



Long before the take-off

At last, the time has come. The friendly voice of a hostess sounds through the loudspeaker, asking passengers to come to the plane.

And while you are entering the cabin of "your" IL-18, TU-134 or IL-62, settling down in one of the seats and anticipating, perhaps, your stroll through Prague, along the Balaton or the Black Sea coast, a well-planned checking process in which many people, invisible for the passengers, had a share, comes to an end. Who, apart from those directly involved, knows what this process includes? Let us, therefore, take a look "behind the scenes" so as to see what comprehensive preparations and safety precautions are taken for every flight.

As soon as the crew report for work, each of them undergoes a thorough medical

the destination and the alternative airfields, and on the cruising height; they are also instructed on the amount of fuel they must take on. At the same time, with the help of the managing clerk, the necessary documents are filled in on the seating of passengers and the loading of the plane with luggage, cargo and mail.

After the plane has been put to an acid test by gear, instrument, radio and radar specialists to ensure the smooth functioning of all systems, aggregates and controls, work begins for the cockpit and cabin personnel.

Safety and technical check-ups and functional tests as well as refuelling require care and concentration by everyone, because exact, careful and responsible work is a basic precondition for a good flight. This, however, is not sufficient, since a number of important things are still needed on board.

It is only after the board buffet has been restocked to care for hungry or thirsty passengers, after the members of the board provision section — nicknamed "white cloud" because of their clothing — have equipped the cabin with all necessary items and after the luggage, cargo and mail have been taken on board, that preparations for the actual take-off can begin.

A final consultation takes place among the crew members, then the passengers are invited to come on board. A few minutes later the plane is rolled to the runway. Even now preparations have not yet been finalized, because while one of the stewardesses welcomes the passengers and informs them about the course of the flight, the smooth functioning of all controls and the correct instrument readings are again systematically checked in the

