Building International Programs in Asia

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"Who gets Diego Garcia?" asked my friend, Joe Arden, director of the University of Maryland's European Division. "The Far East Division, of course," I replied with a smile. Surely the division I directed at the time should serve this tiny Asian island.

The question came up in the early 1980s when the U.S. Navy asked the University of Maryland University College to bring its courses to a flat, desolate island in the British Indian Ocean Territories, some two thousand miles west of Manila. Joe and I soon decided that Diego Garcia and any other new locations to its east would belong to the Far East Division while potential sites to the west of this obscure island would go to the European Division. After drawing this imaginary line, we joked about making a modern division of the globe between Maryland's two overseas divisions, much as the Pope had once divided the newly discovered world between the Spanish and Portuguese crowns in the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas.

That we even knew of this treaty reflects our academic geekiness. Both of us studied international relations in graduate school and, after military service, became Maryland overseas faculty close to the same time. We often talked about world politics and likely effects of different scenarios on the University of Maryland. These conversations grew more serious and prolonged as Glasnost appeared in the Soviet Union, and the Cold War waned. Would overseas U.S. military bases begin to close? Joe and I worried about all the people who worked with us in the "Maryland Empire," especially the difficulty faculty and staff would face returning to tough academic job markets at home. And we wondered about our own futures.

From this interplay of our academic backgrounds and current worries about the University of Maryland's future overseas emerged a novel idea. Why not, we asked ourselves, use the overseas faculty, staff, experience and infrastructure to build University of Maryland non-military international programs? In retrospect, it seems an obvious question, but did not then. For one thing, we had no experience in civilian international programs. For another, the military contracts restricted us in important ways from conducting non-military business. And then arose the question of what our boss, the University president in College Park, might think of the idea.

As the concept developed, and it gained approval in College Park, the Far East Division took the lead, celebrating the first non-military presence overseas, the International Business and Management Institute (IBMI) Tokyo. The idea hatched when my friend, Jim Cramer, a faculty member, came to me with an interesting proposition. He had participated in a briefing of Japanese businessmen headed to positions in the U.S., and his part of the training was so well received that the Japanese firm involved, Dentsu, the country's largest advertising agency, asked him to do more work. Jim wanted to build a consulting and training company within Maryland's larger, non-military context, and I worked on President Massey to give it his blessing. Once he did, IBMI took off, soon acquiring many famous Japanese clients, Itochu, Mitsubishi, Sony and Fujitsu to name a few. Jim arranged meetings for Dr. Massey and me with prominent Japanese CEOs, the Minister of Education and politicians who had been or would become prime ministers.

To conform to the Maryland military contract, all IBMI staff members had to surrender their military ID cards, except in the case of those who were "dependents" of military members or Maryland staff. The same would hold true for all other non-military programs established in Asia.

The IBMI training Jim and his staff conducted fit exactly the needs of the burgeoning Japanese export economy described in Ezra Vogel's iconic *Japan as Number One*. For the first time, Japanese firms began sending managers overseas in big numbers, and they needed everything from knowledge of American management practices to business etiquette. Jim and his colleagues led scores of training workshops in Japan and as far afield as Australia. They also wrote articles about the surge in Japanese business for *The Asian Wall Street Journal, Japan Economic Journal,* Baltimore and Washington papers, among other media

One client, Itochu, presented University of Maryland University College with its first million-dollar gift. The million-dollar gift might have been $10 million. Our contact at Itochu told Jim that the company's chairman had asked him in a meeting whether $1 million or $10 million made more sense. The question came at the end of many hours of meetings and our advocate at Itochu was so surprised he stammered out $1 million. Such was the power and wealth of Japanese firms in this era.

The next adventure in non-military programs came when the Ministry of Education in Malaysia asked the Far East Division to bring the first two years of its programs to Mara Institute of Technology, just outside Kuala Lumpur. The Ministry aimed to save money by requiring its scholarship students to take their first two years of an American degree in country. Those who did well would then transfer to U.S.-

based institutions for their third and fourth years. In 1985, the Far East Division sent a dean and faculty to get things underway.

