

A HIGH HONOR AWARDED TO PERMAFROST SCIENTISTS FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO RUSSIAN-GERMAN COOPERATION IN ARCTIC RESEARCH

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Dr. Mikhail Nikolaevich Grigoriev, Deputy Director of the Melnikov Permafrost Institute, Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences (MPI SB RAS), Yakutsk, Russia and Prof. Hans-Wolfgang Hubberten, former director of the Alfred Wegener Institute (AWI) Research Unit Potsdam, Helmholtz Centre for Polar and Marine Research (Potsdam, Germany) were awarded the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany in recognition of their outstanding contributions to the development of Russian–German cooperation in Arctic research. The ceremony of bestowal took place in the MPI's conference hall in Yakutsk on October 6, 2021.

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The international Russian–German research expedition “Lena” continues from spring to autumn every year in the Arctic zone of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) already during 23 years (Fig. 1).

The team of scientists, including geomorphologists, paleogeographers, permafrost scientists, geophysicists, hydrologists, zoologists, botanists, soil scientists, and representatives of other fields of science annually conduct research there within the

framework of the Russian–German scientific cooperation under the umbrella of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the Russian Ministry of Science and Education.

The implementation of this comprehensive project promotes international scientific exchange and largely contributes to global Arctic research. The obtained results are the necessary data and information that serve as the basis for hundreds of articles and



Fig. 1. Participants of the International Symposium “20 years of Russian-German Expeditions LENA”. October 17–19, 2018, St. Petersburg.



Fig. 2. M.N. Grigoriev and H.-W. Hubberten (*right*), the coordinators of the Russian–German Lena research expeditions carrying out the study of ice-rich shores dynamics. Oyagossky Yar, the Dmitry Laptev Strait coast, 2001.

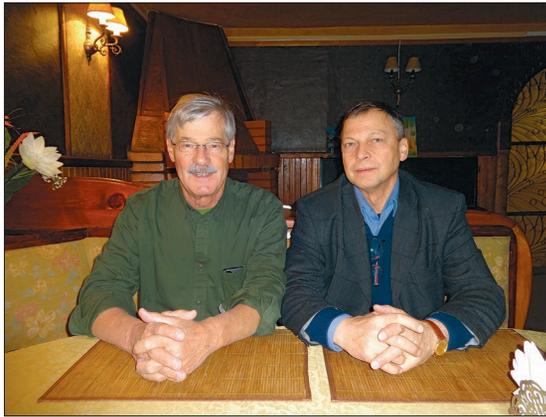


Fig. 3. M.N. Grigoriev (*right*) and H.-W. Hubberten at the International Conference “Cryology of the Earth: 21st Century”. 2013, Pushchino, Moscow region.



Fig. 4. The Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Award List of the President of Germany.



Fig. 5. M.N. Grigoriev (*right*) after being awarded the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany. The person to the left is the Consul General of the Federal Republic of Germany in the Siberian and Far Eastern Federal Districts, Bernd Finke.



Fig. 6. Presentation of the Order to Prof. Hans-Wolfgang Hubberten by Dr. Manja Schüle, Brandenburg Minister for Science, Research and Culture. November 29, 2021, Potsdam (Germany).

dozens of monographs elaborating on the present state and providing insights into future effect of climate changes on the sensitive ecosystems of the Arctic. The scientific and logistical base of the Lena expedition located on Samoylov Island has become one of the best state-of-the-art Arctic research stations in the world.

In the context of global climate change, with the impact on humans becoming increasingly topical, the worldwide recognition and significance of the Lena expeditions have made it unique in many aspects. Joint comprehensive research work in the Arctic zone of Yakutia touches on important issues related to the implications of climate change, thereby allowing the most important inferences about the current state of the Arctic environment and its development. The achievements in the Russian–German scientific partnership have created a solid foundation for future projects demonstrating a good example of scientific collaboration (Fig. 2).

The friendly relationships between Russian and German scientists definitely have played a key role in the successful activities of the Lena research expeditions. Besides, behind it stands a huge organizational and financial support, which was provided (especially at the initial stage) by the Alfred Wegener Institute for Polar and Marine Research, Germany, and researchers from German universities, e.g. from Hamburg, Cologne, Potsdam and other cities.

Equally important were the efforts of management and staff of the Melnikov Permafrost Institute, SB RAS, and from other institutions, among them the Ammosov North-Eastern Federal University, Yakutsk; the Arctic and Antarctic Research Institute (AARI), St. Petersburg; and many other Russian partners, including the Trofimuk Institute of Petroleum Geology and Geophysics SB RAS, Novosibirsk actively involved in the renovation of the research station at Samoylov Island.

Mikhail Nikolaevich Grigoriev, Dr. Sc. in Geography, Deputy Director of the Melnikov Permafrost Institute SB RAS (Russia, Yakutsk) and Professor Hans-Wolfgang Hubberten, former director of the Alfred Wegener Institute (AWI) Research Unit Potsdam, Helmholtz Centre for Polar and Marine Research (Potsdam, Germany) were awarded the highest award – the Order of Merit for the Federal Republic of Germany – for their outstanding contribution to the development of Russian-German scientific collaboration in the study of the Arctic zone (Figs. 3 and 4).

The award ceremony took place on October 6, 2021 in Yakutsk in the assembly hall of the Melnikov Permafrost Institute.

Consul General of the Federal Republic of Germany in the Siberian and Far Eastern Federal Districts, Mr. Bernd Finke visited Yakutsk to attend the ceremony (Fig. 5).

In his welcoming speech, he noted that the awarding decree was signed by Germany's President Frank-Walter Steinmeier a year ago (September 3, 2020); however, due to the pandemic and related restrictions, the ceremony had to be postponed. "*In the context of the presently complicated international situation, such examples of effective and successful cooperation between our countries are of particular importance*", Mr. Finke said.

He emphasized the great contribution made by M.N. Grigoriev and H.-W. Hubberten over the past 30 years to the development of joint scientific projects in the Arctic and, in particular, to the Russian-German expedition "Lena" activities, as well as to the activities involving international scientific collectives in the Arctic research at the Samoylov Island Research Station.

M.N. Grigoriev in his speech and H.-W. Hubberten in his letter noted that "*...this award effectively relates to all members of the large, strongly-tied team of permafrost-scientists participating in the research*".

The ceremony of the presentation of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany to Prof. Hans-Wolfgang Hubberten by Dr. Manja Schüle, Brandenburg Minister for Science, Research and Culture took place in Potsdam (Germany) on November 29, 2021 (Fig. 6).

In his congratulation letter, M.N. Grigoriev noted: "*Dear Hans, I am happy to have been acquainted with you, since you came to Yakutsk 25 years ago to the Permafrost Institute together with Jörn Thiede and Heidi Kassens to launch the Laptev Sea System research project. I've been in touch with you ever since, through common work, joint research into the Siberian and Arctic permafrost, and long-lasting friendship. You have been my best partner and companion, always willing to lend a helping hand*".

The long-term Russian-German research expedition "Lena" plans for 2022 and the years to come to conduct research by several field teams in the Lena Delta and on the adjacent Laptev Sea coast using the Samoylov Island Research Station both as a logistic base and study area. The research lines will include: Late Pleistocene ice complex; coastal processes; thermokarst and thermal erosional processes dynamics; mechanisms of talik formation and subaqueous permafrost degradation; hydrological processes; parameters of permafrost-affected soils, etc.

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