

MISCELLANEOUS

Coal And Tulips Of Spitsbergen

Spitsbergen is a land of steep mountains. This archipelago was so described by Willem Barents, the well-known Dutch navigator of the 16th century. Our contemporary might add that "it is also a land of thick glaciers and burning stone," - and he would be right. The point is that over 60% of the surface of Spitsbergen is fettered by an icy armour, and local coal deposits are estimated by some scientists to be in the order of 8 billion tonnes...

Soviet miners from "Arktikugol'" Trust, USSR Ministry of the Coal Industry, have been working here, on the 78th parallel, for almost 60 years. They work under arctic conditions. For almost 100 days of the year the sun does not appear on the horizon and a harsh winter reigns for nine months.

Our interview with N.A. Gnilorybov, general director of "Arktikugol'" Trust and candidate of technical sciences, focuses on the life of Soviet settlements on Spitsbergen, the problems of their provision with public services and amenities, and the role of the human factor in the development of the natural resources of the Far North.

V.L.: Nikolai Aleksandrovich, let us begin with a necessary clarification. It is known that this archipelago belongs to Norway, and so could you please explain on what grounds the trust headed by you is carrying out economic activity there.

N.G.: The story of man's penetration into Spitsbergen is an extremely interesting one and merits a separate discussion. I will only say that