

**Maciej Górny**

ORCID [0000-0002-8594-1365](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8594-1365)

Instytut Historii im. Tadeusza Manteuffla Polskiej Akademii Nauk (Warsaw, Poland)

Niemiecki Instytut Historyczny (Warsaw, Poland)





[jmgorny@gmail.com](mailto:jmgorny@gmail.com)

## A vacuum to be filled. Central and Eastern Europe in the times of ‘geography without the Germans’

### Abstract

This article analyses strategies used by geographers of Central and Eastern Europe, foremost Poland, to improve their international position, in the interwar. The boycott of Germany and its former allies almost until mid-1930s was a challenge to this group and it gradually hindered its development. The most original attempt at overcoming the threat of marginalization were congresses of Slavic geographers organized from 1924. The greatest success, however, came with the 1934 Warsaw congress of the Geographical Union, which was also the occasion for German geographers to fully return to international scholarly exchange.

**Keywords:** *geography, Geographical Union, Slavic geographical congresses, boycott of the German science*

PUBLICATION INFO		e-ISSN 2543-702X ISSN 2451-3202		 DIAMOND OPEN ACCESS
<b>CITATION</b>				
Górny, Maciej 2018: A vacuum to be filled. Central and Eastern Europe in the times of ‘geography without the Germans’. <i>Studia Historiae Scientiarum</i> 17, pp. 253–272. Available online: <a href="https://doi.org/10.4467/2543702XSHS.18.010.9330">https://doi.org/10.4467/2543702XSHS.18.010.9330</a> .				
RECEIVED: 2.02.2018 ACCEPTED: 20.09.2018 PUBLISHED ONLINE: 12.12.2018	ARCHIVE POLICY <a href="#">Green SHERPA /</a> <a href="#">RoMEO Colour</a>	LICENSE 		
WWW	<a href="http://www.ejournals.eu/sj/index.php/SHS/">http://www.ejournals.eu/sj/index.php/SHS/</a> ; <a href="http://pau.krakow.pl/Studia-Historiae-Scientiarum/">http://pau.krakow.pl/Studia-Historiae-Scientiarum/</a>			

# Próżnia do wypełnienia. Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia w czasach ‘geografii bez Niemców’

## Abstrakt

Artykuł omawia strategię udziału w międzynarodowym życiu naukowym geografów z Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej, przede wszystkim z Polski. Utrzymujący się prawie do połowy lat trzydziestych bojkot Niemiec i ich byłych sojuszników stanowił dla tej grupy poważne wyzwanie i z czasem coraz większą przeszkodę we własnym rozwoju. Najciekawszą próbą przezwyciężenia marginalizacji okazały się zjazdy geografów słowiańskich organizowane od 1924 roku. Ostatecznie największy prestiżowy sukces na tym polu, warszawski kongres Unii Geograficznej w 1934 roku, stał się zarazem okazją do powrotu niemieckich geografów na forum międzynarodowe.

**Słowa kluczowe:** *geografia, Unia Geograficzna, zjazdy słowiańskich geografów, bojkot nauki niemieckiej*

## 1. Introduction

The First World War was a blow for international scientific cooperation. The conflict started with official statements and accusations directed by academic bodies against their colleagues on the other side of the front.<sup>1</sup> Then, symbolic gestures followed: resignations and exclusions of foreign academia members and elimination of (now, suddenly) ‘hostile’ elements within scientific societies.<sup>2</sup> The post-war boycott of the German science (and the parallel German boycott of Entente’s academic institutions and events) grew up on a fertile soil of nationalist prejudice and hatred of the preceding years. At the same time, it was a coordinated action aiming at changing the balance of power within international academia mostly through replacing the existing collective bodies with new organizations with the International Research Council, founded in

---

<sup>1</sup> Kultur und Krieg 1996; Warland 2011, pp. 427–455.

<sup>2</sup> Kleinere Mitteilungen 1915, p. 189.

