

Vostok station, located at an elevation of 3,400 meters, where a temperature of minus eighty-nine degrees has been recorded, was not unduly affected by the events, two of which happened simultaneously. The first came from the sky, the second from out of the snow drifts to the joyful barking of dogs which had gotten the scent of normal human habitation. The quadrupeds were already exhausted, having run across almost the entire continent.

They waited on the aircraft, conjecturing how much of the 3,000 meter runway it would use up during its landing run. After touching down on the snow-covered frozen crust it travelled a distance of 200 meters and stopped dead in a seemingly frozen state (the take-off run had required twice the distance). I saw joy in the eyes of those who told me about this at the Arctic and Antarctic Scientific Research Institutes.

"You understand that a multipurpose turbojet aircraft on skis is something we have dreamed about for a long time," said the deputy director of the institute V. Klovov.

I understand, because I knew the need for such an aircraft. Scarcely had the AN-28 appeared then it attracted the attention of the polar explorers. But all was not as expected: the aircraft didn't have skis. The O.K. Antonov Experimental Design Bureau had done the work on their development. They should have been capable of withstanding the rigid snow of Antarctica, which had the consistency of sand, and many other harsh conditions. It seems that the necessary variant was found, but that it had been flying in the high latitudes without them.

"We were glad about the news communicated by you," said the deputy-chief designer of the Experimental Design Bureau, A. Bulanenko. "Our specialists carried out tests in Antarctica and they finally did what was necessary. Many have been asking for an aircraft on skis."