

Obituary

Ernst Krenkel'



ERNST TEODOROVICH KRENKEL', one of the leading pioneers of Soviet polar exploration, died suddenly on December 8, 1971.

Krenkel' began his work in the Arctic in 1924, as a member of one of the earliest Soviet polar research teams, at the station on Matochkin Shar. He played a leading part in the organization of the observatory on Franz Josef Land, and, during the 1920s and '30s, took part in a number of Arctic expeditions, including the international expedition on the Zeppelin dirigible.

In 1932 he took part in the expedition aboard the icebreaker SS Aleksandr Sibiryakov, which made the first single-season journey (July 28–October 1) through the North-East Passage, using the route north of

Severnaya Zemlya, and demonstrating the feasibility of direct shipping in the Soviet Arctic.

The following year he again sailed in a North-East passage expedition aboard the SS Chelyuskin, an ordinary cargo-passenger vessel. This expedition was intended to demonstrate that summer navigation of the North-East Passage was a commercial proposition. The Chelyuskin had apparently completed her voyage by November 1933 when Krenkel', who was in charge of radio communications, sent back the message: "We have sighted the Bering Straits". But six hours before their estimated time of arrival in the Straits, the Chelyuskin was trapped in heavy pack ice and began drifting slowly north and west, back into the Arctic Ocean. In February 1934 she sank, and the whole party of 120 men, 7 women, and a baby born on the voyage were left stranded on a drifting icefloe. Using radio equipment, which he afterwards described as being "of the most ordinary kind" which frequently "tried to go on strike", Krenkel' managed to keep in daily radio communication with the Wellen Island Base, and to supervise the logistics of the airlift which, over the course of the next two months, slowly evacuated the whole expedition. He himself was on the last flight out, on April 13, 1934.

Three years later, Krenkel' was adrift again on an icefloe, this time as part of the first of the Soviet North Pole drifting expeditions. This series of expeditions, which continues to the present day, is intended to study drift movements of the Arctic ice, and to carry

out a wide range of high-latitude research. The North Pole-1 team were flown in to an icefloe as close as possible to the Pole itself, and drifted slowly south for some nine months. Krenkel' was in charge of research into radio communications in high-latitude conditions, and also acted as communications officer for the party, his Chelyuskin experience proving most valuable for this purpose.

After the successful return of the expedition, Krenkel' was employed in administrative posts dealing with Arctic research—in the Chief Administration of the Northern Sea Route and the Chief Administration of the Weather Forecasting Service. In the last years of his life, he was head of the Scientific Research Institute of Hydrometeorological Instrumentation of the Weather Forecasting Service of the USSR. He continued to interest himself in problems of radio communications in Arctic conditions, and pioneered the use of various short-wave devices for this purpose.

In addition to a number of works of general interest, he wrote and lectured widely on problems of Arctic research. His chief publications include contributions to *The Voyage of the Chelyuskin* (1935) and *Proceedings of the Drift Station North Pole* (1940). With I. D. Papanin, the leader of the expedition, he wrote the official report of the expedition, *Nine Months on the Drifting Station North Pole*, which he supplemented by his personal *Diary* (1940), a detailed and witty account of the daily life of the expedition, illustrated with talented and often amusing sketches.

Announcements

Miscellaneous

Professor S. S. Stevens, Harvard University, has been awarded the Rayleigh gold medal of the British Acoustical Society.

The Edinburgh Geological Society has awarded the Clough medal to Dr James Phemister, for his work on the geology of Scotland and the North of England.

Dr V. C. Barry, director of the laboratories of the Medical Research Council of Ireland, has been elected president of the Royal Irish Academy.

International Meetings

April 24–25, **Combustion Problems in Industry and Agriculture**, Seattle, Washington (Professor R. C. Corlett, Department of Mechanical Engineering, Mail Stop FU-10, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington 98195, USA).

April 26, **Testing and Evaluation in Laboratory Animals**, London (B. Hunter, Huntingdon Research Centre, Huntingdon).

May 1–3, **Bioengineering**, Omaha (Rocky Mountain Bioengineering Symposium Inc., PO Box 59, USAF Academy, Colorado 80840, USA).

May 1–3, **Paraplegia Cure**, Palm Beach (National Paraplegia Foundation, 333 N. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60601, USA).

May 3–5, **Education and Training of Engineers**, Greenwich (Manager, IEE Conference Department, Savoy Place, London WC2R 0BL).

May 3–7, **Protides of the Biological Fluids**, Bruges (Colloquium on Protides of the Biological Fluids, Simon Stevin Instituut, Jerusalemstraat 34, Brugge, Belgium).

May 5, **Industrial Applications of Queuing Theory**, London (Manager, IEE Conference Department, Savoy Place, London WC2R 0BL).