

Ahoy!

## Penguin Secret

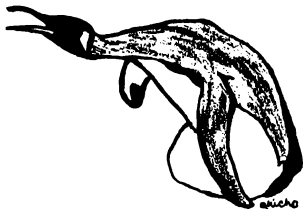
**S**OVIEI explorer told United States scientists of a new Russian doctrine for aircraft in the Antarctic: fly high over brooding penguins.

Dr. Mikhail M. Somov, who led the first of the current series of Soviet expeditions to Antarctica, described a disaster in the penguin world that occurred recently near the Soviet base at Mirny.

Emperor penguins, he explained, lay their eggs on ice and then brood them, embedded in folds of flesh in the abdomen. He observed that they had no fear of anything approaching on the surface—even the most fearsome tractor. But this nonchalance did not apply to something in the air.

The Russians found a rookery whose population Dr. Somov estimated at about 20,000 of the great, eighty-pound birds, all brooding. To make an accurate count, the Russians sought to obtain an aerial photo, but when the plane came over, "thousands of the birds panicked," Dr. Somov said.

As a result, the ice was covered with scrambled eggs and further attempts at aerial photogra-



phy were abandoned. The emperor penguin lays only one egg a year, and mortality among the resultant chicks is heavy in the harsh polar climate. Hence the species holds precarious grip on existence.

**D**R. SOMOV spoke to those who are to man the various American scientific stations in Antarctica during the coming year. They have been assembled in Washington for outfitting and for final briefings by scientists and polar specialists.

He outlined a more conservative program for the projected Soviet transcontinental crossings than had been indicated in Soviet press reports. The initial crossing is not to begin until a year from now. This would enable the Russians to establish Station Lazarev on the Queen Maud Land coast—the destination of the crossing—and scout out a tractor route to that point through the coastal mountains.

Subsequently a second crossing would be made to the planned Bellinghausen Station on Thurston Peninsula. This would also await the green light from those at the station who would first have to insure that the base could be reached from the inland plateau. Bellinghausen and Lazarev Stations are both to be established this year.

Perhaps the most important geographical revelation by Dr. Somov was the discovery that the area that has been described as the Pole of Inaccessibility is heavily crevassed. The area is near the crest of a dome-shaped plateau of ice that blankets the Antarctic hinterland.

**I**T HAD BEEN found to be utterly featureless by both Soviet and American aerial explorers, rising to almost 14,000 feet at its highest point about 9,000 miles from the sea. No peak is known to break the surface anywhere in this vast region, but multiple cleavage of the ice near its summit suggests that a great mountain range lies buried there.

Dr. Somov said aerial survey had indicated that the actual summit of the ice was midway between this area and the present location of Station Sovietskaya; the most remote of the outposts. Hence it is proposed, in the coming weeks, to shift Sovietskaya about 220 miles to that summit, rather than the 440 miles to the Pole of Inaccessibility as originally planned.

This would somewhat reduce the transcontinental tractor route, which is due to run from Station Vostok, to the South Pole, to the new site of Sovietskaya, and then to Queen Maud Land. Dr. Somov emphasized that feasibility of the traverse was still "uncertain" and might not be completed for three years.

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*Get wise, girls, the best way to get around a man is to hug him.*

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