

REVIEWS

SIXTY YEARS OF GEOGRAPHY AT BRNO UNIVERSITY

D. Trávníček

Department of Geography, Faculty of Science, J. E. Purkyně University, Kotlářská 2, Brno, Czechoslovakia

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Sixty years have passed the beginning of geography at Brno University. This anniversary is an opportunity for looking back and evaluating its contribution for Czechoslovak geography in general. All that period can be divided into two main parts. The first part includes the interwar period (1919—1939), the second the post-war period (since up to the present).

The development of geography at Brno University has been very rich in events. Partial topics covering the period have been processed in the papers by Professors Koláček, Vitásek, Říkovský and Nosek. Therefore I should like to limit myself to a summary outline of the development of geography at Brno University in the period mentioned.

The progress of World War I, but particularly the Great October Socialist Revolution, brought a number of political and social changes, including the formation of the Czechoslovak independent state. Only then was it possible to materialize the effort of many years — the establishment of the second Czech university. The National Assembly of the Czechoslovak Republic passed Act No. 50/1919 of the Digest on 28 Jan. 1919, on the foundation of Brno University with the faculties of Law, Medicine, Science and Arts. At that time, our research geography and cartography were still represented only at Charles University in Prague, as geography in Brno, the same as in Bratislava, had to cope with organizational problems, above all building and equipping institutes (Vitásek 1973). Prague, however, gradually ceased to be a sole centre of geographical research and teaching. It is easy to understand that it was Prague graduates that took part in the beginnings of Moravian university geography. Thus in 1921 František Koláček qualified in Brno at the Faculty of Science in the line of regional geography, soon after him at the Faculty of Arts Bohuslav Horák in historical geography, history of geography and historical ethnology (Vitásek 1946). Three years later František Vitásek came as associate Professor of physical geography. The overall development of Czechoslovak post-war geography was to a great extent influenced by the fact that within the whole country the study of geography was shifted from the Faculty of Arts to newly established Faculties of Science. In that way the close connection of geography with history, due to the fact that both subjects had been studied solely in a common combination

at the Faculty of Arts, began loosening. The possibility of that type of study remained, but geography could then be studied in combination with natural history, drawing and physical training.

The first Prague university teachers of geography at the beginning of the 20th century had only a slight influence on the development of this branch and thus there was no wonder that beside the then important Goll's historical school our university geography stepped back (Nosek 1976c). In spite of that, in the same period very good geographers started appearing, but mainly due to their own effort. In Prague they were above all J. V. Daneš and V. Dvorský, in Brno the graduates from Prague geography mentioned above.

We know that at that time Czech geography developed in the way characteristic of Central Europe in general with some delay. Main attention was paid to physico-geographical branches, particularly to geomorphological research.

Brno was lucky to have a person of the type of František Kolářek standing at the foundation of the University Geographical Institute (Horák 1949). He was very able in organization and devoted. He started the preparatory work right in 1921. His institute had only a few rooms available, the library started by buying the library of the late Prof. Jindřich Metelka and the map collection was not forgotten, either. An advantage was that Bohuslav Horák, although a teacher of the Faculty of Arts, had his study and library also at the Geographical Institute which was officially opened in the academic year 1922/1923 (Trávníček 1961). In the further stage the seminar for historical geography and historical ethnology was formed in the academic year 1927/1928 and a year later the section and seminar for physical geography.

A club centre of Moravian geographers was the Section of the Czechoslovak Geographical Society in Brno, established and initiated by Kolářek in 1924 (Novák 1975). It continued the activity of the then existing Czechoslovak Geographical Society in Prague. The initial activity of the Section consisted in holding geographical lectures. Later on there also started geographical excursions. Then, as part of the Section, the Tatra Committee was established for the research of the Tatras and adjoining regions. Starting with 1930 the Section began issuing their "Scripta" in three series: A. Scripta of the Tatra Committee (up to 1940 5 papers appeared), B. Bohemia and Moravia (10 papers by 1940) and C. Regions outside Bohemia and Moravia (9 papers by 1940). Meanwhile F. Kolářek had been appointed full professor of geography and for the academic year 1931/1932 elected Dean of the Faculty of Science. In 1930 František Říkovský qualified in geography. His main subject matter was then the geography of settlements. He became professor extraordinary in 1936 (Krejčí 1949). In 1939 climatologist and meteorologist Bohuslav Hruďka (Krejčí 1949) and physical geographer Jan Krejčí qualified as associate professors (Demek 1977, Kvitkovič 1967, Netopil 1967). František Vitásek was appointed full professor in 1931, Bohuslav Horák in 1934 (Říkovský 1941).

