

CHRONOLOGY ...

Of the events leading up to Levanevsky's fatal flight, the recorded radio communications during the flight, and the history of search for the final resting place of N-209 and its crew and anecdotal evidence. Some notations may be changed as sources are verified.

Date Reviewed 26 April 2016

1929

As General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, **Stalin** takes over the absolute rule of the Soviet Union as aircraft development and aviation history is being made there and around the world.



1930-1938

Russian pilots broke 68 world aviation records during this period.

1933

The first **ANT-25** long-range experimental aircraft designed by **Tupolev** and produced by Russian engineers was built. This aircraft accounted for a number of record-breaking flights.

July 1933

American pilot **James Mattern** forced to abort his round the world flight and had to be picked up at Anadyr and flown back to Alaska by **Levanevsky**.

April 1934

Levanevsky crashes in an attempt to rescue the crew of the steamship 'Cheliuskin'. He was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union for this bravery.

2 May 1935

First flight of DB-A

3 August 1935

Levanevsky, Baydukov and Levchenko in an ANT-25 attempted to fly non-stop from Moscow to the US via the North Pole, aborted after 2500 km due to an oil leak.

Levanevsky was called to a Politburo meeting, where he blamed **Tupolev**, declaring that this single-engine ANT-25 was under-powered.

15 August 1935



Aviation pioneer **Wiley Post** and popular humorist **Will Rogers** dies in a crash just offshore Barrow, Alaska, 250 km west of suspected crash site of N-209.

July 1936

Chkalov, Baydukov and Belyakov flew an ANT-25 from Moscow to Chkalov Island, near the Amur River the Far East in 56 hours 20 minutes; a distance of 9,374 km. Pravda headline was "Glory to Stalin's Falcons!" («Слава сталинским соколам!») coining the term Stalin's Falcons. The trio became Heroes of the Soviet Union.

18–20 June 1937

The Politburo demanded more records and **Chkalov**, his co-pilot **Baydukov** and navigator **Belyakov** embarked to fly north from Moscow non-stop to San Francisco in an ANT-25. At the 60-hour point they passed Seattle, and after two more hours passed Portland lighthouse on the Columbia River and headed deeper into US territory. Over the city of Eugene they found they were short of fuel and turned back for the army airbase at Fort Vancouver Barracks at Vancouver,^[3] landing at Pearson Airfield. The 9,130 km trip took 63 hours and 25 minutes.

12-14 July 1937



Gromov, Yumashev, and Danilin, also in an ANT-25, flew non-stop from Moscow to San Jacinto, California, covering 11,500 kilometres in 62 hours and 17 minutes, and landing with sufficient fuel to fly an additional 1500 km, enough to carry them to Panama.

Commemorative stamp illustration of the Moscow-San Jacinto transpolar flight

13-14 August 1937

With an official sent off, the 6 aviators and their cargo take off at xx:xx Moscow time bound for Fairbanks, Alaska in DB-A N-209. Radio messages along the way below track their progress. The last paint a picture of mounting problems and then silence

TABLE OF 2-Way and 1-Way COMMUNICATIONS
Between N-209 and ground stations in Russia and Alaska. Subject to verification and validation.

