Meetings

Cenozoic History of the Polar Basin

An All-Union Symposium on the Cenozoic History of the Polar Basin and Its Influence on the Development of Northern Landscapes was held in Leningrad, 1–6 April 1968. The author was the only foreigner to attend the meeting which was organized by the Geographical Society of the U.S.S.R. and by the All-Union Botanical Society.

The initiators of the meeting, B. A. Yurtsev (Komarov Botanical Institute, Leningrad) and A. I. Tolmatchev (Leningrad University), were able to compile with the help of many institutions of the U.S.S.R. an impressive program. Most of the 121 contributions were given as short, factual, and concentrated lectures, rather in contrast to the usually somewhat wordy style of Russian colleagues. Fifteen of the contributions were displayed through manuscripts and charts as demonstrations. Many of the contributions were reviews of already published data, but were nevertheless of great importance to give the colleagues of the many fields of science essential information outside of their own specialty. It has been remarked several times that our colleagues in the Soviet Union generally carry out their work with even more overspecialization than we do in the West. This symposium was, however, constantly aimed at an integration and at the establishment of cross-connections. Many of the contributions achieved this aim directly. The organization of the symposium was even more strongly oriented toward this goal. There was no parallel series of lectures and each session combined talks from many fields which contributed data to the topic. After lectures relating to the Polar Basin and the Soviet Arctic as a whole, the following sessions covered individual regions from Polar Eastern Europe to Beringia. The organization of audience participation differed from our usual systems in the West or on international conferences and insured further integration. Questions to the speakers were submitted only in writing and were answered at the end of all lectures of a session. Then the speakers could be asked further questions orally, and after this phase participants from the audience could state their general opinion of the contributions. Finally each lecturer could give his concluding remarks. This is the usual practice in the Soviet Union. The last day was devoted to an overall discussion and the readying of resolutions.

Subject matter of the papers included regional and general paleogeography, often with emphasis on the extent of transgressions; stratigraphy of sediments now situated on land; stratigraphy of presently marine sediments; eustatic and isostatic problems; geomorphology, especially of glaciated landscapes; permafrost; geochronology; oceanography; geophysics; climatology; paleozoology, with some archeological data, especially of forams, mollusks, and vertebrates; zoogeography; paleobotany, especially of diatoms and vascular plants; palynology; and phytogeography. There was no specific paleopediological or exclusively archeological lecture, and none dealt with the results of cores obtained from drift-ice stations.

It has to be emphasized again, however, that this division of subject matter does not do justice to the great amount of cross-connections given in the individual lectures. Nevertheless, the main strength of Soviet paleogeographic research through intensive regional studies, heavy emphasis on mapping, and on the analysis of biological taxonomic data through many more specialists than we can muster in the West, is clearly indicated. In contrast, a general dearth of radiocarbon data and of results depending on more complicated instrumentation was also evident. No paper dealt specifically with sediment analysis through paleomagnetic methods which seem to give at present the best chance to fill the time gap between radiocarbon and K-Ar dating in the creation of an absolute geochronology of the Cenozoic through the sequences of magnetic reversals. Even the relative dating of many sediments was reported as difficult. Lack of even simple instrumentation was also shown by the types of visual aids used. These aids consisted exclusively of large charts and maps; an episcope was used only once.

With an impressive amount of data obtained through classical biogeographical, geological, and paleontological methods our colleagues in the Soviet Union have, however, achieved a level and density of paleogeographical knowledge which far exceeds our results in the Nearctic. Much of the Soviet effort in polar research with more sophisticated instrumentation seems also at present concentrated in the Antarctic. In this connection, it may be worthwhile to comment on the distribution of research workers in the fields of the symposium. There were 114 men (71 percent) and 46 women (29 percent). The high proportion of women actively engaged in arctic research should serve as an excellent example for our nearly exclusively male arctic enterprises in the West. About one third of the audience was comprised of women.

Over half of the contributors came from Leningrad. About a quarter were from Moscow, with Yakutsk and Novosibirsk ranking next.

Concentration of this research in a few institutions is also indicated by the affiliation of the contributors. Twenty-one percent work at the Institute for the Geology of the Arctic (NIIGA), Leningrad; 11 percent at the Geological Institute of Akademia Nauk (GIN), Moscow; 7 percent at the Komarov Botanical Institute (BIN), Leningrad; 7 percent at the Zoological Institute of Akademia Nauk (ZIN), Leningrad. In contrast, only 2 percent came from the Arctic–Antarctic Institute (AANII), Leningrad, which now seems very heavily oriented toward antarctic and oceanographic research. Only 9 percent of the contributors work at universities, which follows the usual pattern in the Soviet Union to concentrate research in state institutes.

With the excellent printing system of scientific results, at astonishingly low prices, the organizers hope to have the contributions and discussions published within a year. Only 500 copies of the abstracts will be printed. Thus, on the first day of the conference the volume became a collector's item. The symposium volume can be expected to be a paramount contribution to our understanding of the Tertiary and Quaternary in the Eurasian sector of the

Arctic. It may well be ready for the next meeting of INQUA and should be translated into English to give a greater percentage of arctic scientists a better idea of the impressive integrative results of our Soviet colleagues.

