

The M-Times

A yearly magazine by Mikhalsky, known as Eugene
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Introduction

Hi guys, this is an attempt to reveal the events and features which were of some interest and importance for me in the year which is now close to quit. I hope these notes might be of some interest to anybody else and could amuse. The events appear below in a raw they have happened. Sorry for the grammar which must be awful.

Hannover

I spent another three months in Hannover between April and July. This time my stay with BGR (Bundesanstalt für Geowissenschaften und Rohstoffe, if somebody is not familiar with this remarkable institution; photo below) was most overloaded by works and projects. Three manuscripts, two reports, current geochemical and isotope studies, and my bloody habilitation (doctorate) thesis left behind at home with the deadlines coming soon. So I found myself really busy with not much time for fun or even schpaß.



The BGR main entrance hall with a mosaic showing central Europe earth crust cross-section

Fortunately, I got the same accommodation as in previous years with much courtesy and welcome from Frau Rosemarie Strehlow. She and her old friend Joahim are pictured upper left column. My stay under her roof was a really pleasant and relaxing. I used to have been offered Saturday (and sometimes Sunday) lunch, and plentiful coffee, tea and fruit, as Frau Rosemary, I guess, might had not have been sure

I fed myself well enough. As a matter of fact, I spent only about 80 Euro per month on food, including sweets and chocolate apart from normal meals. So I was not trying to save, rather food in Germany was exceptionally cheap, and notably cheaper than here in Russia.



Rosemary and Joahim having breakfast



Paulhen-the-scientist

I am very glad to have met across with a man like Joahim, an old chap who was a boy-soldier and saw the war from the opposite side, fortunately only a little bit. Later on he became a veterinary doctor and a great friend of Russia. I actually learnt a lot of recent and earlier Russian history from him. Another remarkable person, and this guy shared the flat with me, was a cat called Paulhen (photo up). The pet was aware if I sat down at the table with my papers that meant I was ready to scratch his forehead and throat.

Paris

Alla came to join me in Hannover in June, and we managed to jump to Paris for three days booking the trip through Internet. Paris is something very romantic in Russian mentality and this name is firmly associated with majestic breath of freedom, love and joy. These days those things may be hardly found. The city itself is not that nice as commonly being admitted, and its beauty is much overestimated. All the same architecture occurs throughout (at least what we saw in three days), the buildings are all the same size and the same grey or dusty yellow colour, sometimes scaring (photo below) and rather boring altogether. Of course the Louvre and other places are much better decorated and the interior luxury startles. But the outsides are losing. Sorry, but St Petersburg looks much better: variegated, bright, harmonious. I think Viktor Hugo could not do his "Notre Dam de Paris" in our city. However, the novels by Dostoevsky also are not that funny.



Looking west from *Notre Dam de Paris*



A cup of coffee in *Monmartre*

Anyway, we liked the trip very much. We saw a lot museums, streets and parks, took a boat trip, dined in what we thought was typical Paris cafes (photo down left column). Being cheated in a hotel

(they pretended a toilet and a bath is the same bit of civilization), bloody tired (six museums and three towers in three days), but happy we flew back to Germany. We must return there some time for more paint museums, as we are fond of impressionists.

Saxony

We went for another three days to Saxony taken by our hearty friends Uli and Elke Wetzel (below; Alla grouping leftside). Majestic views from up cliffs are true impressive, and you mustn't climb up. These places are known as Saxony Switzerland and indeed look fantastic. Besides, small and cosy village hotels provide excellent accommodation.



On top of a cliff facing Elbe

We also visited Dresden and saw the famous art gallery and some more historical places and museums. Tremendous impressions.

As to me, the most interesting trip was to Burg where we visited an old semidestroyed castle where well known (in Polish history) countess Kossel lived for long years. The ruins still contain the smell of old ages, and I liked best of all a torture machine which I would love to employ on my bosses (photo below, but no bosses yet in).



A torture machine

California

I used a chance to visit California attending the International Symposium on Antarctic Earth Sciences in Santa Barbara. The goal was to see my very old friends Tom and Maggie Elliot, with whom we are in pen contact for long, long years. Me and Maggie participated in Antarctic expedition to central Transantarctic mountains in 1985/86 and since that time Maggie and Tom (photo below) provided much help and support for my family (as our German friends the Wetzels also did).



Maggie and Tom Elliot

It was my second trip to California, and this time I found this region not that nice to come again. Very hot weather and somewhat boring nature, dull living environment and no architecture at all. Sorry again, but I would not like to stay in CA above one week. But the couple days I spent with my dear friends were amazing. We saw a lot of interesting and lovely places, drank long wine and relaxed in a wonderful pool (water +40 degree Celsius at least; photo below). Now I know how the paradise looks like. Please note, Maggie and Ton live in Hawaii, and flew to CA just to meet me!



