



Russian Relations

By Glenn Oakley

Geologists, business profs and scholars forge BSU partnerships in former Soviet Union

Geologists Claude Spinoso and Walter Snyder work with Russian colleagues, envisioning a world where all countries are as one.

They're looking backward, not forward — back in time 285 million years when the world's continents converged to create Pangaea. Their research into the beginning of the Permian period, when the supercontinent Pangaea was formed, has established a scientific bridge between Moscow/St. Petersburg and Boise.

Last summer the two BSU geoscientists worked with Russian geologists in the southern Ural Mountains of Kazakhstan. In August, Vladimir Davydov of the St. Petersburg All Russian Research Institute joined Spinoso and Snyder for field research in Nevada. In February, Russian immigrant Paul Belasky will take a year's residence at BSU as a post-doctoral researcher. And Spinoso and Snyder will return to study and collect the rocks of the southern Russian Urals, north of Kazakhstan, next summer.

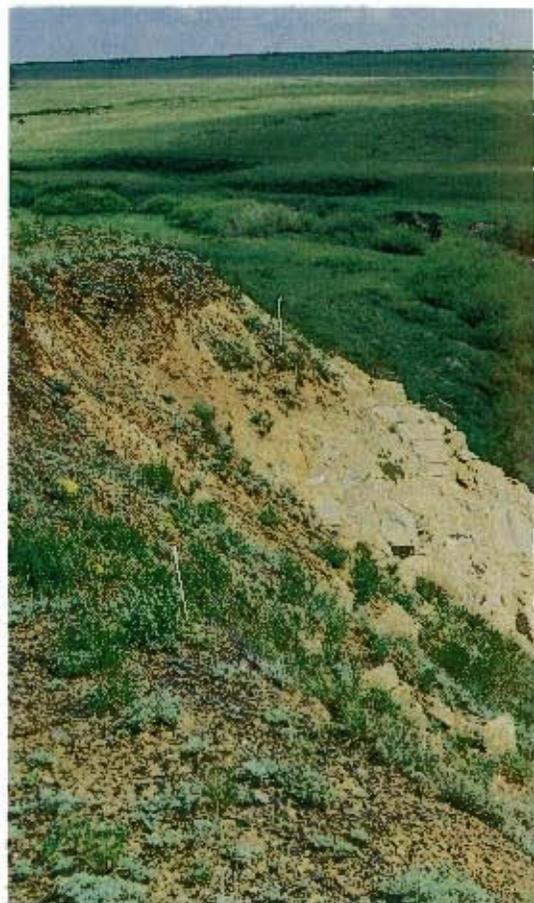
All this work is a continuation of the geological sleuthing Spinoso and Snyder have pursued since 1987, from Nevada to China and Siberia. They are using clues in the rock to understand what hap-

pened when all continents of the world collided to form Pangaea.

The geologists began their study of Pangaea in the basin and range mountains

of Nevada. But it is the Ural Mountains of southern Russia and the republic of Kazakhstan that are the "keystone part of the world for understanding the Permian," says Snyder. It was here in 1846 that the Permian period was identified and named by British gentleman-geologist Roderick Murchison after the town of Perm. As such it has become the "type section" for the Permian — the standard by which the Permian rocks throughout the rest of the world are studied and understood.

Yet the Urals were closed by the Soviet government to foreigners until 1991, largely because of atomic testing conducted there. And while Soviet geologists continued to work in the Urals, they were frequently constrained by geological dogma that became the official — if outdated — perspective, says Snyder. Thus, although it is widely known that the Urals were created by thrust faults when the continents collided, Soviet geologists did not officially believe in the concept of thrust faults. "Much of their work, while excellent, needs to be updated and revised," says Snyder.



The BSU/Russian geology field camp in Kazakhstan was situated along the Ural Mountains, flanked by the Russian steppe. Left, Tatyana Leonova, BSU researcher Dora Gallegos and Claude Spinoso.





Snyder and Spinosa are perhaps the perfect pair to conduct this work because their specialties complement each other. Spinosa is a paleontologist, specializing in ammonoids and conodonts of the Permian period. Snyder is a stratigrapher, specializing in the structure and sequencing of sedimentary rock layers — reading the story of upheavals and erosion, tracking the paths of rivers that have been dried and buried for millions of years.

The fossils reveal the age of the rock layers, since the creatures entombed evolve over time. The type of fossilized creatures also reveal something of the environment since certain animals inhabit deep water, while others inhabit shallow estuaries, for example.

“What we’ve been able to do is combine stratigraphy and structure with palaeontol-

ogy and paleobiology to create a coalition that is uncommon,” says Snyder, noting that most specialists tend to work alone.

Most recently the duo has been unraveling the sequence of sea-level changes that occurred along the coast of Pangaea.

Spinosa and Snyder have determined that along the Pangaea coastline, mountain formation caused by the “head-on” collision of continents masked sea level changes caused by glacial fluctuations.