The symposium left, however, one basic question unanswered. How did the ice cover of the Arctic Ocean fluctuate since the Late Tertiary? This problem became a basic issue of the symposium discussions. However, the discussions pointed out only that the Soviet colleagues are presently divided into two camps, one for, and one against the open Arctic Ocean at interglacial times. The evidence from mathematical calculations based on climatic models, from stratigraphic, and from marine and terrestrial biological data seems to remain inconclusive, although each camp has strong adherents. Perhaps a greater number of corings in the Arctic Ocean and the paleomagnetic analysis of the cores will solve this problem.

In contrast to western scientists, who are now in the great majority adhering to some version of continental drift, the Soviet colleagues seem about equally divided into "drifters" and adherents of other explanations—for example, the expanding earth, and the oceanization or subsidence theory.

It may have been necessary to hold the symposium only for scientists of the Soviet Union, as already this amounted to a mammoth effort for the organizers. The participants, of whom only a minute fraction will be able to attend the next INQUA meeting or other conferences abroad, would certainly have benefited greatly, however, from an up-to-date review of, for example, the Canadian Polar Shelf Project or the work of the U.S. Geological Survey on Beringia.

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Calendar of Events

National Meetings

October

28–30. **Hybrid Microelectronics** Symp., Chicago, Ill. (J. English, Cozzens and Cudahy, 9501 W. Devon Ave., Rosemont, Ill. 60018)

28–31. American Assoc. of **Blood Banks,** Washington, D.C. (L. J. James, 30 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60602)

28–31. **Instrument** Soc. of America, New York, N.Y. (H. S. Kindler, The Society, 530 William Penn Pl., Pittsburgh, Pa. 15219)

28–1. Society for **Experimental Stress Analysis,** San Francisco, Calif. (The Society, 21 Bridge Sq., Westport, Conn.)

29–31. Conference and Workshop on **Applied Climatology,** Asheville, N.C. (H. T. Harrison, Route 1, Box 266, Weaverville, N.C. 28787)

31–1. **Educational** Conf., 33rd, New York, N.Y. (W. S. Litterick, Educational Records Bureau, 21 Audubon Ave., New York 10032)

31–1. **Entomological** Soc. of America, 40th, Philadelphia, Pa. (J. P. Johnson, Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Sta., Box 1106, New Haven 06504)

31–1. American Soc. for **Microbiology,** 8th, New York, N.Y. (R. W. Sarber, 115 Huron View Blvd., Ann Arbor, Mich.)

31–1. Symposium on **Social Behavior,** 2nd, Oxford, Ohio. (R. A. Hoppe, Dept. of Psychology, Miami Univ., Oxford)

31–1. American Soc. of **Tropical Medicine and Hygiene,** Atlanta, Ga. (G. M. Jeffery, P.O. Box 295, Kensington, Md.)

31–2. **Gerontological** Soc., Denver, Colo. (The Society, 660 S. Euclid, St. Louis, Mo. 63110)

31–2. Society of **Photographic Scientists and Engineers,** Washington, D.C. (R. A. Jones, Papers Chairman, Mail Sta. 68, Perkin-Elmer Corp., Norwalk, Conn. 06852)

November

1–2. Central Soc. for **Clinical Research,** Chicago, Ill. (J. Eckstein, Dept. of Internal Medicine, Univ. of Iowa Hospitals, Iowa City 52240)

1–3. National Council for **Geographic Education,** 54th, Kansas City, Mo. (E. Eiselen, The Council, Room 1532, 111 W. Washington St., Chicago, Ill. 60602)

1–4. **Research in Medical Education,** 7th conf., Houston, Tex. (P. J. Sanazaro, Assoc. of American Medical Colleges, 2530 Ridge Avenue, Evanston, Ill. 60201)

6–8. Conference on **Composition and Dynamics of the Upper Atmosphere,** El Paso, Tex. (J. E. Morris, P.O. Box 26065, El Paso 79925)

6–8. **Diffraction** Conf., 26th, Pittsburgh, Pa. (S. Diamond, U.S. Steel Corp., Applied Research Lab., Monroeville, Pa. 15146)

6–8. Northeast **Electronics Research,** Mtg., Boston, Mass. (A. Uhlir, Inst. of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, NEREM-68, 31 Channing St., Newton, Mass. 02158)

6–8. International **Spi Cellular Plastics** Conf., New York, N.Y. (S. Steingiser, Monsanto Research Corp., Station B, Box 8, Dayton, Ohio 45407)

6–9. American **Ceramic** Soc., Pittsburgh, Pa. (The Society, 4055 N. High St., Columbus, Ohio 43214)

6–9. **Operations Research** Soc. of America, 34th, Philadelphia, Pa. (J. H. Engel, c/o Center for Naval Analysis, 1401 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, Va. 22209)

6–9. Conference on **Respiratory Therapy,** Boston, Mass. (M. J. Nicholson, 605 Commonwealth Ave., Boston 02215)

7–9. American Soc. of **Cytology,** Cleveland, Ohio. (W. R. Lang, 1025 Walnut St., Philadelphia, Pa. 19107)