

Dear Friends,

This issue of our journal has come out by the 115th anniversary of Mikhail Alekseevich Lavrentiev, an outstanding scientist of our days, who is for a reason compared with an iconic figure of the Renaissance, Leonardo da Vinci. Today, we remember him not only as a most prominent mathematician, mechanician, and founding father of the Siberian Branch of the USSR Academy of Sciences – a revolutionary project not only for Russian but for the world science, too. As we know, a basic component of the famous “Lavrentiev’s triangle” is personnel, that is, purposeful, multi-stage training of young scientists that starts from school-days. One of the ways of engaging talented youth in scientific research was the All-Siberia Olympiad of School Students in Physics and Mathematics started in the early 1960s. The third round of the Olympiad implied participation in the Summer School conducted in Akademgorodok of Novosibirsk, where school students could get in touch with real science.

Once, in 1961, the well-known physicist G.I. Budker, who was the head of the Summer School organizing committee, put forward a proposal, surreal for the time, to organize a permanent school of physics and mathematics at Novosibirsk State University. Lavrentiev became an ardent advocate of this idea: according to the memoirs of Gennady Fridman, one of the first students of this school, which are published in this issue, “during the first six months, it was an illegal educational establishment funded through an undoubtedly unauthorized use of funds by M.A. Lavrentiev, who wasn’t afraid of anything because he acted in the name of an idea, ... and only in August 1963 the USSR Council of Ministers issued a decree on boarding schools, and later such schools were set up in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, and in other cities.”

The continuation of this story became a vivid example of the feasibility and huge potential of the ideas laid in the foundation of the Novosibirsk Center for Academic Research. The same Fridman, when he was a second-year student of Novosibirsk State University, together with his friends literally “retried” the organizational experiment performed three years earlier by the founding fathers. This is how, fifty years ago, the distance learning school of physics and mathematics was started, which gave inquisitive and talented teenagers from towns and villages all over the Soviet Union, including the most remote areas, a rare chance to assess their abilities and essentially improve their standards in physics and mathematics. Unbelievably, this one of the best national distance learning schools was, in fact, illegal and supported only by the enthusiasm of its organizers. According to Gennady Fridman, “The first official document that showed that the Distance Learning School did exist appeared only six or seven years later. Ironically, it was a University decree that G.Sh. Fridman and other organizers should be fired from University for ruining the Distance Learning School.”



In the same issue, we are publishing materials dedicated to the fundamental problems of cultural and historical processes that have taken place since high antiquity to these days. The specific occasion is the 25th anniversary of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography (IAE), SB RAS, a most important national center for research in humanities – in the last 15 years, the scholars working in the Institute have been awarded three State Prizes of the Russian Federation for achievements in science and technology.

If we follow the letter of law, the IAE SB RAS was formally awarded the status of an independent research institution 25 years ago, in the end of the year 1990. However, if we look at the Institute’s “evolutionary tree,” we will see that its roots go down the faraway 1960s, the very start of academic research in the humanities, and the Institute’s “immediate ancestor” is the Institute of History, Philology and Philosophy, Siberian Branch, USSR Academy of Sciences, established in 1966 by a prominent Soviet historian and archaeologist Aleksey Pavlovich Okladnikov, the founding father and head of the school of research into the history, archaeology, and ethnography of Siberia, Russian Far East, and Central Asia.

The remarkably broad chronological, thematic and geographical range accounted for the enormously wide array of issues tackled by the Institute: from the spread of Paleolithic traditions in Eurasia and development of ancient arts to the ethnogenesis of indigenous Siberian peoples and development of Russian culture in Siberia.

We will get the readers acquainted only with some of the research conducted in this originally multidisciplinary institute. Even judging from this limited selection, we can see that each of the authors remembers well the words once said by A.P. Okladnikov: “Go for it but bear in mind the three simple recommendations borne by the history of scholarly research. As you move forward, keep in touch with the experience of the previous generations. Value your heritage, the contribution made by your predecessors. Beware of the lure of an easy way towards ambitious goals, adventurism in elaborations and the phony glitz of false gems.”

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Editor-in-Chief