

In the opinion of a number of scientists, the stratosphere clouds recently discovered at altitudes of more than twenty kilometres consist of microscopic ice crystals upon which freons can be deposited. At the beginning of spring, when the sun gets hotter, the "conserved" freons are freed and begin to "devour" the ozone.

The expedition of scientists from the Central Aerological Observatory had the task of discovering or, more precisely, confirming the existence of stratospheric clouds and of examining their structure. This work was in preparation for a joint Soviet-American experiment in the Arctic scheduled for the end of the current and the beginning of the following year.

Already the first exploratory flight encouraged the CAO specialists. Approaching Hayes Island, they already noticed the mysterious clouds. Appearing at an altitude of about twenty-three kilometres, they would rise still higher closer to the pole.

The following day, Thursday, the Tsiklon headed straight to the pole. Again the stratosphere clouds appeared where they were expected. While the scientists continued to attend to their instruments, preparations were being made on board for the ceremony of conquering the North Pole.

Finally, at 11:37 Moscow time, the Captain, Boris Dmitrievich Grubii, honorary pilot of the USSR, announced on the plane's intercom: "The pole is below us! I salute the members of the expedition!" A few minutes later, the Tsiklon veered sharply and started a trip around the world. We apparently established a record of sorts, crossing all the meridians of the earth in some five to seven minutes.