The Ministry focused especially on *Bumiputra* ,i.e. Malay-speakers. While making up the majority of the population, Malays had not done as well in business and the professions as the Chinese and Indian minorities. In other words, we were part of an affirmative action program for the majority students, a situation that would eventually, with other issues, bring the program down. Those other issues surprised us. In the program's second year came increasing pressure to ease up on grading, something we had never experienced on military bases. Next the Malaysian Government took another undermining step, asking us not to send Jewish faculty to teach in the country. We gave notice of withdrawal soon after receiving this notice.

My boss understood the failure of this venture, and I learned more about "due diligence" in advance of international commitments. It would stand me in good stead a few years later as we began to dispatch service members on academic study tours into Soviet Siberia and collaborating universities there sought further academic cooperation.

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As it turned out, I sent my wife, Patricia Wallace, to Siberia on January 17, 1990. Lest this appear of murderous intent, or merely heartless, I hasten to add she volunteered to travel to Irkutsk, an isolated central Siberian city between Vladivostok and Moscow, at a time when I could not leave Japan. The University of Maryland in Tokyo had been contacted by Irkutsk State University (ISU) in the fall of 1989 requesting a meeting to discuss collaboration on non-military programs. The contact had developed by a circuitous route, starting with an unusual telex message from Irkutsk, received by a Japanese office able to handle this antiquated technology, then forwarded to us. Pat, who was head of Information Technology in the Maryland Asian office, soon figured out how to send and receive telexes at our end.

We responded to the telex by suggesting a study tour for our American military students to Siberia the next summer. The Soviet side asked us to describe the concept of a study tour. We told them students travelled with a faculty member to a location they were researching, learned more about it on site and completed a paper when they returned. We described study tours to tropical rain forests in Malaysia and visits to Hong Kong to observe its vibrant economy. I feared our proposed Soviet study tour would appear a barely disguised spy mission to our telex-friends at ISU, and when they responded that "Moscow" would have to approve any issuance of visas for American military students to visit in the summer, the smart money at our Tokyo office assumed the Siberian study tour idea dead.

Nevertheless, I checked$ with President Ben Massey in College Park, the U.S. Pacific Command office in Hawaii responsible for Maryland's Asian contract, and the Yokota Air Base Commander, all of whom gave thumbs up to the study-tour idea. Perhaps it seemed a remote possibility to them, or they viewed a study tour for U.S. military students to Soviet Siberia as just another step in the diminishing Cold War. The real surprise came after these U.S. approvals when our Irkutsk colleagues telexed an invitation to visit their university to discuss the study tour itinerary and consider other types of collaboration. For the study tour to take place in summer 1990, a University of Maryland delegation needed to come to Irkutsk

soon to work out details. They suggested January as the latest possible date given the time it would take to issue visas.

I have always loved Pat's adventurous spirit, and she hesitated not a moment in volunteering to make the visit. We could find little information on travel in Siberia and less on Irkutsk. The Internet did not exist, and no Fodor's or State Department advice guided us. Our hosts offered few details except that they would handle arrangements in Irkutsk. At the end of their invitation, they indicated Irkutsk might be colder than Tokyo and suggested "Dr. Wallace should dress warmly." In the privacy of our home, we told ourselves, "Well, duh, it's Siberia," and Pat made calls to outfitters around Tokyo and then to several in the U.S. seeking their warmest garb. She found a branch of Eddie Bauer that handled the special needs of clients going on cold weather expeditions, and from this source she ordered the warmest down coat they offered. It reached from her chin to her ankles and presented my beautiful wife as a female version of the Michelin tire man, whose name around Europe is "Bibendum." Her trip, of course, became the Bibendum Mission. (She still has that coat.)

Pat received her Soviet visa in record time and made her travel arrangements. Flights turned out to be more difficult than we expected in part because the Japanese and Soviet governments did not enjoy good relations. Among other stresses, the Soviet Union continued to occupy the Kurils, several small islands north of Hokkaido, seized after entering the war against Japan in its final few weeks. So, for example, there were no flights between Tokyo's international airport at Narita and any Siberian destination. Pat had to travel by train to the eastern side of Honshu where, from the town of Niigata, two flights a week covered the 750 miles north to Khabarovsk in less than two hours. Changing planes in Khabarovsk, she'd fly another 1400 miles west to Irkutsk. More problematic, Pat would fly all legs to and from Irkutsk on Aeroflot, an airline well- travelled friends warned against. The map of Northwest Asia lays out the major parts of her winter odyssey.