This, as it turns out, has led to the most significant discovery of their work so far, says Spinosa, because it refutes a widely-accepted formula for dating rocks: the “Exxon sea level curves.” This is a graph which assigns ages to rock based on global sea level changes attributed to glacial contraction and expansion. Oil geologists use the Exxon sea level curves to help them

locate oil, which is generally associated with distinct ages of rock strata.

Says Snyder, “People want to use this sea level curve in place of paleontology to date rocks.” But according to field data gathered and analyzed by Snyder and Spinosa, the Exxon curve, at least for the Permian, simply is wrong. “Where they have put the boundaries [between ages or rock] are incorrect. They do not coincide with the biological boundaries (indicated by the fossils),” he says.

While oil is not the focus of their research, their work has significant implications for its exploration. Kazakhstan is one of the world’s hot spots for oil exploration, according to oil industry journals *AAPG Explorer* and *Oil and Gas Journal*. And the geology they are studying “is the surface expression of the subsurface geology in the petroleum producing regions to the southwest,” says Snyder. Adds Spinosa, “We’re not over there trying to sell ourselves as oil people. But what we are finding out is critical to them.”

When they are conducting field research, Spinosa and Snyder rely on their Russian colleagues to handle the bewildering logistics of travel in remote Russia and Kazakhstan.

“Vladimir [Davydov] is the prime organizer of the whole field operation,” notes Spinosa, arranging everything from the tents and cooking to the drivers.

Last season they set up a row of tents on the grassy Kazakhstan steppe, dug a root cellar for storing potatoes and eggs and traveled from site to site in an eight-wheeled military truck. In villages that have changed little since Murchison passed through about 150 years ago, they bought chickens, cheese and milk.

In many regards the BSU researchers are following in the steps of Murchison: foreign geologists bringing expertise to a long-closed continent. While Murchison basically established the fact that there was a distinct geologic period called the Permian, he did not precisely define its boundary. Today, that boundary still has not been calibrated.

Spinosa and Snyder, with their Russian colleagues, are now establishing that global time scale.

THE BUSINESS OF COMRADESHIP

By Bob Evancho

Blagoveshchensk. Now try saying *that* three times real fast. Even one stab at it would be a mouthful for most Americans, but not Gundars Kaupins and Alan Frankle.

That's because the two BSU business professors have been to that city, located in the Far East portion of the former Soviet Union.

Hard by Asia's Amur River, Blagoveshchensk is the home of the Russian American School of Business Administration (RASBA), an institution that has established ties with business schools in

America's Pacific Northwest. It was through such an arrangement that Kaupins and Frankle were able to travel to Blagoveshchensk last year as guest lecturers with RASBA's executive MBA certificate program. Sponsored by Portland State University, Frankle journeyed to the Amur region in January and September while Kaupins lectured there in March. Each trip was two weeks long. (BSU accounting professor Zeke Sarikas also taught management accounting at RASBA last June, but was unavailable for this article.)

For Frankle, chair of Boise State's marketing and finance department, teaching in the former Soviet Union is a noteworthy addition to his list of scholarly trips abroad. For management professor

Kaupins, a visit to Russia hits closer to home. His parents came from Latvia and most of his relatives still live in the former Soviet republic.

In fact, before his trip to Blagoveshchensk, Kaupins had traveled to his homeland three times to attend conferences, meet with University of Latvia administrators and government officials, and visit relatives. In March he will return to Latvia to continue his research on the compensation system there. "Hey, it's relatively cheap," he says with a laugh. "I already have a place to stay."

With Latvia and the Amur region occupying opposite corners of the Russian landmass, Kaupins' experiences in the former Soviet Union have been vastly cross-sectional—a perspective he views as most advantageous. In his effort to share his insight with his students at BSU, Kaupins has had the benefit of interacting with a broad array of Russian students, teachers and citizens. Through his relatives and others, Kaupins has developed an understanding of how their ideological thread is woven throughout the continent—despite the demise of the U.S.S.R. He uses the prevailing Russian attitude toward capitalism as "immoral" as an example.

"My [BSU] students cannot imagine how capitalism can be considered immoral," Kaupins says. "Now I'm not giving any praise to communism whatsoever, but from [the Russian] perspective, there are a lot of problems with capitalism, such as crime, guns and stealing. ... To think of yourself as an individual instead of collectively leads to these problems associated with capitalism. And to think of yourself as an individual is not morally right."

"This kind of thinking is an eye-opener to my BSU students. They

consider it a shocking new philosophy. But if you stay in Boise and are not exposed to these things, it's hard to imagine that someone would support socialism. But there are a lot of people out there who do—the majority of the world."

Like his colleague, Frankle believes his increasingly international interests have the potential to reach beyond the formalities of education.

"I think trips like the one I took help make our business school a key player in the state economy," he says. "As a result of this trip, not only can we inform Idaho businesses how Russian businessmen think, we can tell Russians how American businesses operate and what American businesses expect—how to establish cash flow, how to have a third party involved in business deals,

and how to present a business plan. These are a few of the areas where Russian businesses need considerable improvement."

