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Goskomgidromet (State Committee on Hydrometeorology), their work "costs" 8 million per year. But the Antarctic is so far and the Arctic so near. There a year, here just a month. What in fact is this work, which is apparently of such great importance, and why is it so expensive?

One of the sensational discoveries of the past fifteen years has been the mountain system beneath the waters of the Arctic Ocean. The maps of this region show the names of Russian and Soviet scientists - Lomonosov, Mendeleev, Gakkel, Knipovich...

The Lomonosov Ridge stretches for almost 2000 kilometers from the New Siberian Islands to Ellesmere Island. The submarine mountains of the ridge attain elevations of 3000-3500 meters. We know that the ridge rose above the surface of the ocean comparatively recently (in terms of geologic time) - only 70-110 million years ago.

New geologic discoveries are expected, but this time we are not talking about minerals. That is a secondary task, as it were. This time the chief interest is basic geologic research concerning the development of the earth. And this is where our conversation with M. Yu. Sorokin began.

"Continents and oceans have a fundamentally different structure," he explained. "A continent has three layers: sedimentary, granite, and basaltic (lower still is the mantle). The ocean lacks the granite layer.

"Physicists can design and construct an experiment, such as an accelerator," Sorokin continued. "For geologists it's different. The time scale for scientific study of the earth is millions of years, and so one can only use abstract models, which are more or less accurate. Moreover, the Arctic Ocean is virtually inaccessible... What is remarkable about the discovery is that the entire