Time	GMT	Content – English Version
18:15		Lift off from 12 August
18:25		Listen to me on a wave of 55 meters. How can you hear me? Galkovsky.
18:45		You hear the wake of 32.8. Hear well. Gone Zahorska traverse. All right. Levchenko, Galkovsky.
18:49		Begin work on a schedule. All right. Galkovsky.
19:40		Crossed the Volga-mother, ground speed 205 kilometers per hour. Flight altitude 820 meters. Hear well in the wake of Moscow 32.8. All right. Good state of health of the crew.
20:55		At 20:37 Vozha passed traverse the lake. Arkhangelsk, pass in the wake of 512 meters. Moscow hear well. Galkovsky Levchenko
22:03		22:03. At 21:50. latitude 63, longitude 40 degrees 2 minutes. Galkovsky.
23:50		23:09 passed Morzhovets island. Height of 2600 meters. Forced break due to a continuous schedule of cumulus clouds. Three hours go by night. Levanevsky and Kastanaev lead plane instrument. Feeling good.
0:35		All right. Material part works well. Feeling good. Turn on a wave of 26.54 meters Galkovsky.
0:55		Listen to me on a wave of 26.54 meters How do you hear? 0 hours 39 minutes left in the Barents Sea. Latitude 68 degrees 31 minutes, longitude 44 degrees 10 minutes. Behind the rest of the night. Expect sun. Flight altitude of 2500 meters. All right. Feeling good. Levchenko, Galkovsky.
1:53		All right. Wait.
2:20		1 hour 40 minutes latitude 70 degrees 20 minutes and longitude of 45 degrees 15 minutes. Flight altitude of 2500 meters. The sun rose. Downstairs solid clouds. Air temperature -25 degrees. Wait.
2:54		2 hours 25 minutes latitude 72 degrees 15 minutes, longitude 45 degrees 47 minutes. Flight altitude of 2300 meters. Come over solid clouds. All right. Good state of health of the crew. Levchenko, Galkovsky.
3:16		Meteo accepted. Wait 40 minutes. All right.
3:42		3:42. All right. Wait.
4:35		3 hours 50 minutes longitude 44 degrees 20 minutes latitude 74 degrees 50 minutes. Hear both the lighthouse well. However, by Rudolph the lighthouse can not go. High clouds east of the meridian of 50. Come to the land of Alexandra. All right. Feeling good. Levchenko, Galkovsky.
4:58		4:00 28 minutes latitude 76 degrees 52 minutes, longitude 44 degrees 50 minutes. All right. Levchenko, Galkovsky.
5:00		I RL. 43 minutes 00 43 minutes Height of 6000 meters. Air temperature -27 degrees. [From the cold bursts celluloid]. All right. Levchenko. (The

			phrase in brackets is absent in M. Singer: indication of time 5:45 mistaken.).
	6:44		6:00 20 minutes latitude 79 degrees 13 minutes, longitude 51 degrees 42 minutes. Crossed the front. Go to Rudolph beacons. How do you hear? All right. Feeling good. Levchenko, Galkovsky.
	8:30		Rudolph, I RL. Give zone beacon to the North.
	09:15		Go to lighthouse. All right. Good state of health of crew. Galkovsky
	11:00		11:00 50 minutes. On the way to the pole in the area of the lighthouse. Flight altitude 5400. [Material part works fine]. Air temperature - 28 degrees. All right. Good state of health of the crew. How do you hear? Galkovsky. (The phrase in brackets M. Singer is absent).
	12:32		
	13:40		“flies pole. From middle of the Barents Sea Total overcast. Height 6100 metres. Temperature -35 degrees. Glass cockpit covered with frost. Strong headwind [100 kilometres per hour] Notify weather on the other side of the pole. All right” We fly pole. He got us hard. Starting from the middle of the Barents Sea Total powerful cloudy. Height of 6000 meters, the temperature of -35 degrees. Glass cockpit covered with frost. Strong headwind. Notify weather on the other side of the pole. All right. (Signed by the entire crew).
	14:32		Latitude 87.55. Longitude 58. We go behind the clouds, cross fronts. Flight altitude of 6000, we have headwinds. Material part works fine. Feeling good. Levchenko, Galkovsky
	14:32		Refused because of the extreme right engine oil system malfunction. Come on three engines. Very hard. Go to overcast. Height of 4600 meters ... Planting will be doing Levanevsky 34.00.
	??		(Transmission time is not specified). Emergency. Height 6200 meters, refused rightmost motor decreases, enter the clouds, obledenevaem.
	15:58		Everything in order. Audibility is poor. Yakutsk. All right. Audibility of R-1 (bad).
	17:26		17:26 Anchorage. (Inaudible signals).
	17:44	14:44	“...we have no orientation. Difficulties with the radio” 17:44. (14:44 GMT) Anchorage. "We have no orientation. Trouble with the transmitter " In 14 hours 44 minutes Greenwich time (17:44) radio communication of the U.S. Army Corps in Anchorage plane distinctly heard on one of his waves - 33 meters. Was intercepted a few words with a request to take over the radio coordinates of the aircraft. (Alekseev DA, Novokshonov PA In the wake of "mysterious journey." Moscow, 1988. Pp. 105)
	17:53 or		“Cape Schmidt. How do you hear me? RL. Wait (or Standby).”

	17:57		
	22:xx		"I'm going on two ... I had to go down ... I see icebergs ahead"
	23:50		
19			48340092
	evening		"I'm going to see the two had come down in front of icebergs."
	evening		Moscow. Impossible to work in the front cabin. Turn back. Levchenko, Galkovsky.
	Aug 13-14		Unintelligible signals received two stations in Yakutia: the wave of 26 meters in the wake of Srednekolymsk and 34-35 meters in Bulun (Tixi).

