

QUO VADIS, COMMISSION »KARST«?

(Chair's report and reflexions at the 31st International Congress of IGU, Tunis, August 12 – 15, 2008)



South Tunis – gorge in limestone.

Four years – the interval between international geographical congresses of International Geographical Union (IGU) is the period of work of IGU Commissions. At the time of the Congress a report of the 4 years work is presented and proposal, plan and suggestions for the work in the next term are given.

The report of the chair of the C04.22 »Karst« commission for the period 2004 – 2008 was good: the Commission had over 200 members, it organized and participated at organisation of different meetings (Regional Conference at Brisbane, Karst and Cryokarst, Sosnowiec 2007, Poland, International Karstological School at Postojna (every year), just to mention a few of them), it published or co-published professional editions (Annotated Bibliography of Karst Publications, Karst and Cryokarst) and co-operated with other professional organisations as IAH, IUS, formally the Commission was rather active. The plan for the next term (2008 – 2012) is well prepared. The proposal for the continuation of the commission was prepared, its work plan and the proposal of the new steering committee: E. Trofimova (Russia) for the chair and 10 members from different countries (Brazil, Canada, Hungary, Israel, Japan, Poland, Republic of Korea, Russia, Slovenia, Ukraine, USA). Regarding by the

administration point of view, by the IGU administration and by the national delegates everything was good and clear. Therefore the IGU General Assembly accorded the continuation of the commission without any objection, the same stands for the majority of other commissions.

But at the Tunis congress there were only two members of Commission's steering committee, the chair and the honorary member from Japan. At the karst session there were only three "karst" papers presented listening by the audience of ten. Partly it is the fault of the organiser - four other "karst" papers have been put into other sessions with the explanation to the authors that there will be no karst session. The other reason was the International geological congress held at Oslo practically at the same term. Special session dedicated to D. Ford and P. Williams attracted many members of the commission Karst too. But all the same we have to think over the problem. Already four years ago during the IGU congress, the discussion of the continuation of the commission emerged among the members. There were both pessimists and optimists. During the 2007 spring meeting at Sosnowiec (Poland) the present members of the Steering Committee decided that we must submit the continuation of the commission for the period 2008 - 2012. Thus

the proposal was prepared, including the new steering committee and the new chair (Elena Trofimova of the Geographical Institute at Moscow). The proposal was forwarded to the IGU and its General Assembly, held during the 31st International Congress at Tunis (August 11 - 15, 2008), approved it.

The last day of the Congress there was a meeting of the Executive Committee and the commissions' chairs discussing the general lines of commission work in future. Beside the organisation recommendations (to arrange commission meetings during IGU international and regional congresses where at least the nearby-living members have to participate), the vision of a commission work, aims and targets were emphasized. Without a lively interest of a majority of members in common aim, a commission cannot be successful. The main results should be publications.

The future will show if the interest of the geographers-karstologists is so heterogeneous and divided among various karstological organisations and groups,

that they cannot find a common goal in the frame of the commission Karst. The new chair and steering committee members will either be able to overcome the problem and to form a compact group of karstologists working for the common interest in the karst or the commission will cease to exist.

After tens of years of the commission existence which worked on karst under different names according to the rules of IGU, where the world renowned karstologists acted as chairs

(H. Lehmann, I. Gams, U. Sauro, and J. Gunn just to mention some of them) I would be very sorry if the name Karst will no more appear on the list of IGU commissions. But who knows to which direction the future of karstology in the frame of geography is aimed - Quo vadis Karst Commission?

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