

ARCTIC DEVELOPMENT

Meeting On The Ice

After sailing for 10 days, the diesel electric ship, Vladimir Arsenev, accompanied by the icebreaker, the Admiral Makarov, is approaching its goal - setting up the new floating station, North Pole - 31. Making their way through heavy ice, these expeditionary ships are now in areas of the Arctic Ocean, where, according to experts, Soviet vessels have never been before.

This area, which is located beyond 76° longitude, north-east of Wrangel Island, is of great interest to science. The Arctic had a surprise in store for the explorers. An ice-floe on which the Soviet floating station, North Pole-25, had operated from May 1981 to April 1984, was encountered en route. The expedition leaders decided not to stop at the ice-floe, although this would have been fascinating. The group had to hasten to set up North Pole-31 as the daylight hours grew shorter and the weather more unreliable each day.

At first North Pole-25 was examined from a helicopter (Mi-2) dispatched from the icebreaker, the Admiral Makarov. The head of the new station, North Pole-31, V. Sidorov, a Hero of Socialist Labour who had opened North Pole - 25, was able to take a look at the station once again after so many years from the air. How many miles had it travelled in the ocean? Had any one been on it since its research group left it on April 23, 1984? At the time it was evacuated, the weather forecast was not good and both personnel and equipment were removed on AN-2 planes.