August 14

Radiogram, adopted at 24 hours 12 minutes after the last radio message (August 13, 14:44) "19 P34 its range." (Sal'nikov P. Unknown square Levanevskogo // Around the World. 1981. № 1. S. 40).

August 14. Yakutsk

"12 o'clock 25 minutes captured by the end of the transfer station unknown tone similar to radar and precisely configure it pt conservative figure of 83 was repeated three times and wait for the AU sign (temporarily interrupt transfer). During operation, the tone of this station changed abruptly. Nightingale, a radio operator from Yakutsk. "(Alekseev DA, Novokshonov PA In the footsteps of" mysterious journey. "Moscow, 1988).

August 16

21:45. "RL Levanevskogo the plane."

22:15 on the same for the same wavelength. Transfer of a foreign language. (Sal'nikov P. Life Devoted to the Arctic. M., 1984. S. 178).

August 16

Arkhangelsk. "RL radio was heard when listening to 55 meters. Adopted sketchy microphone transfer 22 hours and 30 minutes. RL caused Moscow. " (Alekseev DA, Novokshonov PA In the wake of "mysterious journey." Moscow, 1988).

THE SEARCH

The following Chronology of the search from August 1937 till August 1938 is a summary provided by Yuri Salnikov through Larisa Mikhaylova 25 April 2016

In Fairbanks the Levanevsky team was to be greeted by the city mayor, its citizens and four Soviet representatives:

- Mikhail Belyakov, the Sevmorput' State Meteoservice, head meteorologist

- Artak Vartanyan, the Transportation department head of Amtorg – a company which worked in the US since the time prior to the diplomatic relations establishment conducting trade and production between the two countries
- Savva Smirnov, a radio engineer who assembled a radio locator near Fairbanks for maintaining radio contact with the team
- Lev Khvat, a correspondent of the main Soviet newspaper “Pravda”, who brought from Moscow a code table to decipher radiograms sent by the plane radio operator.

Practically no one on the board knew English, neither American operators knew Russian.

The 19th radiogram, carrying the news of dysfunction on the board, was received by both American and Soviet radio stations and later repeated by “Pravda” in a shortened version:

... At 2.32 pm a radiogram from the board came that the far right engine switched off due to dysfunction of the oil feed tube, flying at the height 4600 meters in overcast sky...

In the full text though there was more:

“...icing-up quickly... lost orientation... going to land... 3400 (not deciphered until now) ... Levanevsky”

Mikhail Belyakov was a brother of Alexander Belyakov known in America as a member of Chkalov and Baidukov team of the first successful transpolar flight in June 1937. Mikhail Belyakov together with American colleagues was making meteorology prognosis for Levanevsky team and later for the search teams. In fact it was the birth of the World weather service.

In the morning of August 14, 1937, Vartanyan managed to rent three planes with experienced Arctic pilots and the search started.

In those days the most experience pilot in the Arctic was Joe Crosson – a chief pilot of Alaska Airways. Vartanyan and Khvat flew with him north along the 148th meridian up to the Flaxman island and then returned to Fairbanks.

The second plane – a single engine Fairchild – was piloted by a well-known Canadian polar aviator Robert Randall. (By the way, all five sons of Randall became pilots too.) He flew across 250 miles to the northwest along the shore and also found nothing. (The) next day he landed on the Barter island a hundred and forty miles from Barrow and started to ask local Inuits which(sic) told that they never saw a plane but heard a loud noise from above.

Murrey Stewart piloted the third plane, also a Fairchild, and flew with Savva Smirnov over the Porcupine River not finding anything too...

