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Schmidt, Otto Iulevich

Born Mogilyov, (Ukraine), 30 September 1891

Died 7 September 1956

Russian geophysicist Otto Schmidt led the 1937 Soviet air expedition to the North Pole. Thus, he may have been the first person to actually reach latitude 90° N. His subsequent fame brought him a directorship within the Academy of Sciences. However, Joseph Stalin relieved Schmidt of this position during World War II. (Whether it was simply because of his German surname is unknown.)

Freed of administrative responsibilities, Schmidt turned—for the first time—to a research field in which he had a long-standing interest: solar-system cosmogony. Schmidt hypothesized that the planets were formed from "meteoritic" material that had been gravitationally captured by the Sun as it passed through an interstellar cloud.

Selected Reference

Levin, Aleksey E. and Stephen G. Brush (1995). *The Origin of the Solar System: Soviet Research 1925-1991*. New York: American Institute of Physics