the financial burden of the design collective has been borne primarily by the An-124, which for the second year is carrying cargo under contracts with the commercial firm "Ruslan" that was formed at the OKB. Now the "Mriya" is making its contribution, having earned its first few hundred thousand rubles.

Vozdushnyi transport

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Page 3 (slightly abridged)