

# COMMISSION ON THE HISTORY OF GEOGRAPHICAL THOUGHT

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As its history richly illustrates, geographical thought must constantly adjust to the polarities represented by globalization and fragmentation. The Commission is therefore devoted not merely to demonstrating the diversity of points of view and of practices, but also to mark out ways in which they may be reconciled and the obstacles separating them reduced. Toward this end, the Commission has pursued an approach that is intercultural, international, and contextual, focusing most recently on three specific themes. The first concerns the necessity—but also the difficulty—of conceiving of a genuinely global history of geographical thought. The contributions at the symposium in Mexico showed that there are privileged domains of study and that it is possible to “de-regionalize” the history of geographical thought without succumbing to relativism. The second theme relates to the interactions between geography and other modes of thought and knowledge. The examples of territorial planning, cartography, and mythic thought demonstrate some of the many cognitive processes which geography shares with other modes of knowledge and action but which it too often tends to ignore or reject. Finally, the third theme involves reflecting on the future dimension of geographical thought in the light of its history. The intention was to make the latter into a instrument for reflection upon the future, which was pursued in terms of the particular example of sustainable development. The seminars and meetings held in collaboration with diverse organizations—in particular UNESCO—have encouraged the Commission not to remain fixed to an exclusively retrospective view of geography.

Thus in addition to its role of the international diffusion of new themes and bringing colleagues together around the history of geographical thought, the Commission now seeks to encourage reflection on the contemporary world and the future. By following a critical approach and maintaining a certain distance, it should be possible to avoid the pitfalls both of a complacent globalization as well as the fragmentation of thought and of practices.

The members of the Commission have made it clear that they feel it should continue to work in this spirit. I hope that the paths it has opened up can continue to develop, in one way or another, after the next international Congress, at which the General Assembly of the IGU will examine the question of the future of all the commissions. I will be looking forward to seeing you there!

Vincent Berdoulay

*History of geographical thought (Merida, Mexico, April 21-24, 2003 Summary in Spanish).*

A symposium organised within EGAL 2003 (Encuentro de Geógrafos de América Latina), the meeting of Latin American geographers held every other year, was based on the presentation of 28 papers: 4 on the theory and method of geography, 12 on the history of geography and geographical knowledges, 6 on history, theory and methods of cartography, and 4 on geographers who have written on Latin America. During the first part of the meeting, discussions were about sustainability in geography, about geographical determinism and history, about humanistic geography, and about space, territory and geography. The second part dealt with geography in Cuba from a historical perspective, geography textbooks in Mexico during the past two centuries, the teaching of geography and geopolitics in Brazil (19<sup>th</sup> C.), the study of soils in Mexico (19<sup>th</sup> C.), Mexican geography and its historiography, and cartography in Yucatan (19<sup>th</sup> c.). Discussions on the history of cartography dealt with several themes : geohistory and the cartographic discourse, the choromatic map and cartography, and the contribution of geotechnics to the new paradigms of cartography. Finally, the geographers who travelled through, or lived in, Latin America, and who were discussed are Humboldt, Reclus and Josué de Castro.

An important event during the meeting was when the participants were offered a book which resulted from a symposium held by the Commission during the last International Congress of the History of Science (Mexico City, 2000), when the relations among science, history and cultural diversity had attracted great attention: V. Berdoulay and H. Mendoza Vargas (eds.), *Unidad y diversidad del pensamiento geográfico en el mundo. Retos y perspectivas*, copublished by INEGI and Instituto de Geografía (UNAM). The various chapters deal with four major challenges that geographic thought has to take up : methodology, the knowledge of territories, cultural diversity, and education. The authors work in Argentina, Brazil, Spain, France, Indonesia, Italy, Japan and Mexico.

H. M.V.

*Political Geography and Geopolitics : Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow (Moscow, June 2-6, 2003).* International conference organised by V. Kolossov and V. Gorbanyov under the auspices of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russian Federation and the Institute of Political Geography of the Russian Academy of Sciences, and co-sponsored with the Commission of Political Geography. The objective was to evaluate the evolution of political geography, its status within the discipline of geography, as well as its potential status as an autonomous subject. Participants came from 17 different countries : Russia, Israel, USA, Finland, Italy, France, United Kingdom, Croatia, Belgium, Brazil, Iran, Rumania, Netherlands, Czech Republic, Poland, Norway, and Ukraine).

At the opening ceremony, professor Vladimir Kolossov underlined the contemporary expansion of the teaching of political geography in many universities in order to demon-

strate the growing importance of this discipline. He also noted that the MGIMO (where the conference was taking place) has been the home of political geography in Russia since the 1950s. After the opening, during the first session, professor Kolossov made an analysis of the diverse streams and evolutions of political geography since the end of the XIXth century, using comparisons among various authors and theories. The themes were quite varied, and the main points of debates revolved around the following issues : the relationships of political geography with the other academic disciplines; the formation of the image of the world by the public opinion; the role of discourse in the shaping of the political map, of limits and boundaries, of identities and conflicts; and the world geographical order, as it is mostly linked to issues in Eastern Europe.

