

ARCTIC RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

Icebreaker Conducts Seismic Research on Continental Shelf

The icebreaker "Kapitan Sorokin" of the Murmansk Steamship Line has begun a not altogether common journey. Immediately following refitting in the German port of Emden and the return to its port of registry in Murmansk, the ship was sent off to the islands of the Shpitsbergen Archipelago. The ship is scheduled to carry out an 8-day program of seismic research on the ice-covered continental shelf. This is the first time that this work has been performed by Soviet icebreaker, and the work is very promising since a large part of the shelf has been studied very little.

But while the voyage is important from a scientific point of view for the specialists, for the sailors themselves this unusual line of work represents a new source of revenues, especially of hard currency. As N. Khvoshchinskii, head of the Icebreaker Fleet and Arctic Operations Service, explained, the steamship line decided to accept responsibility for half the cost of the voyage in order to be a full-fledged participant in the research program. The other four days will be paid for by the organizers of the program, which include the Norwegian joint-stock company "Geko", the German company "Tissen Nordseewerke", the scientific production corporation "Sevmorgeologiya", and other Soviet organizations.

The bow section of the icebreaker was replaced during work in the German shipyards, and now the new lines of the ship's hull permit it to cut a cleaner path through the ice. It should be pointed out that the Norwegian firm installed modern seismic equipment on the icebreaker which is so high-tech that, to put it bluntly, is not permitted on ships sailing under the Soviet flag. But the Norwegians' interest in the "Kapitan Sorokin" was so great that they obtained permission, despite the ban. Nonetheless, a special foreign representative also accompanied this unique equipment on the voyage in the ice, and when the voyage is complete the equipment will be taken to the port of Kirkenes. But in the future, if it is needed, the equipment can be installed on the icebreaker at any time.

It should also be said that, if this measure is successful, the joint stock company "Geko" will have the opportunity, along with its partners, to conduct similar research in so-called third countries as well where the demand for such operations is great.