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## Priorities in a Changing Scientific World

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# LIQUID CRYSTALS

# Today

Vol. 2. No. 1 March 1992

Newsletter of the International Liquid Crystal Society

## Priorities in a Changing Scientific World

**The far-reaching political reorganisation that is taking place in states of the former USSR will have many long-term consequences for the world**, but the drama played out during one week last August will become a key point of future world histories. For most of us, dramatic events are to be read about in the newspapers or watched on TV, brought to us by a well-organised but detached press and media network. Momentous happenings take on a new perspective when we are personally involved, or hear the first-hand accounts of those caught up in such events.

It was perhaps auspicious that the *final* Liquid Crystal Conference of Socialist Countries in Vilnius last year should have been scheduled for the week that saw the abortive coup in Moscow. The report of this conference by Waclaw Witko in this issue of *Liquid Crystals Today* gives a dramatic account of the events in Moscow as viewed from Lithuania. The conference organisers and participants deserve our acclaim and respect for pursuing the serious business of liquid crystal science during such uncertain times, and we should be stimulated by the observation that science and scholarship will prevail in spite of political and economic upheaval.

Our international scientific community provides a network through which information is exchanged, largely uncensored, which can provide a balance to the political excesses in many parts of the world. The new situation in the former Socialist Republics presents scientists everywhere with a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge is to preserve the continuity of scientific success in those countries, and the opportunity is to form even closer links with colleagues now struggling with vanishing resources for research and uncertain futures.

An item in this issue of *Liquid Crystals Today* refers to the problems of the scientists in the former socialist countries: it emphasises the importance of preserving and nurturing the local science base, rather than encouraging wholesale emigration. It is to be hoped that liquid crystal scientists and institutions in more prosperous communities will do everything possible to alleviate the overwhelming strains on their struggling scientific colleagues, but that aid will be offered in such a manner that will prevent rather than encourage the dispersal of the great tradition of soviet socialist science.

After nearly two years in existence, the International Liquid Crystal Society

will be holding the first elections for a new President and Vice-President within the coming months. A notice requesting nominations together with an abstract from the Society Bylaws appears in this issue of *Liquid Crystals Today*, and nominations approved by the Nominating Committee will be sent out to members for ballot in May 1992; the result will be announced at the next International Liquid Crystal Conference in Pisa, Italy in June 1992.

Professor Chandrasekhar will be stepping down after two years of service to the Society as Founding President, previously he had been Chairman of the International Steering Committee, which formed the basis of the ILCS. It was through Professor Chandrasekhar's enthusiasm that the ILCS was born, and its success and expansion is a tribute to him and his efforts. Our Vice-President Dr Martin Schadt also is not seeking reelection after his two year period of office. His wide experience and support to the committee during that time has been invaluable, and he will continue to be active in the affairs of international liquid crystal science in other capacities.

The next *Liquid Crystals Today* will appear at the Pisa Conference, and I hope it will be a bumper edition celebrating the first two years of the Society. The newsletter is for views and comments as well as scientific news, and I urge members to send contributions for the 2nd Anniversary Issue.

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