

former basin from a geologic point of view is at an intermediate stage, so to speak. At one time there was a typical continent here. As a result of processes occurring in the mantle, the granite layer began to be reworked. In approximately another 60 million years the Arctic will turn into a true ocean, such as the Pacific or Atlantic.

"We can already say with certainty that the crust in the zone between the Podvodniki and the Makarov basins is subcontinental - that is, close to continental - in structure. Relics of a granite layer have been found at depths of more than three kilometers."

"This is your discovery?"

"Hypotheses existed. We confirmed them."

I wanted to know from Sorokin why drifting stations were not used for his work. At the present time there are two such stations - SP-30 and SP-31. The main reason is the lack of certainty that the ice will drift to the required location. The SP-31, which was viewed as a "candidate" for geologic work this year, defied the forecasts by "going off course". An icebreaker is also unsuitable since it cannot manoeuvre in just any kind of ice.

That a drifting station or icebreaker is not suitable is not difficult to understand. But for 200 people you have to have just the right body of ice. People know how difficult it is at times to find a large body of ice in the ocean on which to construct a drifting station. What guarantee is there that the region selected (for study) will have the appropriate ice?

"There are no guarantees," Sorokin agreed. "In addition to the main ice sector we select two or three reserve ones, precisely in case the right ice cannot be found. Naturally, as time goes on the number of sites in the ocean that interest us will diminish, and that means fewer and fewer reserves. The problem will become greater with each passing year."