

As far as the cold is concerned, this is first time that Roberto Lorenzoni, the chief instructor of the survival school, has experienced such temperatures. When the group were riding in the covered back of the truck on spurs of the Verkhoyan ridge, Lorenzoni's feet were slightly frost-bitten - he was let down by heated Italian boots made of synthetic material. Fortunately everything turned out all right, but the Italians took no further risks and put on high boots made of reindeer skin and just in case, they also acquired real Russian felt boots en route.

Approximately fifty kilometres before they got to the reindeer herdsman's settlement of Topolinoe, which was to mark the starting point of the most difficult part of the route, the travellers encountered sagging guard towers and half-rotten wooden barracks, enclosed by rusty barbed wire. Sinking into the snow up to their waists, Palkiewicz and his comrades went nearer. It turned out that there had once been a prisoners' camp here...

"Some of my fellow-countrymen" remarked Jacek, "think even now that "Siberia is a one-way ticket", that is, it is only used for exiling people. But the time of Stalin's labour-camps has long been over. the abandoned camp which we found is a symbol of what was a terrible period for the Soviet people. As we are finding out for ourselves, Siberia is region of cheerful people, inspired by the plans for the great perestroika programme."

At Topolinoe settlement, the main farm centre of the "Tomponskii" State Farm, the members of the Soviet-Italian expedition collected extensive material on the everyday life and culture of the northern peoples. Their hosts presented the guests