

BY THE HYDROGRAPHER OF THE RUSSIAN FED.

As it Is

On 13 October 2002 the Russian Navy Hydrographic Service celebrated its 175th anniversary. This article covers the history of the creation of the Russian Hydrographic Service and the major milestones in its development since the beginning of the XVIII century.

Among the reforms initiated at the end of the 17th century by Tsar Peter I was the creation of the State Navy and the beginning of regular hydrographic surveys. In the early 18th century hydrographic surveys were carried out in the Caspian and Baltic Seas, two Kamchatka expeditions were arranged, and work in the Arctic Ocean was initiated. Further significant discoveries and hydrographic investigations are connected with the names of the outstanding Russian mariners G. A. Sarychev, I. F. Kruzenshtern, Yu. F. Lisyanskiy, V. M. Golovnin, F. F. Bellinsgauzen, M. P. Lazarev and many other Russian naval officers. On 13 October 1827, within the structure of the newly created Main Naval Headquarters, the Hydrographer-General's Department was established. The history of the Russian Navy Hydrographic Service can be traced back to that date. Vice Admiral G. A. Sarychev, an experienced hydrographer, was appointed the first chief of the Department.

In the early 20th century the necessity to combine the efforts of hydrographers all over the world to address various tasks of ensuring the safety of navigation was well perceived. In compliance with the decision of the XIth International Congress of Navigation, an International Maritime Conference was held in the Head Hydrographic Department of Russia in March 1912. One of the Conference resolutions stated: "It is desirable that the Conference on the safety of navigation should become a Permanent International Institution".

The First World War and the Russian Revolution prevented Russian hydrography from direct participation in the creation of the IHB. In 1923 the USSR Head Hydrographic Department was established. The deep interest of the Government in the needs of the Navy ensured considerable intensification of hydrographic activity; by 1940 the volume of hydrographic work had increased by 15 times as compared to 1913. However, in 1941 Germany attacked the Soviet Union and all the efforts of hydrographers were concentrated on the support of combat operations. After the War, a large number of vessels were built and tools and equipment were produced at a new technical level. These ensured a sharp increase of hydrographic surveys. By 1965 a complete collection of nautical charts for national waters had been created. In 1977 the USSR Government acceded to the Convention on the IHO. At that time our Hydrographic Service was the largest in the world hydrographic fleet and made the maximal number of surveys in various parts of the World Ocean.

In the early 1990s, after disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Hydrographic Service of the Navy encountered hardships, nevertheless it pursued development. Thus, the first hydrographic vessel of the SIBIRYAKOV type was put into operation; the bathymetric chart of the Arctic Ocean was compiled and published; 2,008 nautical charts were digitised in the internal format and 137 charts were converted into the S-57 format. Our coming plans include expansion of the volume of surveys, completion of the digital chart database and full conversion of digital charts to the S-57 standard. The competence and expertise of our hydrographers will ensure the accomplishment of the tasks assigned to us.