On August 14. the Soviet ambassador Oumansky invited a President of the Explorers’ Club, the Polar explorer Vilhjalmur Stefansson, to come to Washington from New York. Stefansson brought with him an Arctic and Antarctic traveler Hubert Wilkins. During breakfast, they decided to buy a flying boat which could land on both water and ice, while the Arctic Ocean is not covered entirely with ice, to safeguard against the crash. Wilkins team plus five Canadian and American crewmembers managed to join the search starting from airfields in Canada and in the USA. When ice covered the ocean entirely the newest

Lockheed-Electra was purchased from a member of Explorers Club Richard Archbold. Wilkins managed to fly 2000 km searches, and flew even under moonlight. In December 1937 and February-March 1938 he made six quite risky flights almost to the North Pole, but all in vain. Mikhail Vodopyanov's team in December 1937 flew from the Franz Joseph Land over the Pole towards Alaska and returned on the last liters of gas. Yakov Moshkovsky made a very risky flight in February 1938, still without any result. In May 1938 the search was stopped. And on the 13th of August, 1938, a year after the plane's disappearance, an Ordinance was published, announcing the cessation of search, issuing pensions for the families of the perished crewmembers and erecting a Memorial to honor them.

Yuri Salnikov

14 August 1937- March 1938

Immediately four teams, one Canadian and three American, started combing the coastal islands of Alaska. Included was Canadian Robert Randel in a Fairchild.

Soviet Embassy rented a seaplane, and on August 22, **famed Arctic explorer Vilhjalmur Stefansson**, offered to rent three airplanes to fly to the Alaska search party which included experienced **polar explorer Sir Hubert Wilkins**. This team logged over 70,000 km over the ocean from Spitsbergen, to Ellesmere Island, Point Barrow and the Pole for a total area of 440,300 km².

Stefansson offered to rent three airplanes to fly to Alaska. Later a Lockheed Electra was brought in. Search included **American pilot Jimmie Mattern** who was rescued by Levanevsky years before.



Homer Kellems sailed in his schooner "Norge" from his home base in California to Barrow then up to the Pole, back to Mackenzie River outlet and along the coast to Barrow. The icebreaker "Krassin" also participated. Land searches combed the area from the Mackenzie River delta to the Endicott Mountains.

Fall 1937

Radio operator **Master Sargent Stanley Morgan**, who was based at Point Barrow, met with Eskimos from Oliktok Point, who claim to have seen a large flying machine about 15 kilometers north of the mainland and flying at low altitude. It hit the water, pulled up and then crashed into the sea near the Jones Islands. It was a stormy, rainy evening.

July 1962

Ron Sheardown air search over north Baffin Island following a report of a crash being seen by a helicopter pilot. No crash debris was found.

July 1979

Scientists including the president of the Geographical Society visit Lake Suresnes-Kyuel in Yakutia to investigate rumors that N-2109 ended up there.

Summer 1982

Three missions to the Kyuel area

1983

Small expedition organized by newspaper 'Soviet Russia', again to Kyuel

29 August 1984

Sohio Petroleum finds an aircraft 15 miles from Oliktok Point. It proves to be a DC-6 and not N-209.

August 1986

Large expedition to valleys and hills in Kyuel area discovered a large aircraft but it was not N-209

1986-1987

Kurilchik with a team and assisted by Arco review aeromagnetics results, conduct a marine magnetometer search around Spy/Thetis islands, detect numerous anomalies and divers investigate some.

1988

1989

April 1990

Joint US-Russian expedition. **Dr. David Stone** and graduate students from UA construct and survey with a ski-mounted gradient magnetometer over the suspect area. A number of anomalies were mapped. **Russian journalist Vaiz Yunisov, Professor Eugene Konoplev** and **Roger Baker** of IHAS were part of this effort.

1992-1993

Sheardown conducted aerial searches in the area around Pond Inlet on Baffin Island.

March 1999

Dennis Thurston of the Minerals Management Service in Anchorage and **Ron Sheardown** located what appeared to be wreckage in the shallows of Camden Bay, between Prudhoe Bay and Kaktovik. There was conjecture in the media that it was

Levanevsky's aircraft, but a subsequent attempt to locate the object again proved unsuccessful.

September 2000

US-Russian expedition which included **Sheardown** and **Stone** located an object in Camden Bay which turned out to be a sunken whaling schooner.

May 2001

US government Minerals Management Services, University of Alaska Fairbank and **Sheardown** conducted an underwater ROV search in Camden Bay.

June 2002

UA Fairbanks Geophysics Institute and **Sheardown** dropped a ROV through the ice at Camden Bay to investigate a 60' cigar shaped object. .

2006

Another expedition to southern Yakutia using a archived photo of an airplane finds the remains which turned out to be a TB-3.

2013

Salnikov interviews relatives and friends of the native Inupiaq hunters who witnessed what is believed to be the crash of N-209 near Spy/Thetis Islands.

Above subject to change