

For quite some time, problems concerning passenger transport by water were customarily dealt with only after yet another tragic incident. Following such an occurrence, all sorts of resolutions and formidable orders would immediately be issued, and committees would be sent out from the "centre" to investigate. Numerous consultations and meetings would be held, and generally quite good measures would be mapped out, but then the fuss would die down and we fearfully waited for a new incident to occur... It was clear that the half measures being taken from time to time would never solve the ever-increasing problems with passenger transport by water. And I agree with the newspaper, which holds that we cannot manage without active assistance on the part of the government.

The Lena United Steamship Line, just as the Black Sea sailors, has entered into a period where the increased need for passenger transportation is completely disproportional to the availability of ships. This is most evident on the Osetrovo-Yakutsk Line, where a mere three passenger ships, built in 1958, work a 2,000 kilometre stretch. Over the past few years however, a great increase in the flow of passengers has been observed. From mid-June until the end of August the ships are 120-150% full. Frankly, it's embarrassing to look people in the eye when children and elderly persons are forced to travel on the decks and promenades for six to seven days. And they don't do it because they were lured here by some romantic travel notion; their situation is desperate since, aside from water transport, there are no other forms of transportation in the Lena River Basin.

An even more depressing state of affairs can be found on the Yakutsk-Tiksi stretch, where a