

ANTARCTIC

Scrap Metal and Other Waste Products Accumulate in the Antarctic

In embarking upon intensive development of the Antarctic, have we not transferred our unsolved ecological problems to the frozen continent? This is the question that the APN correspondent put to V. Martyanov, leading research associate of the Arctic and Antarctic Scientific Research Institute.

"Fortunately, man began developing the Antarctic after already becoming aware of the need to preserve an ecological equilibrium in nature. But today there are no environmentally neutral forms of human activity, and over the thirty years that polar stations have existed we have already succeeded in disrupting the natural integrity of the continent.

The most acute problem of Soviet stations, in my view, is the accumulation of scrap metal and the delays in removing it from the continent. Equipment that has outlived its purpose quickly freezes in the ice, the metal turns to powder and is very difficult to remove. At temperatures that are, for us, extreme but are common in the Antarctic, hydrolysis - the process of dissolving the metal - proceeds rapidly in the ice.

The Institute is doing all it can to solve this problem, is organizing special expeditions to transport the metal to the stations Bellingsgauzen, Leningradskaya and Russkaya. But some stations are faced with very difficult conditions. For example, one of the first Soviet stations