

## Atomic Dreams by Engineers—Ships

Title 92

Having just been on a voyage aboard the Nuclear Ship *Savannah*, I was of course most interested in the proceedings dealing with other nuclear ships. The first ever atomic ship propulsion was in the U.S. Navy Submarine *Nautilus*, operational since 1955 and world-famous in 1958 for crossing submerged below the North Polar Ice. I was so enthusiastic about this achievement that I decided to present a copy of Jules Verne's original French first edition "*Vingt Mille Lieues Sous Les Mers*" to the submarine's captain, Commander William R. Anderson. [See picture Title 67]

Jules Verne's submarine, the original *Nautilus* under the command of Captain Nemo, reached the South Pole submerged in his classic book, published 1870. On my next visit to Paris I found a copy and I could now approach the U.S. Naval Attaché in London, Rear Admiral R.W. Cavenagh, and at a small ceremony at US Navy HQ, Grosvenor Square in London, he accepted the book for onward transmission to the USS *Nautilus*. In return I received from Commander Anderson a copy of his book in which he described his passage under the North Pole.

But to return to Geneva. At a Soviet press conference, A.M. Petrosyants, the Chairman of the State Commission for the Utilisation of Atomic Energy in the USSR, praised the nuclear performance of the Icebreaker *Lenin*, commissioned 1959, which had completed 63000 nautical miles, two thirds in Arctic ice fields. He announced that two further nuclear propelled icebreakers were being built. (The *Antarktika* was launched 1973 and the *Sibir* in 1976). My report about the press conference appeared next day under the heading: "Russians plan two more Atom Icebreakers".

The German nuclear propelled ore carrier *Otto Hahn* was launched at the time of the Geneva Conference in 1964 and had by 1975 completed 380000 nautical miles without any accident. Similarly the NS *Savannah* launched 1962 had by 1975 completed 575000 nautical miles. At the time of the Conference it was estimated that at least 180 naval units, mostly submarines and aircraft carriers, were nuclear power propelled. They were in the service of the United States, the USSR, the British and the French navies.

It only remains to mention the Japanese vessel, the only other nuclear propelled merchant vessel, the *Mutsu* launched in 1969 and commissioned in 1972. She was unlucky, and her reactor leaked during a trial voyage in 1974 but could not immediately be repaired.

Thus ended one dream of the peaceful uses of atomic energy, simply because these merchant ships could not enter—to them—foreign ports as anti-nuclear hysteria created by the fear of environmentalists was too great. [See also Hans Michaelis, *Kernenergie*, DTV, Munich 1977]