Brussels in 1919, as the main institution in the field of inter-state scientific coordination. As noted by Roswitha Reinbothe,

The primary objective of this project of the Allies was to prevent reconstruction of the pre-war dominance of German scientists, the German language and German publications in the area of international scientific cooperation.<sup>3</sup>

This article deals with the strategies used by geographers in Central and Eastern Europe (denoting Poland, Czechoslovakia, the Kingdom of Serbs Croats and Slovenes, Romania, and Bulgaria) to ‘domesticize’ this new situation, and to improve their own position within international science. Paradoxically, to achieve the status they desired it proved necessary to gradually normalize their relations with German and Austrian colleagues. All this will be analysed on the basis of published and archival sources concerning main geographical and geological conferences of the inter-war period with relation to the topic as well as individual correspondence between geographers from Central and Eastern Europe and Germany.

## 2. International Congresses

Geography was no exception in the trend to eliminate whoever and whatever could have a connection to Germany or its former allies. In response to the demands of French and Belgian institutions boycott was held consequently and for quite a long period of time. This meant that the renewed scientific life virtually passed Germany by and so it did to its former allies: Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria. Moreover, the fiercest adherents of the boycott (the French and the Belgians) also attempted to take control over colleagues from the neutral states to ensure that they did not let Germans in through the backdoor. There is some irony in the fact that the first holes in this wall were made not by the neutrals but by the American Rockefeller Foundation and the Japanese Hoshi Endowment, private-owned institutions devoted to financing science. In the early 1920s, they both initiated schemes to

---

<sup>3</sup> Reinbothe 2010, p. 162.

support German and Austrian research projects.<sup>4</sup> The boycott proved to be decisively more effective in the case of international events, congresses and conferences.

The consequences were serious. They manifested themselves already during the first post-war geologists' congress in Brussels, 1922. In the preparation phase the organisers of the event announced that none of the academics from countries which had been former enemies to Belgium would be welcome. Yet, the effects of this strategy went far beyond the intended marginalisation of Germany. The responsible were the wartime neutrals, who refused to subscribe to the boycott. In reaction to the organizers' statement Sweden suggested that it would be ready to host the congress, thus allowing former enemies to meet on the neutral ground. This offer, however, proved unacceptable to Brussels as it would be a disaster to Belgium's image. Following Belgian refusal, Sweden withdrew from the congress. Norway, Finland and Brazil followed soon, and Holland restricted its participation to individual researchers. Quite obviously, Soviet geologists were not invited, which, however, did not raise any controversies at that time.<sup>5</sup>

The Cairo and Cambridge geographical congresses, held respectively in 1925 and 1928, followed suit. In the first case, the German, Austrian and Hungarian geographical societies issued official protests to the International Geographical Union. As a consequence, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland abstained from participation. Holland and the USA did not send their official delegates to Egypt either; only some individuals took part in the congress as private scholars. In Cambridge the organizers succeeded in restricting the 'losses' to Germany, Austria, Hungary and Soviet Russia lone. This time Sweden and Holland participated.

The impact of these disturbances on geographers in Central and Eastern Europe was not evident. In theory, the sudden disappearance of such science centres as Germany, Austria and Hungary from the international scene could elevate the position of their Central and Eastern European neighbours who, would quasi-automatically get more space to present their own research. But this effect of the boycott remained

---

<sup>4</sup> Schroeder-Gudehus 2012, pp. 19–43.

<sup>5</sup> Lencewicz 1922a, pp. 1–8.

restricted to statistics. As a matter of fact, new and enlarged countries, Poland in the first place, could register a stellar growth in numbers of the congress participants. Yet, sheer numbers did not translate either into the quality of the congress presentations, or to the country's political influence in international organizations. Reports published following the congresses by leading local scientific journals raised doubts whether a young and poor state really should be so generous in financing the exotic tourism of the geographers and, much worse, also non-scientific personnel of the delegations. Shortly after the Cairo congress, during which Poland had the third-largest representation (after the French and the Italian), Stanisław Pawłowski, a geography professor from Poznań, criticized the organization of the delegation. He noted that the effects of the congress were in no relation to the costs, while the scientist ratio in the Polish delegation to Egypt failed to reach even 50 per cent. Despite their presence, they did not even chair any of the sections.<sup>6</sup>