Thus Brno geography was very well equipped as for the staff and could start developing a rich teaching, research and publication activity which, however, was soon broken by the Nazi occupation and World War II. In the pre-war era a very well organized line was above all physical geography, dealt with in full scope. Only later on did the individual research workers begin to specialize. A broad upswing was noted in meteorology and climatology (Kolářek, Vitásek, Říkovský, later on particularly Hruďka) and in geomorphology (Vitásek, Říkovský), hydrology (Kolářek, Vitásek, Říkovský). Interest was also concentrated on regional geography and geography of Czechoslovakia (Kolářek, Říkovský). Historical geography had

the only workplace in the Republic at the Faculty of Arts in Brno (Horák). Brno geography in that period belonged to the best at the universities in Czechoslovakia. Its then representatives were under the influence of idealistic philosophical conceptions, but their democratic and anti-Nazi orientation shown also during the war was well-known. Three of the Brno University geographers did not survive the the concentration camp at Mauthausen.

The Nazi occupation and closing down universities in November 1939 brought immense damage also to Brno geography. Besides personal losses mentioned it was also heavy material losses (the Institute and its collections were destroyed), as well as losses in the sphere of geographic research and in the education of future teachers (Nosek 1976a, b).

The consequences of those losses were then long reflected in the post-war period. The greatest merit for a complete renewal of the activity of Brno geography is due to František Vitásek (Nosek M., Demek J. 1974). The beginnings were particularly difficult, there was a shortage of teachers and, on the other hand, after the six-year break there were plenty of students. The teaching started in a new building and, besides, it was also opened in the newly established Faculty of Education. Also there František Vitásek won a great merit for building up the geographical workplace. The study of geography at the Faculty of Education was opened in the winter term of the academic year 1946/1947. The seminar of geography became part of the University Institute of Geography. But the development of geography there was often changed (Frendlowský 1966). In 1953 faculties of education were abolished. Geography for teachers was then taught at the "High School of Education", then, up to 31 Aug. 1964 at the Pedagogical Institute, and from 1 Sep. of the same year again at the renewed Faculty of Education, i.e. within the University. In the original seminar of geography lectures were held till 1951. At that time the effort was concentrated on building the most necessary collections of maps, rocks, meteorological apparatus, as well as libraries. In 1951/1952 the geographic section became a part of the newly established Department of History, Geography and Civics, but closely afterwards, when departments of natural history were established, it became part of the Department of Natural History, Geography and Chemistry; already in 1953, when the High School of Education arose, there was formed an independent Department of Geography and Geology, whose head up to 1959 was Asst. Prof. O. Tichý. At that time the Department continued the research activity aimed above all at the theory of teaching geography. According to schedule the necessary teaching aids were obtained and the library was completed. In 1959 the Department joined the Department of History and Civics, headed by Asst. Prof. F. Frendlowský; the section of geography was led by the later Asst. Prof. K. Hanák. But in 1964, when the Faculty of Education was renewed, the Department of Geography became independent and geography became a section within the Department of Civics and Geography. In 1977, headed by Asst. Prof. S. Horník, an independent Department of Geography was again formed which, within the Union of the branch of Geography of J. E. Purkyně University has been cooperating since the winter term of 1975 with the Department of Geography of the Faculty of Science, above all in the sphere of education, partly also in research. The workers of the two departments solve research projects in team cooperation. They take part in common lectures and exercises for the two departments.