The Bibendum Mission extended over nearly a week, and during this time we heard nothing. Gradually the jokes around the office about sending Pat to Siberia subsided, and I began to worry, trying to hide any nervousness from our eight-year-old daughter, Callie. I knew phone calls were extremely difficult and even the telex not much easier, so I rationalized Pat's silence as the days crept by. On day six, a hurried phone call to the office from an exhausted Pat revived my spirits. She was calling from Niigata, Japan, where she had just landed and was about to board the train to Tokyo. Everything had gone well, she told me, and our Soviet colleagues were eager for further collaboration, more details to follow when she reached Tokyo.

Once home at Yokota Air Base, Pat described her Irkutsk adventure, telling the Maryland staff that the Soviet academic group proved extremely hospitable and almost painfully eager to develop ties with the University of Maryland. They put her up in a hotel reserved for visiting Communist Party dignitaries and arranged visits to locations they thought might be of interest to those taking the study tour, including Lake Baikal and the near-by tundra forests. Since snow buried both, she couldn't see much. After several discussions and dinners marked by copious vodka toasts, it was agreed that the study tour would go on as a confidence-building step which might lead to other connections. Although unclear what these were, Pat's visit played out as we had hoped, and planning for the study tours began.

Patricia Wallace Meets with Vladimir Saunin and others at Irkutsk State University, Siberia

At our home, Pat's conversation for my ears only added rich detail on life and culture in the last years of the Soviet Union. At the start, her Aeroflot flights to Irkutsk unnerved her. She reported broken and soiled seats, surly service, no English and pilots who banked more steeply than she had ever seen and landed on a snow-packed runway at the Irkutsk airport. Baggage was piled up in a six- foot stack filling a small, unheated room. Passengers waited a long time and then were let in all at once to sort it out. Fortunately, the Irkutsk University staff arrived to help her through this chaos, and they brought extra clothing, including a huge fur hat, anticipating she might not be warm enough. Walking around Irkutsk on her own, she observed state grocery stores with half empty shelves where canned goods and salted fish predominated. Nineteenth century wooden houses added charm to the old section of Irkutsk, although the windows of many homes were shockingly close to the ground as the structures were slowly sinking into a more frequently melting permafrost – perhaps a side effect of climate change before we were using the term. The city's burgeoning private market stood in stark contrast to the limited stock in the state stores. Piles of lemons, oranges and vegetables, fresh fish and all kinds of meat dominated the free market. There, and later in her hotel with its triple- paned windows, Pat warded off young people determined to buy her jeans for large stashes of rubles.

A few days after she returned, and we had extracted all her stories, Pat turned serious one evening: "If you go to Irkutsk to learn more about the further contact they are seeking, be careful at the dinners and vodka toasts. They can affect your judgment and encourage you to agree to things in the evening you might regret the next morning." These were not Pat's exact words, but they are close and expressed a warning that proved prophetic in my follow-up visits to Siberia.

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Pat's Bibendum Mission in January 1990 inaugurated a flurry of additional contact from Irkutsk State University and the other leading higher education institution in the region, Far Eastern State University

(FESU) in Vladivostok. Irkutsk wanted to continue the conversation about further cooperation they had suggested to Pat, and FESU would welcome a University of Maryland study tour building on that arranged with Irkutsk. Apparently the two university rectors had been discussing the Maryland connection.

