

Until now, imported bulldozers, such as "Komatsu", "Caterpillar" and "Fiat-Allis", were used in such operations. They handled the job well, but incurred substantial expenditures.

With the aim of halting the purchase of imported excavating machinery and accompanying spare parts, the USSR Council of Ministers in November 1987 instructed concerned ministries to work out a program for equipping goldmining enterprises with Soviet-made machinery. The "T-500" tractor produced at the Cheboksary Industrial Tractor Plant was chosen as the prototype for the new bulldozer-rippers. It is fitted with mounted equipment at the Sterlitamak Construction and Road Machinery Plant ["Stroidormashina"].

We can say frankly that this long-awaited brainchild of the two industrial giants was, to put it mildly, born a bit premature. Among the prototype's design drawbacks noted by miners are the absence of an automatic emergency brake system, a cabin-controlled anti-fire system, a towing attachment; the non-airtightness of the cabin, housing of batteries in an unheated compartment, poor arrangements of the operator's seat, lamps, etc. The most important point is that the bulldozer can operate only at temperatures down to  $-50^{\circ}\text{C}$ , even though the All-Union State Standard calls for a lower temperature threshold of down to  $-60^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

It was hard to expect anything else. It's strange but true: this machinery is intended for use mostly in the Far North, yet tryouts were conducted at the Korshunovo Mining and Metallurgical Combine (USSR Ministry of Ferrous Metallurgy) in Irkutsk Province at average monthly winter air temperatures of  $-21 - -22^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Only on some days during the tryouts did the mercury dip down to  $-45.4^{\circ}\text{C}$ .