The boycott was not only a personal and political matter. It also had an impact on the selection of themes discussed on the congresses and on some technicalities. Both proved detrimental to geographers from Central and Eastern Europe. The German language was, understandably, banned from the post-war congresses. Yet, this move affected not only Germany and Austria, but also a large numbers of specialists from Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. Prior to 1914, Vienna and Berlin were the main centres of geographical research in the region and they attracted the cream of geography students from the whole region. Above all, Albrecht Penck's seminar in Vienna and, after 1906, in Berlin excelled in gathering the biggest names of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Central and Eastern European geographical science including such scholars as Eugeniusz Romer, Stanisław Pawłowski, Jovan Cvijić, Simion Mehedinți, Viktor Dvorský, Jerzy Smoleński, Niko Županić, Pavle Vujević, Alexandru Dimitrescu-Aldem, and Ludomir Sawicki.<sup>7</sup> Not only to these scholars was German the first and sometimes the only foreign language actively used. Romer, one of the brightest among them, started to learn English no sooner than during the war. As his correspondence with Isaiah Bowman, President of the American Geographical Society, shows,

---

<sup>6</sup> Lencewicz 1925, pp. 127–143.

<sup>7</sup> Górný 2017, pp. 20–21.

the effects still left a lot to be desired in the early 1920s.<sup>8</sup> To Romer's colleagues whose linguistic abilities did not go beyond fluent German such linguistic restrictions were a serious obstacle. As the Germans and the Austrians were absent anyway, other German-users were the actual victims to the post-war linguistic regulations of the geographers' societies.

Besides language, professional questions mattered, too. With the Germans, the Austrians, the Hungarians and the Russians absent, some of the geographical phenomena typical for Central and Eastern Europe disappeared from the congress agendas. In Brussels one of the initially planned sections was devoted to the phenomenon of glaciation. Yet, in the face of the minimal participation of the countries excelling in glacial research, this section had to be eliminated from the programme.<sup>9</sup>

There were also some other reasons not to celebrate the German absence. Soon it became obvious that – also in symbolic terms – the standing of Central and Eastern Europe had not improved with the elimination of Vienna, Berlin, Budapest and Sofia from the international scientific exchange. Long and frustrating attempts by leading Polish geographers to invite the most prestigious geographical congress to Warsaw can serve as an example of this misery. The first to officially touch upon this question during the congress in Cairo was the Polish-American expert in polar research, Henryk Arctowski. His appeal fell on deaf ears despite positive reactions of the audience.<sup>10</sup> The decision was to be taken during the nearest official congress of the International Geographic Union (the Cairo meeting had not been acknowledged as such). However, when the time came and Eugeniusz Romer announced the Polish intention to organise the next congress to the gathering at Cambridge, he was informed that the decision had already been taken. To his disappointment France had been chosen. In an attempt to save what could be saved, Romer tried to persuade the Union's leadership to keep the next free date for Poland, that is to declare Warsaw as the host of the 1934 congress. But he was refused, again, this time with an argument that such a long-term decision would collide with the Union's statute.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Seegel 2012, p. 250.

<sup>9</sup> Lencewicz 1922a, p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> Lencewicz 1925, p. 134.

<sup>11</sup> Lencewicz 1922a, p. 229.