When the next telex arrived at our offices in Japan, it contained an invitation to visit Vladivostok. Recalling my U.S. Army years in military intelligence and our University's work on the periphery of U.S. forces in Japan, I knew Vladivostok sheltered the formidable Soviet Pacific Fleet. Very much a navy town, most Soviet citizens and all foreigners were kept out, so tourism did not exist. One hint of difficulty on a potential visit to Vladivostok appeared when the FESU staff explained that I must travel many hours by train into Vladivostok from the town of Khabarovsk rather than fly directly. After some quick staff work on our side, we worked out the logistics of a revised study tour to include both Vladivostok and Irkutsk. I set my travel for the end of February, first retracing Pat's route to Irkutsk and then, on the way back to Japan, picking up the storied Trans- Siberian Express from Khabarovsk to Vladivostok.

Pat's experience prepared me well for the Aeroflot flights, rough baggage handling and all other trials of air travel in Soviet Russia. Reaching Irkutsk, I was met by the two leaders of a university group who were pushing ties with the West in anticipation of major changes in the Soviet Union. Vladimir Saunin and Gennady Konstantinov became my constant companions on this visit. Saunin was a senior administrator interested in non-traditional programs and appeared to have close ties with the city's political leadership. Konstantinov taught mathematics and spoke English.

Gradually at meetings and visits around the campus and city, and then at boozy dinners, the Irkutsk group explained what they hoped would come from my visit. The quotes that follow come from a log I kept each day: "The Soviet Union is changing rapidly," they said. "Under Gorbachev's glasnost (openness) and perestroika (restructuring of the economy and political system), the leadership is admitting errors of the past and looking toward a less centralized economy that will fill the stores with food and consumer items. Our country will need people who know how to create and manage businesses that replace inefficient state-owned industries. These companies will be led by a new generation who understands modern management practices and speaks English. Our University's mission is to prepare these pioneers, and we need help from American universities who have been teaching business and management for a long time." Then came the reason why they had contacted the University of Maryland: "You offer management and business courses all over the world. We have studied how you do this and believe you could bring these programs to Siberia."

The professors pointed to the few free markets Pat and I observed as examples of how the future Soviet Union might look. They asked me: "How do you think private merchants get lemons and oranges to our city in the middle of winter?" I had no idea, but I knew the state stores had none. "These guys, Armenians, Kazakhs and Kurds, drive produce trucks from our country's southwest along frozen Siberian rivers, using the ice in place of non-existent roads. And why do you think they undertake this dangerous trek? They want to make a profit, and we get products the state stores don't have." Sometimes one of the Irkutsk professors bordered on what I thought might be dangerous, telling me on one occasion that

while the Soviet Union had a first-world military its people lived in a third-world state. These points I left unrecorded.

"But how will we make this Soviet-American program work," I inquired at the beginning of a banquet on the next-to-last evening. I worried my new Soviet friends were putting too much hope in what a small program in Siberia could achieve if it got off the ground at all. Beyond that, I had no clear idea what the program would look like, how we would deliver it or even if our College Park leadership would go along with such a radical departure from its overseas military-based model. Still, as the evening wore on, and the vodka toasts came every few minutes, innovative ideas from the Soviet side and from my alcohol-soaked brain began to flow. Here is how I remembered the evening from notes I took a few days after this dinner, some of which appeared in Sharon Hudgins' history of University of Maryland University College, *Beyond the Ivory Tower: The First Sixty Years, 1947-2007:*

> *… I was laughing, they were laughing…and together we were planning a grandiose University of Maryland- Irkutsk State University collaboration that would bring the two great countries together. Interspersed with the flow of ideas, we toasted the great peoples of the USSR and the USA. At my request, the Soviet group asked the waiters for paper, but there was none, so I outlined the academic plan we were developing on a paper napkin using one of the University of Maryland ball points I had brought for gifts. The napkin soon filled with vision, staffing, organizational structure and outcomes. Because the only napkin at hand, mine, was slightly soiled, this scribbled wisdom competed with traces of the banquet, and the ink blurred in a few places damp from spilled vodka. At least I retained the foresight to put it in my shirt pocket as we were leaving.*
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> *Early the next morning the phone rang in my hotel room, and an enthusiastic Russian-accented voice told me the Irkutsk University rector would like to talk to our dinner group about the audacious program we had laid out. A university car would arrive in 45 minutes to bring me to a 900 a.m. meeting in the rector's office. I had a fierce headache, and the caller's loud voice got on my nerves. Recalling long ago experience from my University of Virginia days, I recognized symptoms of a hangover as I struggled to piece together what program the caller was talking about. With the help of two cups of bitter Soviet coffee, I remembered the napkin, pulled it out of my shirt pocket and began to puzzle out what we had discussed late into the night before. Pat's prescient warning about just this kind of awkward scenario weighed on me as much as the hangover when the university car arrived.*

