

These were my thoughts as I got off the plane. At the airport an oblast committee person was kind enough to offer to drive me to the hotel in the official "Volga" sent for him. But I scanned the shiny black automobiles looking for "my" car. After all, they had promised to meet me. Suddenly, someone called out to me. Beside a small light blue "Zhiguli", stood a tall smiling man who had apparently picked me out among the passengers.

"Levchenko," he introduced himself presently. Seemingly catching the astonishment on my face, he explained: "We're renting the car, its owner is at the wheel."

Sometime later I found myself in an old wooden house, home base for Vitalii Alekseevich Levchenko, head of the Archangel Multidisciplinary Scientific Research and Planning and Design Department of the institute "Yakutnioproalmaz" (Yakut Scientific Research Institute of the Diamond Industry). I thought to myself: "Big ideas and the eternal mark of poverty. There's no getting around it - as things now stand in Russia we need faster and more substantial results." In some translated piece I read that diamonds have always been the final salvation in times of social upheaval. Truly, they are at all times a staunch bulwark of the economy.

"And how far is the deposit from Archangel?" I asked.

"A hundred kilometers northeast, near the Zolotitsa River."

"Are we flying or going by car?" I asked Levchenko.

"The road is a mess. We'd do better to request a helicopter. But for my part, it's six of one, half dozen of the other."