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Author(s): Olga Kuznetsova: ''It Was Silly to Keep Us in the Background'']

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FULL TEXT OF ARTICLE:

1. [Article by Olga Kuznetsova: ''It Was Silly to Keep Us in the Background'']
2. [Text] Passing through the streets of St. Petersburg, we scarcely pay attention to many institutions whose entryways have no plaques or signs explaining what department is located there. One such anonymous building is located on Vasilyevskiy island, not far from the Harbor. But just recently a sign was hung up: NINGI MO RF, which means Scientific-Research Navigational-Hydrographic Institute of the Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation.
3. I was the first newspaper person to cross the threshold of this institute, which on the inside is more reminiscent of a military unit than a scientific research institute.
4. Practically all national research in the field of navigation and hydrography has been concentrated here for dozens of years, on the corner of Bolshoy Prospekt and the Kozhevennaya Line. Here they developed and improved the onboard apparatus now in use (and not only by the military) without which not a single modern vessel would brave the open sea, and also the means for navigational equipment of sea routes and ports, and hydrographic and hydrometeorological equipment. It was within these walls that a system was developed for determining the location of ships and other objects using artificial satellites. Even UFO-ology was within the field of research of the institute, and for many years they accumulated a lot of material here in this field. An enormous intellectual potential is concentrated at the institute: dozens of specialists have been awarded scientific degrees, and it has its own doctoral council.
5. It is a secret to no one that such scientific institutes,

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subordinate to the military department, are not going through the best of times now. Many institutes have had their financing cut, and the threat of closure looms. This has also affected NINGI. But finally it became clear to its leadership that if the institute was to survive, it had to emerge from the underground, since not only the military requires navigational equipment. But in the words of the deputy chief of NINGI, Captain 1st Rank Sergey Alekseyev, the traditional curtain of secrecy surrounding the institute did not allow it to openly use its scientific potential and rich data bank, the results of all national hydrographic expeditions since the twenties. According to existing instructions, scientists of the institute could not contact colleagues from other scientific institutions, and frequently there was duplication of research into the identical areas by civilians and the military. "It was silly to keep us in the background," Sergey Alekseyev believes.

6. But the process of conversion, part of which was liberation from the fetters of excessive secrecy, which recently has seemed to be simply an anachronism, has also touched NINGI. A year ago the decision was made to hold a scientific and technical conference at the institute, to which all interested parties could be invited, chiefly civilian organizations. And this conference "The Modern Status and Problems of Naval and Air Navigation" was a success. Three hundred specialists, representing the major scientific organs and industrial facilities of Russian, the CIS countries and the Baltics countries, for three days they shared their experience and became acquainted with the latest developments, for which an exhibition of new technical equipment was arranged.

7. Since the development of navigational equipment is a very science-intensive task, requiring great financial expenditures, commercial organizations were also invited to the conference. One of them, "Tranzas marin," has already concluded a contract with NINGI.

8. Now the institute is faced with a global task: creation of a federal radio-navigation plane for Russia which combines all information on navigation, marine as well as air and ground navigation. One hopes that by uniting its efforts with other civilian and military institutes, NINGI will successfully accomplish this task.