Fuel for Innovative Thinking

The Rector's name was Fyodor Shmidt. His grand office and adjoining meeting room impressed me with their heavy Victorian furniture and social realist paintings. The latter had been disparaged by my graduate professors in Soviet Studies as cartoon-like, "Girl-Meets-Tractor" art, political propaganda cartoons, but I liked those in the rector's office. They reminded me a little of Edward Hopper's work in the U.S. and Diego Rivera's murals in Mexico. Soon Saunin, Konstantinov and others from Irkutsk faculty and staff I did not know joined us, including one person who introduced himself as the Party member responsible for university instruction.

Shmidt proved an engaging man, like many American college presidents, and put me at ease, asking about my family, work and impressions of Irkutsk. Responding with similar questions of him, I learned he was born near Stalingrad in the Volga river region, but as a child came to Irkutsk with his family in 1941. I concluded he was among half a million ethnic Germans whom Stalin ordered transported east to Siberia at the time of the German invasion of the USSR. Catherine the Great had invited their ancestors to immigrate to southern Russia in the 18th century to modernize its agriculture, and there the Volga Germans had lived until the fall of 1941. When I asked Rector Shmidt if he spoke German, hoping I

could communicate without a translator, he told me he spoke it as a child but not a version I could easily understand. A two-hundred- year- old South German dialect hardly sounded like German to my ears.

Fortunately for me, Vladimir Saunin outlined the program we developed in last night's riotous banquet. He was careful to describe it in tentative terms, always asking me if he had understood correctly, thus winning me a little breathing space. Irkutsk and Maryland would field a dual degree program, he explained, one in which Irkutsk students would take the first two years in their regular Russian university program though with a special emphasis on English. Those who qualified both in their preliminary studies and in English, would take the next two years in English from Maryland faculty coming to Irkutsk. Most of the Maryland courses would be in areas of business, management and economics to enable students to complete a Maryland bachelor's degree with a concentration in business. A fifth year, required by Russian universities at the time, would earn students an Irkutsk degree. I marveled at what we had managed last night, and as my hangover waned, began to feel some ownership and enthusiasm. At the same time, I made the point that our "Rector", my superior, President Ben Massey, would need to approve. Further, I reminded the group that a successful University of Maryland study tour would be a useful confidence-building step for any larger cooperation. We agreed on the study tour and further that Irkutsk University would send a delegation to Tokyo in May to meet more of our staff and work out details of the dual degree program.

The question of the program's cost came up, and I could only explain what courses cost in the military program and note that travel and administrative expenses would increase these figures. The Soviet side seemed taken aback by the dollar figure I suggested. The next day, my final full day in Irkutsk, they responded with some ideas: would we accept iron ore and timber products to cover some of the costs? And could rubles rather than dollars be used for others? I'm sure they sensed my doubt as I imagined asking President Massey in the cold light of his College Park office whether the University would welcome iron ore or timber products in payment. On the plus side, the Soviet team offered housing, domestic vacation travel and other benefits for any Maryland faculty we sent. The Soviet colleagues held a final banquet to discuss these questions, and I insisted on drinking more mineral water than vodka for most of the toasts. The next morning, Saunin and Konstantinov put me on the flight to Khabarovsk where I'd meet the train to Vladivostok.

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I flew into Khabarovsk, the closest airport to Vladivostok open to foreigners. I'd have to travel the last leg by train. Arriving at Khabarovsk's railroad station, I was startled by the waiting crowds, some sleeping in blanket rolls, others gathered around small open fires or camping stoves on the platforms. The station's clocks read 9:05 a.m. although my watch (and the sun) insisted it was 4:05 p.m. The Trans-Siberian Express would take me to Vladivostok on its final leg from Moscow. It was four hours late. Given this train's 5400 mile, eight-day winter odyssey across eastern Russia and Siberia, four hours behind schedule seemed insignificant.

