

TRANSPORT WATER

An Icy Test For Three Departments

Having undertaken an unusually early expedition, a convoy of the ships of the Far Eastern Steamship Enterprise, found itself in a difficult situation; it is now trying to force its way to Anadyr (Chukotka). Ermak, the organization's most powerful icebreaker is leading the Aleksei Chirikov, a modern icebreaker- cargo vessel carrying a load of cement and empty barrels. It seems that everything had been taken into account when this voyage was being planned: scientific and operative support from the Pevek administration, while ice reconnaissance was provided by the pilots of the Kolyma and Indigirka aviation service. The icebreaker has its own helicopter and the expedition personnel includes S. Ragozin, an experienced polar hydrologist.

The Isvestiya office in Vladivostok conducted an interview by satellite with Yu. Tilichev, captain of the icebreaker Yermak:

We knew, of course, that the recent cyclones had packed the Anadyr' estuary with ice. By itself it is light - some seventy centimetres. But the eastern winds had piled it three or four stories high. The ice hummocks reached five marks. Twenty miles from the designated point a surprise awaited us: the icebreaker began to be wedged in. After each impact, we had difficulty in moving back again. And then came a second surprise. A strong icing all around. In the western sector of the Arctic, where I used to participate in drawn-out operations, this happened from time to time. But here, in the East, Ermak had never experienced anything of this kind.