Let us come back to geography at the Faculty of Science. In the first post-war years it was necessary to provide education, prepare textbooks for students and

gradually also new editions of the most important textbooks. Many difficulties were overcome by the enthusiasm shown both in education and in research work by teachers as well as students. A decisive factor for a further development of the socialist University and of socialist geography was February 1948. Since the academic year 1948/1949 there have been qualitative changes in our branch as well. Foundations were laid for a Marxist concept of geography (Nosek 1976a, b). A study reform took place according to an exactly elaborated five — year plan, different for future teachers and for future specialists. From the latter only the study of physical geography was taught at Brno University. In the study of teachers the inter — faculty combination with history was abolished. One of the most important provisions was the establishment of individual departments. All previous university geographical workplaces were merged by the decree of the then Ministry of Education, Sciences and Arts issued towards the end of 1950 into a single Department of Geography, with Prof. Jan Krejčí as its head (Netopil 1967, Kvitkovič 1967, Demek 1977). He was in charge of the Department for almost 20 years. For the development of geographical work it was necessary to complete the staff, which took place in early fifties. At that time also some important changes took place in the political, educational and ideological work of the Department which then penetrated the whole process of education and were also reflected in investigation and research.

Physical geography could continue the pre-war traditions. Experienced workers of that branch, particularly Prof. Vitásek, guaranteed the successful development of the main physico-geographical subjects (Krejčí 1964). The situation of economic geography, however, looked less rosy. Before the war only Prof. Říkovský dealt with it, but he died too early, so that none of his students could continue his work. Special lectures of economic geography at the Department were started as late as in the academic year 1975/1976 according to the plans elaborated by the Department and two years later according to the general syllabus. From the organizational point of view the Department was divided into three sections in 1964: Meteorology and Climatology (since 1975 the Section of Meteorology, Climatology and Hydrology), the Section of Physical Geography and Cartography and the Section of Economic Geography (since November 1978 Section of Economic and Regional Geography).

In 1970, after almost 20 years, there was a change in the management of the Department. Prof. Nosek became its head. Gradually there was an improvement of the work of the Department, ideological orientation and political and educational work became more intense. Research, up to that time oriented at solving faculty tasks and partial state research projects, in which only individuals of the Department participated, was gradually concluded in that form. Newly the Department concentrated on teamwork in solving the state research projects in connection with the needs of the socialist society, such as "Physical Geography, Natural and Socioeconomic Resources and Basic Factors of the Environment of the Znojmo District" (II.-5-1/17), "The Influence of Meteorological Conditions on Precipitation and Drainage Circumstances of the ČSSR" (II.-7-1/5), "The Territorial System of the Region of Rosice—Oslavany and its Potential" (II.-5-1/4), which also contribute to strengthening the collective of workers (Nosek 1976a).

Compared with former periods, the Department has also introduced new forms of work: symposia, seminars and conferences. They are attended not only by the workers of Department, but also specialists invited from other workplaces. This contributes to making contacts and to further mutual cooperation. The most important of these were the symposium held on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the

death of Prof. Kolářek, Říkovský and Asst. Prof. Hrudíčka in 1972 and a symposium on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the liberation of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Army in 1975. The most important materials from those events are usually published in faculty journals, either in the "Folia" or in the "Scripta", thus making even a broad geographic public acquainted with this activity of the Department. From among further activities a seminar held in 1974 can be mentioned which was aimed at Engels's "Dialectics of Nature", a year later members of the Department spoke at the geographical section of the fourth ideological and methodological conference. Three seminars concentrated on the problems of the environment.

The pedagogical activity of the Department was strengthened by the fact that new professors and associated professors were appointed. Thus in 1965 Miloš Nosek was appointed professor (deputy of associate professor in 1955, associate professor in 1959), a year earlier Bohuslav Šimák came to the Department as professor. After a long time cartography was thus again represented at the Department. Due to his long activity in practice Šimák could successfully connect the theoretical as well as the practical aspects of this branch. Rostislav Netopil was appointed associate professor in 1963, Jaromír Demek in 1966, Otakar Šlampa in 1967 (Trávníček 1976), Miroslav Macka in 1973 and three years later also Vladislav Kříž. After the Second World War the Department was complete, as the main branches were taught by professors and associate professors. In 1960 František Vitásek retired, following Bohuslav Horák, who retired in 1952.

