

with every facility for rest and recreation before they tackled the difficult route to the "pole". They also supplied them with the necessary foodstuffs, helped them to repair their clothing and equipped their reindeer teams. Now the names of two more participants in the expedition became known, the young team drivers Andrei Struchkov and Dmitrii Efimov. They set up a training camp some seven kilometres from Topolinoe, where the travellers spent two days living under mountain tundra conditions.

Every morning started with the team searching for and catching the reindeer which wandered off for the night in search of reindeer moss. Not being used to this exercise, the Italians had some difficulty catching the animals with the aid of a leather lasso. But they had already learned how to chop wood, to chop up ice for boiling and to ride reindeer sleds. The lessons learned at the training camp were soon put to good use.

Accompanied by the sounds of the tambourines and songs of the "Maranga" folk ensemble, the expedition started off on fifteen reindeer sleds for Oimyakon. A head of the men lie seven hundred kilometres of unknown country, the river Tompo and its tributaries caught in an icy grip and hiding treacherous ice traps, the mountain passes of the Verkhoian range, the taiga wilderness and the windswept tundra areas.