

Tenth International Marine Geology Conference, Gelendzhik, Russia, and first impressions of research conditions in that country in October 1992

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The Shirshov Institute of Oceanology in Moscow has organised biennial conferences on Marine Geology at Gelendzhik, a resort on the Black Sea coast, since the early 1970s. Normally these meetings attracted researchers from all corners of the Soviet Union and during the mid to late 1980s, attendance was about 800, but at the meeting held in October 1992, this had declined to about 150, reflecting the severe difficulties experienced by Russians in raising even the seemingly modest sums of money needed to attend. In spite of their hardships, the Shirshov Institute invited around ten foreigners to attend and graciously paid all of our expenses inside Russia for the duration of the meeting and for the travel between Moscow and the Black Sea. The scope of the meeting was very wide. The proportion of review papers seemed to reflect the increasing difficulties which researchers have in finding funds for doing marine fieldwork, but new results were presented on such topics as environmental conditions in the basin of the Lena (found to be about the least

polluted river in the world) and minutely detailed vulcanology in the Kuriles as well as in more conventionally marine or lacustrine work in areas like Lake Baikal, the Arctic and the Black Sea.

Although rapidly varying exchange rates and rampant inflation make comparisons hard and of fleeting validity, prices seem to be about one tenth of those in North America and wages about one hundredth. The Shirshov Institute is following an increasingly common practice of forming entrepreneurial service and manufacturing companies in a quest for survival. Haggis Geophysics acquired a graphic recorder from the acoustics group to demonstrate in Canada, Hong Kong and Japan. It was the first they had seen go out of the country and they said they were grateful for the experience it gave them with filling out the necessary export documents.

My thanks to Professor Alexander Lisitzin and his colleagues.