

ARCTIC

A Trip to Yesterday - SP-31

We are flying to the North Pole-31 drifting research station. Our journey will be a long one; the station is near Alaska at present, past the international dateline that intersects the Bering Strait. It is a 9-hour flight from Cherskiy, but since it is located in the other hemisphere, we will be arriving there yesterday - from Thursday to Wednesday, as the day that has passed is not over yet.

Our airplane is the Ilyushin-14 ice observation aircraft built by the Kolymo-Indigirskiy aviation company. The "mighty ice plane #14" - this is what the plane is called in the North. Only this aircraft can fly the thousands of kilometres in one direction and the same distance upon return with one refuelling. But for now this model is the only one for all the Eastern Arctic. It has been a long time since this plane was manufactured, but there are no replacements. This creates great difficulties: there is nothing with which to inspect the expanses of ice and water, no means with which to transport cargo to the drifting stations. This spring, for example, the supplying of North Pole-30 was carried out from Zhokhor Island, with the assistance of the Antonov-26. It was a good thing that the station was floating not far from this base. But problems immediately arose with North Pole-31. The situation has been saved for the time being only due to the circumstance that the basic goods have been delivered here in the fall, together with the entire station, by ship. But any reserves have their limits, and with winter approaching problems can arise here.

Before us is the Proliv Longa. The altimetre indicator has frozen at 1500. The first signs of ice formation have appeared. The cabin becomes instantly cooler, the energy used to heat the