

THE ANTARCTIC

The Sea Gateway To Antarctica

Deep in the continent of Antarctica, some one hundred kilometres from the shores of the Southern Ocean, lies the oasis of Schirmacher Ponds. Thirty two members of the Thirty Third Soviet Antarctic Expedition are stationed there. They are led by V. Shirshov, who has spent seven winter seasons in Antarctica and who has long been our correspondent. Recently we receive one of his regular radio reports.

"Not far from us is the first Antarctic station to be set up by the German Democratic Republic. The German station is named in honour of the famous German scientist Georg Forster. The station was established in October of last year with the help of Soviet polar experts. Cape Ostryi, on Leningrad inlet, constitutes a unique sea gateway to the two scientific settlements. It's from here that men and supplies are forwarded to the oasis by ships' MI-8 helicopters and by snowmobile convoys. The latter vehicles often make the trip along a difficult ice route, which runs between the crevasses.

In the course of the last season, the last of the expedition's ships to set a course for the Far South was the diesel-electric "Mikhail Somov", holder of the Order of the Red Banner of Labour. On board were a group of scientists and specialists from two fraternal socialist countries and their equipment. The main field of operations for the crew, led by that experienced polar captain, F. Pec'yakov, was the ice mooring at Cape Ostryi.

The ship reached her destination at the height of the Antarctic autumn. The crew ran into a storm in the Lazarev Sea and this developed into a hurricane. The wind-speed sometimes reached forty to fifty metres a second. The ship tore herself away from her ice anchors and was forced to go back out to