

The icebreaker quickly approached its objective: it was 120 nautical miles off the Greenland coast. In the wheelhouse I found Alternate Captain V. Davydyanets, who told me that the Rossiya had doubled past Spitsbergen and was now moving along its western coast. We would soon come up to the edge of continuous ice and would then do an aerial reconnaissance in order to determine the best route to the station.

SP-28 proved to be in the zone of the Arctic where only the members of the Papanin expedition had drifted in about 1937-1938. It was important to the scientists to learn just what had changed over the past fifty years and to trace the vigorous and rapid discharge of ice from the central Arctic. This would help them to better understand the capriciousness of the Arctic Ocean.

It is, of course, a pity that observations on SP-28 will have to be discontinued. Officials decided, however, to freeze the Goskomgidromet scientific research ship Otto Shmidt into the ice and thereby continue, as it were, the station's drift.

Two hundred and fifty nautical miles remained until our arrival at SP-28. Our course was to the northwest. Sometimes we entered open pack ice, while a dim moon obscured by clouds of snow hung over the nuclear-powered ship like a lantern. Here, the polar night reigns all 24 hours.

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