Soon another incident exacerbated the relationship between Poland and the leadership further. The point of contention was the so-called the Millionth Map (International Map of the World). This ambitious project originated from Albrecht Penck's idea in 1891. The idea was to cover the whole surface of Earth with normalized maps of 1:1 000 000 scale. The idea sounded quite straightforward, but it proved to be a bone of contention for Europe's cartographers. As a rule, all toponyms were to follow their original form in Latin alphabet. In practice rivers or mountain chains changed their names according to the language used on a given map and largely corresponding to the language of the state they were placed in. The problem was that the squares of the Millionth Map sheets were not synonymous with political borders. A minor issue prior to 1914, this question became tricky after territorial reconstruction of Europe in the wake of the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. Linguistic problems multiplied while maps became a matter of political prestige to the new and enlarged states. The idea of international cooperation that inspired Penck's project gave way to international competition. In the words of Stanislaw Lencewicz, a Polish participant of the Millionth Map project:

When it comes to the sheets of the International Map, there are six of them covering our state's territory, however, none of them belongs to it fully. The largest fragment of Poland belongs to the map 'Kraków'; the map 'Warszawa' exceeds Polish borders by more than a half. Nevertheless, we should concentrate precisely on these two sheets, even though the Free State of Gdańsk, East Prussia, stripes of Lithuania and Czechoslovakia will also figure there. We cannot afford to wait until the Germans get the politically-loaded idea to do 'Warsaw' for us while the Czechoslovaks do the same with 'Kraków'.<sup>12</sup>

Lencewicz's fear was justified by prior experiences. There had already been cases of such 'aggressive takeover' in the history of the Millionth Map. During the war, provisory sheets covering Central and Eastern

---

<sup>12</sup> Lencewicz 1922b, pp. 81–91, quot. P. 88. Unless otherwise stated all translations by the author.

Europe had been published in Great Britain. In the opinion of Lencewicz they were a disaster:

The sheets done by the British are just awful! Perhaps due to negligence or ignorance of basic cartographic material; suffice it to say that the part covering former Russian partition [of Poland] is based on the 1:420 000 scale map while the whole of splendid Russian cartographic publications of the recent twenty years had been completely ignored. Railways follow sheer phantasy; take just the line going straight from Kraków to Piotrków. Toponymy not only contradicts the rules [of the Millionth Map] but it is generally an awful mix of Russian, English and French. Most of the names cannot be recognised either by a Pole, or by a foreigner. Kunev, for example, represents Okuniew, Meji-reyche – Międzyrzec, and Shchebreshin – Szczepieszyn.<sup>13</sup>

The situation escalated. During the Cambridge congress an exhibition of the Millionth Map sheets was presented, including some prepared by German cartographers and covering fragments of Polish and Czechoslovak territory. Romer protested but his request to remove the maps was rejected.

This was not the end of Polish failures at Cambridge. After the Millionth Map protest and the invitation to Warsaw had been rejected, Romer wished at least to inform the congress about the proceedings of the Second Congress of Slavic Geographers held in various Polish cities in 1927. The organisers refused, again. An author with “Przegląd Geograficzny” speculated that the reason was the Union’s unwillingness to sanction national or regional particularisms.<sup>14</sup>

### 3. Among the Slavs

The Union’s reluctance to accept regional competition had been, indeed, one of its long-term strategies. To some extent this attitude was shared by the initiators of regional cooperation themselves. Lencewicz,

---

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 86.

<sup>14</sup> Lencewicz 1925, p. 229.



for example, commented the foundation of the Society of Carpathian Geographers initiated by Henryk Arctowski during the congress in Brussels with his colleagues from Czechoslovakia, Romania and Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and warned that, although useful, it might lead to disintegration of the geographers' international unity represented by the congress.<sup>15</sup>

Despite such fears, the idea of scientific cooperation within Central and Eastern Europe gained popularity. It materialised in the form of the Congresses of Slavic Geographers and Ethnographers, the first of which was held in Prague in 1924 under honorary leadership of Jovan Cvijić. One of its organisers, Stepan Rudnyc'kyj, was another disciple of Albrecht Penck, and a Ukrainian scholar whose tenure at Lviv University was not prolonged for political reasons, and who was now teaching at the Ukrainian Free University in Prague. From the very start it was evident that Slavic congresses would be no less political than their international incarnation. There was neither formal nor organizational continuity between the two. Huge gatherings undoubtedly contributed to the integration of the milieu; the first congress gathered 300, and the second, held in Warsaw in 1927, over 500 scientists. In a way, they aspired to play a connecting role that used to belong to the German science prior to 1918. One of the participants of the third congress (held in 1930) put it clearly:

Finally, one must admit that the Slavic Geographical Congresses already bore some fruit. True, we haven't produced all-Slavic scholarly syntheses, but we have gathered information concerning scholarly output and geographical physiognomy of the three countries; response to our scientific work reaches us without the intermediary of the German scientific journals as it used to be before and therefore we are getting far more such information than before. Before we succeed in acquiring rights equal to great nations on the international congress, we may win an international standing and contacts on a lower level.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> Lencewicz 1922a, p. 4.

<sup>16</sup> Lencewicz 1930, pp. 115–121, quot. p. 121.

Slavic congresses were inspired and run by the elite of Central and Eastern Europe's geographers. Besides Romer, Ludomir Sawicki and Stanisław Pawłowski, this group included, among others, Jan Czekanowski, Niko Županić, Viktor Dvorský, Václav Švambera, Jerzy Smoleński, Jovan Cvijić, Jiří Daneš, Anastas Ishirkov and Borivoje Milojević. Slavic congresses set new traditions also in symbolic terms. The initiators decided to admit French as an official language and excluded German. This was not at all original, yet the other linguistic rule distinguished Slavic congresses among international scientific events of the time. Participants unable or unwilling to speak French were encouraged to use any Slavic language instead, preferably their native tongue. There was also some originality in the selection of countries admitted to this academic organisation. Bulgaria, although quite recently in the war on Germany's side and still absent in the international scientific life, was present already from the first congress.

Slavic congresses connected scholars and facilitated circulation of knowledge. Simultaneously, they also gave hosts the possibility to pursue propaganda. Conference excursions belonged to the favourite means. On the occasion of the first congress in Prague, participants were invited to see Slovakia where they were instructed by Karel Domin, a botanist, on the 'floristic unity' of Czechoslovakian lands.<sup>17</sup> The Polish organizers of the subsequent meeting initially planned to shuttle their guests to all border areas of the country. Due to transport-related problems and high costs the idea was dropped and travels reduced to an absolute minimum (being, in fact, quite ambitious as such) including Warsaw, Kraków, the Tatra Mountains, Vilnius, L'viv and the Galician oil fields.<sup>18</sup> The organizers of the third congress held in Yugoslavia in 1930 pushed this idea to the limit. The excursions were designed to show the participants the meaning of the loss of Rijeka to Yugoslavia. To achieve this aim the scholars were taken by train from the suburbs of this city to Ljubljana, a distance of less than 100 kilometres. Due to border changes such a trip took them a whole day; making it thus blatantly clear how unfair it was to let Italy annex the direct railway connection between the two cities.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Zaborski 1925, pp. 119–126.

<sup>18</sup> Smoleński 1927, pp. 100–105; Vujević 1924, pp. 88–91.

<sup>19</sup> Lencewicz 1930, pp. 115–121.

The fourth (and last) Congress of Slavic Geographers and Ethnographers took place in Bulgaria in 1935. As before, all Slavic languages were allowed in the presentations and discussions. At the same time the number of papers in French grew by only a little. Side effects of this decision were identified by one of the congress reporters:

As during prior congresses, the topics were not clearly outlined so that section panels resembled a mosaic of multiple unconnected problems which did not inspire any discussion on facts. Slavic languages, used by the majority of referents, proved to be a serious obstacle because most of the speakers seemed unaware of the fact that the audience they spoke to did not know their native language and could only understand the content with some effort.<sup>20</sup>

