

Soviet scientific research station, Severnyy Polyus-18 (North Pole-18), on the ice. It also happened in 1973 when the Vladivostok and the Kondrat'ev set up the SP-22 station. In 1977, the nuclear-powered Arktika sailed out of Siberian open water to the Geographic Pole and did so with relative ease. Ten years later the nuclear-powered Sibir' made the same trip.

A question may occur to the reader. Do we really need such a trans-polar route? Yes. While this is only theory, it is justifiable for purposes of obtaining scientific knowledge. And who knows how things will turn out in the future. Time passes and much changes. Maybe this theory will play some part in the development of that paragraph of the Joint Soviet-American Declaration signed in Washington, which recognized the necessity of "activating efforts to obtain a mutually advantageous agreement on sea commerce" including the Arctic Ocean.

Late in the autumn last year, we were fortunate to take part in an expedition to set up the SP-30 station on the ice floes. I was by that time familiar with Kupetskiy's hypothesis and was interested in directly investigating the arguments in its favour, as well as those supporting an Arctic passage. I will tell you about them now.

The diesel-electric powered Vitus Bering, on which the expedition was based, set out accompanied by a powerful ice-breaker from Pevek. We were immediately stuck in an ice massif. With great difficulty the convoy managed to round Vrangeli island from the South, and from there set out to the North. Initially we moved slowly. The ice floes were strong and the pressure considerable. However, as each day passed, their resistance diminished. As