Lazy paradise in Santa Barbara

Geological conference was also of some interest. People seem to work hard on Antarctic rocks and structures. I was very glad to meet some guys (photo below) and drank some California wine which was supplied by the organizing committee free and not limited.



Myself, Adrian Corvino and Andreas Laufer taking much of the conference

They also arranged an excursion to some rocks outcrops in close vicinity, where oil-bearing strata crop out (photo below, note thin black layers which are turf). It can be not easy to scrape the turf off your skin after swimming and walking down the beach. The latter is beautiful, the sand hot and fine and they do not charge anything for all that.



The source of CA prosperity

Award

Couple weeks after I returned home I was invited to the city's authorities to get an award granted to me by the federal Government acknowledging the 50-year anniversary of Russian Antarctic research, which was celebrated in 2006. I was one of large number of people – logistics, scientists, sailors, aviators, but got my medal (the lowest level of award, but the thing is smart and made of silver) only now.

It was very nice to get the award from the city Governor Valentina Matvienko (photo below), whom I never met by person before. As a matter of fact my son used to meet Governor when she purchased books in the store he runs.



With the Governor

Thesis reading

I started my thesis in 2003 and worked on it very hard for last couple years. So the official public reading at Moscow State University was a very important and in a way thrilling event. The whole reading which included a talk delivery (photo below), questions, three official opponents reviews, and public discussion and assessment of the talk and thesis. It took 3.5 hours altogether and when they finished and the council voted OK I was deeply exhausted, vitally deserted and did not feel any exultation or even satisfaction; just some work done as if it occurs every other months. However, the council consisted of 18 professors including two academicians: E.E. Milanovsky (in the photo below) who was the chairman and V.E. Khain, and my successful reading may be considered a convincing outcome. Now I have to wait 4–6 months to obtain the doctor of science degree by the final decision of the central qualifying committee.

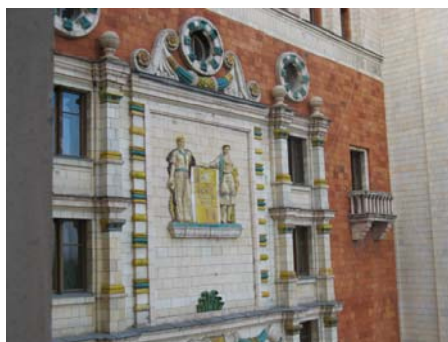


Delivering the reading talk

Alla, as usually, was with me the days before the reading providing help, support, shelter and everything. It seems it was much more difficult for her to get through that reading than for me. Fortunately she got at least one reward staying some days in the Moscow University (photo below) hotel in *de luxe* apartment (what they called such in 1950-s). It happened to be Alla's dream to stay in the MU.



In front of the University



The main building decorations (looking out the window)

Family

In June my mother was 75, but I missed the celebration staying in Hannover. She and my father were anyway too busy during the summertime with a well construction at our *dacha*. It cost a lot of money, but now we have a steady water supply. It would be also very practical to get some electric power available, but that is beyond one's ability.



Eugene-the-junior appeared on TV (photo left) interviewed as a tradesman successively selling out some bestsellers.

He studies some culture basic sciences at a University and will graduate next year.

Country

As we face the President elections in coming (today!) year, I like you to know what I think about current political situation in Russia. First of all do not believe whatever the western mass-media say about Russia and accuse V. Putin of. Most of that is not true as I learnt when stayed in Germany. He is not a perfect President, and the inflation rate is not 12% as the Russian Government officially calculates (I guess 20–30% would be a more realistic assessment, as food became more expensive much faster), but he

brought to Russia stability what was badly lacking. I completely trust the official results of recent Parliament (Russian *Duma*) elections as I know many, many people who voted for his party, even if they do not agree on basic topics, and only few (including myself) who did not. People vote for stability and do not like more changes. Those guys who declare themselves the “democratic opposition” (Kasparov, Kasianov, Bukovsky, Berezovsky, etc.) have no chance to get more than a few votes of their families and guards in the President elections.

Conclusion

The 2007 year was strongly “enriched” time for me. All the goals were achieved. The financial income was high enough to cover food and lodging expenses, and allowed some travel also. Today we all meet 2008 year, and I wish everybody success, luck and prosperity!

Yours,

Eugene Mikhalsky.

31. 12.2007



A happy new year!