Frankle sees his role as a go-between for potential Russian-Idaho trade relations as a helping hand in Idaho's growing involvement in world commerce. "Going offshore to teach and work with Russian businessmen and then coming back here can help bring these parties closer together," he says, "and eventually that could make them more comfortable when they negotiate with each other."

Frankle, who taught at RASBA's campus in Khabarovsk in addition to Blagoveshchensk, says it's all part of developing understanding and tolerance of different cultures.

"We all don't see things the same way," he says. "You need to be able to understand other people and develop a sense of multinationalism and multicultural communication. In a global environment, there is more than just a language barrier to deal with. Business people need to learn how to be open and tolerant of cultural differences too."

Sound advice for business students with international interests. □



Gundars Kaupins outside a trade union building in Blagoveshchensk, Russia.

DEAN DEVELOPS POLITICAL PIPELINE

By Bob Evancho

Trying to figure out the goings-on in the former Soviet Union can be confusing. But Bob Sims has a solution: He goes right to the source—or brings it here.

Sims, dean of Boise State's College of Social Sciences and Public Affairs, is affiliated with a program that involves an exchange of Russian and American scholars, government officials and business leaders. The exchange has been taking place for more than a decade, and Sims became involved in the early 1990s as a result of his college's growing interest in foreign affairs and Russian studies.

And from that association he has helped to build a pipeline between BSU and some of Russia's top scholars and political experts.

In 1991 and again last year Sims and others traveled to the former Soviet Union under the auspices of the Portland-based U.S.-Soviet Trans Pacific Conference as the guests of the U.S.A.-Canada Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences, a Moscow-based think tank that was started in the late 1960s.

Sims returned the favor in 1992 as BSU hosted several members of the institute—considered among Russia's top scholars—for a variety of seminars and presentations sponsored by the university's Frank Church Conference on Public Affairs.

In mid-April another Frank Church Conference will be held on the BSU campus with many of the same Russian scholars returning at Sims' invitation.

"I am certain that Russia is going to continue to be a major power, and this exchange gives us a chance to interact with these people and ask them questions we are interested in," says Sims, "and given the need to continue to internationalize our curriculum at Boise State, I think maintaining a relationship with Russia and Russian scholars is important for our students and faculty."

The Russian contingent coming to Boise will again be led by Georgi Arbatov, founder and director of the U.S.A.-Canada Institute. Before the collapse of the U.S.S.R., Arbatov served as an adviser to Russian President Boris Yeltsin and every Soviet leader since Leonid Brezhnev. He was among those who advised Mikhail Gorbachev to abandon communism and establish a market economy. Other scholars at the institute, such as Andrei Kortunov and Viktor Kremenyk, appear frequently to comment on Russian politics for U.S. television news programs.

"In my view the institute was an important catalyst for reform in the former Soviet Union," comments Sims. "Now that Russia is in transition, the institute is no longer subsidized by the government

and its members are no longer government employees. They receive some government funding, but not much. Because of this transition, the institute members have had to be more entrepreneurial. But the institute still continues to play an important role in Russian policy."

Sims' fellow travelers to the Soviet Union last summer included Micron co-founder Ward Parkinson and Boise restaurateur Pug Ostling. The 10-person delegation first went to Moscow, where it met with government and business officials, including one of Yeltsin's top deputies in the executive branch. The group also toured parts of Moscow, visited the Kremlin and attended cultural events.

Sims then journeyed to the Siberian city of Krasnoyarsk, an intriguing location, he says. "Until about 2 1/2 years ago it was really a forbidden city because of its military installations," he explains. "Even under glasnost it was very difficult for Westerners to get there

because of its strategic importance to the Soviets. It was a weapons manufacturing center and it was very important to their antiballistic missile complex."

A city of about 1 million people, Krasnoyarsk also has two universities. While there, Sims met with administrators of both institutions to discuss the potential of establishing an exchange of faculty and students. But because of Russia's current internal strife, those plans are on hold. And like most other systems in the former Soviet Union, Sims points out that the higher education system there is at a crossroads.

"I found them to be extremely naive about what is facing them," he says of the officials of the two schools. "Before the transition began, there was no tuition in the Soviet higher education system, but that clearly has to change. They have a major crisis in funding.

"Generally, the Russian people are finding out that they have to be entrepreneurial in a market economy, and the same kinds of things are going to have to happen in higher education. [School officials] are going to have to look to industry to help them with tuition systems and somehow merge that with some degree of state support. But right now they are in terrible shape and starting from scratch financially."

Sims will step down as Social Sciences and Public Affairs dean this summer and return to BSU's history department. But he hopes the university will maintain its Russian pipeline.

"I would like to continue being part of this exchange, and when my successor comes on, I hope [BSU] maintains an interest in the program," he says. "I think it's important that we stay up to date and receive accurate information about what's going on in Russia." □



BSU's Russian connection has brought scholars to Boise.

PHOTO BY KYLE A. HUGHES