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Photograph: Alfred Wegener's propeller sled *Schneespatz*, 1930

Kebl, Franz

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Propeller sled *Schneespatz*. Photograph by Franz Kebl, 1930.

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One of the Wegener exhibition's motorized snow sleds. (© 1930 Franz Kebl. Courtesy of AWI.)

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> An essential precondition for Wegener's ambitious scientific program was the construction of an overwintering station in the center of the ice sheet, some four hundred kilometers from either coast. Thus logistical questions—including the transport of materials, instruments, and supplies—were of utmost importance. The expedition was, however, delayed for several weeks due to the fact that the sea ice had not melted, and the general difficulties of transporting materials

across the ice sheet. Furthermore, it was not only very difficult to load the propeller sleds onto the ice, it was also a challenge using this untested new technology for the transport of equipment across the ice. The detailed diary entries from August and September 1930 provide an impression of the drama and the difficulties that confronted Wegener. Propeller sleds occupied a key position, for they were the object of great expectations. On the one hand, Wegener was full of enthusiasm about the new possibility of transporting large loads across wide stretches without stopping. On the other, the failure of the propeller sleds seemed to reflect the failure of the mission in general.

—Christian Kehrt

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