In the research work the Department has reached good results in the past twenty years, thus keeping a foremost position among geographical departments of Czechoslovak universities. Members of the Department took part in issuing the "Atlas of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic" (appearing in 1966) and the "Czechoslovak Military Atlas" (1965). Both atlases were published on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the liberation of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Army. Headed by Miloš Nosek the state research project was elaborated concerning the possibility of artificial influencing of precipitation in the ČSSR. Further papers by Nosek concerned dynamical and climatological conditions of October precipitation on the territory of the ČSSR and in the Carpathian part of the Danube basin. In geomorphology Jan Krejčí carried out a detailed analysis of broad surroundings of the City of Brno. Hydrological research, headed by Netopil, was aimed at finding out the régime of ground water, particularly along the planned Oder — Danube canal.

From the publications, prepared recently by the Department of Geography and published, Nosek's "Methods in Climatology", a result of the study of statistical methods, and Netopil's "Hydrology of Continents" are worth mentioning. Both books were published in 1972. In 1954 Nosek's "Practical Climatology" appeared, and in the post-war period several editions of the three-part "Physical Geography" by Vitásek. These publications have been also used at other universities. Jaromír Demek, together with former graduates from the Department of Geography, Evžen Quitt and Jaroslav Raušer, wrote the "Introduction into General Physical Geography" (1976). Lesser studies were published by members of the department in journals of the Faculty of Science: in 1921—1967 it was the "Spisy", since 1964 also the "Folia facultatis scientiarum naturalium universitatis Purkynianae Brunensis", and since 1971 the continuation of former "Spisy", renamed to "Scripta facultatis scientiarum naturalium universitatis Purkynianae Brunensis", series "Geographia".

The Department of Geography established friendly contacts with exchange of members and experience with the geographers of Comenius University in Bratislava, and with the Universities of Kiev and Wrocław. With the latter also exchanges of students' excursions are organized as well as mutual participation in the "students' scientific research activity". It has been mentioned that in recent years there exists a very close cooperation with the Department of Geography of the Faculty of Education in Brno. Some lectures, exercises and practical exercises in the field have been common for the students — future teachers of geography — of both faculties since the academic year 1977/1978. The Department has a close contact with some institutes (the Hydrometeorological Institute, Geotest, VÚVA, the Regional Institute of Geodesy and Cartography, etc.). Successful close cooperation with the Geographical Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, whose seat is in Brno, started in the year of its establishment in 1963. Department members have also collaborated with the Regional Pedagogical Institute. They try to contribute to the modernization of teaching geography at schools and try to do away with the disproportions between school geography and scientific geography which helps to solve problems connected with the progressing scientific and technological revolution. Department members have also participated in processing study plans and syllabuses of geographical studies. They also rendered important service to the Czechoslovak Geographical Society (Trávníček 1975). At the 13th Congress of Czechoslovak geographers held in Plzeň 1975 Jaromír Demek together with Miloš Nosek held an evaluating and programme setting lecture called "Our geography in 1972—1975", at the following Congress, held at Levice in 1978 Jaromír Demek spoke on the topic "Czech geography in the years 1975—1978". In the years 1966—1972 Miloš Nosek was chairman of the South-Moravian branch of the Czechoslovak Geographical Society of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in Brno, in 1972—1975 he was president of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Geographical Society. Jaromír Demek was elected president of the Czechoslovak Geographical Society at the congress held at Levice. Towards the end 1978 Miloš Nosek died (Demek 1979). Jaromír Demek, who had meanwhile become an internal member of the Department, became its head.

Evaluating the development of Brno University geography for the sixty years of its existence we can see that after modest beginnings devoted above all to organizational work and after the first, mostly individually conceived papers, the Nazi occupation brought about an enforced break of any activity last in almost six years. The liberation in 1945 was reflected in an enthusiastic effort of all restoring the activity, the year 1948 laid the foundation to Marxistically oriented geography with planned studies as well as research activity. The Department succeeded in asserting itself both in scientific and in pedagogical, publication and organizational activities. At present it participates in most of the geographical tasks concerning the whole of Czechoslovakia and its own research and teaching activity has spread to all branches of geography.

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