I waited, wishing I had warmer clothes and a fur hat like most others in the station. The miserable cold reminded me again of the words of my travel-writing hero, Paul Theroux, who proclaimed a journey's

worst moments produce the best travel stories. *The Great Railway Bazaar,* 1975, recounted his epic train journeys from London, across the Middle East and South Asia to Japan and back on the Trans - Siberian, encompassing many detours, breakdowns and much adversity. At one point on the Trans-Siberian he describes the endless bleak scenery and the depressing, crowded, stinking coaches, drawing the conclusion that people on the train drank so much because they had nothing else to do: "They drank all the time and they drank everything—cognac that tasted like hair tonic, sour watery beer, red wine indistinguishable from cough syrup…. Passing bottles like bums in a doorway."

I also remembered his book reported the entire Trans- Siberian over its seven time zones operated on Moscow time. That, of course, explained the mystery of Khabarovsk's station clocks. They too were on Moscow time.

Clambering aboard the big, wide-gauge train, a strong mixture of human sweat, vodka and cigarette smoke assaulted my nose. Occasionally this poignant blend gave way to the vinegary odor of a just-opened pickle jar. With Theroux's book in mind, the first three scents were not unexpected in a train with few facilities for washing and where nearly everyone smoked and drank. The source of the fourth aroma became apparent as I made my way to a vacant seat: everyone was eating home-made pickled vegetables. Passengers strolled around the train in pajamas, some wearing bathrobes, others not, a very informal, we-are-all-in-this-together atmosphere. Coal stoves at each end of the cars heated them and provided all the hot water needed for tea.

Fortunately, I met a couple of English speakers who explained things to me once they got over their surprise at my American citizenship. "Even Soviet citizens can't go to Vladivostok without an official government or Navy purpose, and a visa in their internal passports," one told me. I explained my academic business to them, and that I had indeed been officially invited, but they didn't find this story very credible.

When we reached Vladivostok station the next morning the conductors shouted out some Russian farewells, I thought. My new friends translated their words, and I used them to open travel stories I later wrote about the journey and Vladivostok. These sold more widely than anything I had ever written, not so much for their stirring prose but because I was one of the first Americans allowed into this city. Here's how *The Chicago Tribune* version of the story started: "Vladivostok, USSR—When the Trans-Siberian Express from Moscow pulls into Vladivostok…conductors call out to passengers scrambling off the train: "Take your time, Ladies and Gentlemen, you have reached the end of the world." *The Pacific Stars and Stripes* headed their weekend travel pages with the same version:

Vladivostok

Closed to visitors for generations, this remote port city is beginning to open its doors to tourists

Editor's note: The author of this article is director of the University of Maryland's Asian Division. The school recently sponsored a study tour to Vladivostok.

By Julian Jones
Special to Pacific Sunday

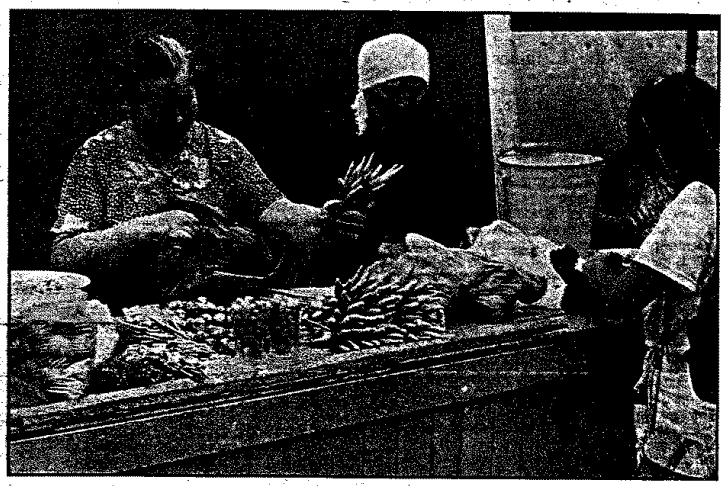
When the Trans-Siberian express from Moscow pulls into Vladivostok after its more than 6,000 mile journey east to the Pacific, conductors traditionally call out to passengers scrambling off the train: "Take your time ladies and gentlemen, you have reached the end of the world."

