

kilometers. This meant that the atmosphere held ever less oxygen. People who have been there know what this is: mountain sickness and the torments of acclimatization. It is harder to breathe, strength returns more slowly, and the Primus (stoves) operate continually more poorly...

But then, we hear hardly a word of difficulties: the skiers' mood is buoyant. A line from a radiogram reads "Optimism, humor, a sporting outlook and scientific concentration". The daily routine runs like this: 7 o'clock in the morning, get up; until 10, collections and the scientific program; until 7 o'clock in the evening, the ski journey itself, and until 11 o'clock, the scientific program and personal care; the team members then break-off and head for their sleeping bags.

Beginning at the 200th kilometer, the group will move through the zone of "zastrugi", wind-weathered ridges of snow, an area cursed by God and man, containing huge ice "folds", on which even the powerful tractors of the caterpillar sleigh trains break their joints. The zastrugi extend to the 375th kilometer.

Beyond this point, the going should get at least a bit easier: the skiers will have completed their acclimatization, and an even, compact snow zone will begin at Pionerskaya. The team has already covered 302 kilometers. The wind is blowing at 12 to 13 meters a second, and the temperature is minus 25°C.

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