Several papers insisted upon the history of geographical thought and the evolution of political geography, especially : the paper by Elena Dell'Adnese from the University of Milano Bicocca on political geography as discursive practice, with the example of the genetic classification of limits by Richard Hartshorne in 1936; the paper by Julien Vandeburie from the University of Brussels on the epistemological transformation of the atlases of geopolitics since 1980; and the paper by Rafael Winter Ribeiro from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro on the construction of the image of national territorial diversity by the Brazilian state at the time of the implementation of the federalist republican model.

After three days of conference and debates, a two-days excursion to Rostov the Great and Yaroslav made it possible to appreciate one of the contexts of geopolitics.

R. Winter Ribeiro

#### Forthcoming meetings :

#### **30th International Congress of Geography, Glasgow, 15-20 August 2004**

As the other commissions of the IGU, the Commission on the History of Geographical Thought will hold several sessions within the main congress in Glasgow. Two sessions will be devoted to "*Ratzel and Mackinder: 100 years later*" (co-sponsored by the Commission on Political Geography), and the others will more explicitly focus on the majors themes and prospects of the Commission, under the general heading of "*Histories of geography in international perspective*".

For registration and any information, see the Web site [www.meetingmakers.co.uk/IGC-UK2004](http://www.meetingmakers.co.uk/IGC-UK2004) or contact the Secretariat:

IGC-UK 2004 Glasgow, Congress Secretariat, Meeting Makers, Jordanhill Campus, 76 Southbrae Drive, Glasgow G13 1PP, Ecosse, Royaume-Uni. Tél.: +44 (0) 141 434 1500; fax: +44 (0) 141 434 1519; e-mail: [igc2004@meetingmakers.co.uk](mailto:igc2004@meetingmakers.co.uk)

*The work and thought of Jean Gottmann (Paris, 2004)*. This symposium organised by Luca Muscara had to be postponed to 2004. This multi-disciplinary conference dedicated to the works and thought of Jean Gottmann should be held by the Bibliothèque Nationale de France and the Département des Cartes et Plans (Paris), cosponsored by Commission on the History of Geographical Thought and the Société Française pour l'Histoire des Sciences de l'Homme. For further information, contact Luca Muscara : [muscara@unive.it](mailto:muscara@unive.it)

**22nd International Congress of History of Science (IUHPS), Beijing, China, 24-30 July 2005**. Special sessions will be organized by the Commission. For participating to the Congress, consult the Web site : <http://2005bj.ihns.ac.cn>

*Geographers: Biobibliographical Studies* is published under the auspices of the Commission by Continuum, simultaneously in London and New York. This series treats of a wide variety of individuals who have influenced the development of geography and geographical thought, with a summary of their contributions and brief bibliographies.

*The 2003 issue* (Vol. 22) is a very full edition, and international in outlook in the best traditions of the Commission. Thirteen geographers are included. They represent figures from several parts of Africa, the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Scotland), France, the USA, Mexico, Australia and New Zealand, and the Netherlands. The range of nationalities of the authors is equally wide-ranging. There are several important essays, including the contribution by Anne Buttner (former Chair of the Commission) on the distinguished former editor of *Geographers*, Walter Freeman, and Richard Chorley's essay on Robert Beckinsale. Professor Chorley died shortly after this piece was written and thus the study is one of the last things that he published. Other studies in the volume include those of Samuel Baker, who developed geography in East Africa, Fernand Braudel, Jan Otto Marius Brock, James Edward Church Jr, Antonio Garcia Cubas who contributed to the popularisation of geography in Mexico, explorer and colonial administrator George Grey, Armin Lobeck whose wonderful geomorphological diagrams will be remembered by many geographers, and a Russian who contributed to knowledge of Australia and the Pacific - Nikolai Nikolaevich Miklouho Maclay. Catherine Spence - "The Grand Old Woman of Australia" -, Christiaan van Paassen and John Kirtland Wright complete the series. The fully-indexed volume has an introduction and runs to around 200 pages.

*The 2004 issue* (Vol. 23) should appear shortly. In it Africa is represented by Thomas Baines (written by Viv Forbes) and Mungo Park (by Charles Withers). Paul Claval offers an account of the life and work of Lucien Febvre (a task made more difficult by the fact that restrictions have been placed on the use of Febvre's papers). The interesting account of China geographer George Brown Babour (by Roger Selya) mentions his links with both the USA and UK. Many British geographers who undertook their training between the 1930s and 1960s will remember *The personality of Britain* by Sir Cyril Fox, and will be grateful for Colin Thomas' essay on him. Marion Hercocq reviews the lives of two of the distinguished Australian exploring family - Augustus Charles Gregory and Francis Thomas Gregory. Jim Powell reviews the life of another Gregory - John Walter (no relation). Cotton Mather's life and times are discussed by P.P. Karan, and those of Borivoje Milojevic by Milorad Vasovic. Mexican surveyor and cartographer Jose Salazar Ilarregui is remembered by Luz Maria Tamayo Perez and Jose Omar Moncada Maya. William Smith, founder of scientific stratigraphy and whose geological map "changed the world", is recalled by Patrick Armstrong and Jill Rutherford. Accounts of the lives of Indian geographer Chandra Pal Singh (by his colleague Anu Kapur) and Italian pioneer Giuseppe Dalla Vendova (by Ilaria Luzzana Caraci) complete the series.

The editors are always pleased to hear from a geographer who would like to contribute to the series. A preliminary enquiry is necessary.

Patrick Armstrong Geoffrey J. Martin