Visitors who arrive in Vladivostok by air or sea will have the same feeling. The city has been closed to outsiders for generations, not only to foreign travelers but to most Russians as well. With the coming of perestroika, however, it is now beginning to open to foreign trade, culture and tourism.

Citizens of Vladivostok trace the opening of the city to a 1986 speech given here by Mikhail Gorbachev in which he asked Vladivostok to join the dynamic forces shaping the Pacific Rim. It took Gorbachev's full authority to begin to change the mind of this Navy town, home of the Soviet Far East Fleet, and it took Boris Yeltsin's charisma to fully open the city following his August 1990 visit. For generations the Soviet Navy had called the shots, and the Navy looked askance at visitors.

Recently, Soviet tourists have flocked here, and plans are afoot to receive foreign visitors who are expected to arrive in ever larger numbers in 1991. The University of Maryland sent a vanguard of 40 U.S. students and faculty on a first-ever study tour to Vladivostok in July 1990, and U.S. Navy ships visited the port in September.

Vladivostok is working feverishly to prepare for foreign tourism. Its airport has been renovated, and its old ferry port is being rebuilt by an Italian crew. The city's two barely adequate hotels are also undergoing renovation and a new Intourist hotel is going up with Indian engineering help.



U.S. Navy, Lindsey

Private street vendors in Vladivostok sell their goods.

postcards for sale at the usual places such as hotels, restaurants and museums. After much searching, one bookstore turned up that carried postcards of Lenin in various heroic poses. Second, these visitors never saw a single word in a foreign language during the five days of their stay. Third, visitors are unlikely to find restaurants serving food to international coffee-shop standards. At the showpiece North Korean restaurant, there was no rice, no kimchi and no beer. Someone, however, has arranged for a vast oversupply of cucumbers and you will have them each day at all three meals.

The city has one of the most striking natural settings in the world, one which rivals San Francisco, Hong Kong, Sydney or Nagasaki. It is built on a hilly peninsula which sticks out like a chubby finger into Peter the Great Bay. The views of near and distant hills, of the ships in port and those moving in and out, are spectacular — and you can see the whole panorama from a promontory called Eagle's Nest. It is worth the taxi trip to return there at night to witness the great expanse of twinkling lights.

Vladivostok's geography was a key to its founding in 1860 when control of the surrounding area passed from

belong to another world, eight time zones away.

People in Vladivostok compare to European Russians as American Westerners do to those who live on the Eastern seaboard. In both cases, nineteenth century pioneers moved into trackless land held by tribal peoples. They battled great distances and unforgiving climate, crossing continents to isolated destinations at the ends of their respective worlds.

Both cultures celebrate their adventurers. Vladivostok's founder, Count Muravev, is the prototype military officer operating on his own too far from his home base to be controlled. The Russian East experienced the same shortage of women on its frontier as did the American West. As late as 1937, the Soviets were still trying to attract women to the Far East to fill the gender void. Adroit publicity that year brought out 70,000 female volunteers.

Visitors will not lack for contact in this city if they wish it. Many residents are busily learning English and are eager to try their skills on foreigners.

taxi driver, a man so large he could barely

The business side of the visit is easily told because it largely repeated the Irkutsk visit except that my meetings started at the top this time with Far Eastern State University (FESU) rector (president), Professor Vladimir Kurilov. He began our talks by telling me that my visit would have been unthinkable only a few months before, but President Gorbachev's insistence that the city join the dynamic forces shaping the Pacific Rim began the change, and he, Kurilov, wished to bring the new age to his University. He spoke as if he knew all about the dual degree program laid out in Irkutsk. It was clear he and Rector Shmidt had discussed it. When I asked him for more detail on why he saw such a program important, he explained that the University's primary goal during this period of change was "to educate a free, undogmatic individual capable of creative activity, self-development and global thinking." We reached quick agreement that FESU would be part of the dual degree program and, as a confidence-building step, would do everything possible to persuade "Moscow" to agree to bringing U.S. military students to Vladivostok during a summer 1990 study tour. I noticed that every issue I raised about either the dual degree program or the study tour was met with *nyet problem* (no problem) from Rector Kurilov. He was very eager for this contact.

The rest of the visit unfolded around tourism and banquets. The banquets resembled those in Irkutsk with two exceptions: first, I had learned my lesson and kept track of the vodka drunk in toasts, and, second, the hosts' restaurant selection for the customary farewell banquet veered seriously off track. To be sure, they went out of their way to choose the best restaurant in town. They were confident I would like the brand new North Korean dining spot, but alas, the service was terrible and the food a pale imitation of South Korea's great cuisine. Hard to believe, the restaurant ran out of rice.

As for the sightseeing, it started with Intourist guides learning the ropes, beginners in the guide world but eager to master their craft in anticipation of the city's opening. None spoke English, so students at FESU translated for me. The guides started with the magnificent physical layout of the city, whose hills and bay vistas reminded me of Hong Kong or San Francisco. But beyond that they had no idea what a foreigner might want to see. At one point we came across a group of people jumping into holes they had cut in the harbor ice and cheering each other on. I wanted to talk with them, find out what this was all about, but the guides saw it as a distraction from the boring Soviet-era buildings they wanted to show me. When we drove by the magnificent Tsarist-era railroad station finished in 1916 to receive the first trains from Moscow, I wanted to stop and get a picture. "Why" one guide asked, "it's old and will soon be torn down." Insisting on taking a picture of this impressive structure, I persuaded them to stop. As I was composing the picture, an elderly woman in a head scarf came up to me, pointed and started yelling "Spion!" Others joined her and the guides had to rescue me from a suspicious knot of people who thought I was a spy. Otherwise why would I be taking pictures of an old railway station?

OK, I thought, if taking pictures is risky, I'll buy some postcards. But there were none. We went to bookstores, a department store and two hotel lobbies and found nothing. Finally, a guide turned up some postcards at a museum kiosk but not of the city, only works of art and an idealized portrait of Lenin. A city without postcards sits very much on the frontier of tourism.

Despite the experience at the rail station, most people I met were outgoing, friendly and curious. I connected with Soviet students for the first time, both as guides and in FESU classes I visited. In one class a student asked me point blank if I found the Soviet Union under Gorbachev "absurd." Others were equally direct, often critical, and I felt a need to hide my feelings to keep the students and myself out of trouble.

Another surprising aspect of Vladivostok was the pale Slavic skin and blond hair of many inhabitants of this city, deep in northwest Asia, a few miles from North Korea and China and just across the Sea of Japan from that country.

I was seen off at the rail station on my way back to Japan by a group of FESU officials and student guides, determined to prevent any further charges of spying. The farewells were touching, and each person brought a little gift. I remembered them and others I had met when I wrote a few words to conclude the Vladivostok article: "*The city stands on a travel frontier….That means uncertain plumbing, mediocre meals, near empty shops and no post cards, but also excitement of discovery, unusual experiences and above all human contact with people eager to meet the world after seventy years of isolation."*

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The Russian programs survived the end of the Soviet Union, a change from face-to-face to online classes and the vicissitudes of Russian-U.S. relations. Irkutsk State University built a noted Russian- American Management Institute, and both Russian programs welcomed UMGC President Javier Miyares and other senior officials over the years. I felt privileged returning to Vladivostok in 2017 to award degrees and celebrate the program's 25th anniversary. Professor Kurilov, now dean of his university's law school, met me for lunch, and we reminisced over our meeting more than a quarter century earlier. His two little daughters from that time were now both married to Americans and lived in Seattle. We enjoyed an excellent Italian lunch with a wonderful view of Peter the Great Bay and the city of Vladivostok.

Two years later, University of Maryland University College changed its name to University of Maryland Global Campus. The new name encompassed both its worldwide military programs and the new international connections Joe Arden and I imagined so many years earlier.