Besides linguistic issues, Slavic congresses suffered from all diseases of scholarly socializing. Papers were of unequal value, the hosts (over) used their right to dominate, both in numbers and in setting conference topics, and did not hesitate to use more or less subtle propaganda about their modernizing efforts and territorial postulates. The highly idealistic idea to allow every Slavic language made communication harder. As seen in Sofia, when led to its logical conclusion, such a rule made the scholarly debate nearly impossible. Most probably, a considerable part of the participants would find it easier to communicate in their best-known conference language, i.e. in German. Yet, there were no prospects of reintroducing German due to political reasons. The other weakness that Slavic congresses shared with post-war international scientific gatherings was connected to the exclusion of Germany, Austria and Hungary as well. It degraded the academic rate of these conferences. Quite obviously, there was no such a thing as 'Slavic geography', the very category 'Slavic' being derived from linguistics and not from geography. The interference of both spheres was never sufficiently explained, let alone convincingly substantiated. Guests from Romania, Austria, Hungary or, indeed, Germany would have been at least equally capable of discussing the same problems of Earth surface or cartography speaking of the same geographical space.

---

<sup>20</sup> Kondracki 1935, pp. 139–150, quot. p. 141.

Despite their restrictive formula, Slavic congresses succeeded in facilitating scholarly exchange. Perhaps not so much via official proceedings but rather behind the scenes, during unofficial meetings and travels (some) ‘Slavic geographers’ got to know each other better. No more, but no less.<sup>21</sup> Such an understanding of this impact seems to be typical for the elite of the regional geography of the time. Also, growing time gaps between consecutive congresses hint at a utilitarian attitude of the participants and organisers. Three years divided the first from the second and the second from the third. The fourth was delayed while the fifth, planned for 1940, never happened.

The first and foremost reason for the slow demise of Slavic cooperation seems to be the Polish success in attracting the Geographical Congress to Warsaw. The decision was voted on in Paris and this time Romer’s request was answered positively.<sup>22</sup> Slavic cooperation lost its *raison d’être* at least from the perspective of Poland.

#### 4. Germany’s return

The Warsaw Geographical Congress came down in the history of the discipline as the first post-war gathering to include the German delegation. Yet, even earlier some attempts at a normalization could be spotted. Cvijić, the oldest disciple of Albrecht Penck, was one of the pioneers. As President of the Academy of Sciences in Belgrade he felt obliged to support international contacts of the Yugoslav science, including Germany. Penck’s was the first address he contacted.<sup>23</sup> It was then followed by German-language exchanges with Ernst Nowack, the specialist for Albania, and others<sup>24</sup>. In 1924, Cvijić and Penck met in person on the occasion of the latter’s visit to another of his former students, Zheko Radev in Sofia.<sup>25</sup> Gradually, academic contacts between Germany and Central and Eastern Europe returned to the norm, albeit never so cordial as prior to 1914. Publication exchange and research

---

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 141.

<sup>22</sup> *The Paris Congress* 1931, pp. 544–550.

<sup>23</sup> ASANU, Fond Jovan Cvijić, sign. 13484–953–48, Letter from 6 July, 1920.

<sup>24</sup> AfG, Nachlaß Ernst Nowack, sign. 238/223, Letter from 19 June 1925 and the following correspondence with S.M. Milojević (sign. 239/288).

<sup>25</sup> AfG, Nachlaß Albrecht Penck, sign. 871/3, Erinnerungen, Ch. 51.

travels belonged to the popular topics along with mutual discontent with the post-war conditions of scientific work. The latter may be illustrated with a fragment of a letter to Nowack in spring 1930 from Károly Roth's, a Hungarian geologist in Debrecen (where he obtained a tenure after the First World War):

The conditions at our provincial universities are pretty harsh. There is a newly-founded institute here which lacks everything. You have to organize everything, preferably for free. I do not have any assistants and I am obliged to teach not only geology and palaeontology but also mineralogy and petrography. [...] Add to it practical exercises basically in all these disciplines – there are 50 students of mine. [...] And still this position gives me a lot of joy and satisfaction for I do have the most precious thing which is complete independence.<sup>26</sup>

In the period when Germany and its former allies still remained a pariah of international academic institutions, joint publications were yet another link connecting them to the rest of the world. In 1924, a representative selection of the region's best geographers met on the pages of a *Festschrift* for Jovan Cvijić.<sup>27</sup> On the pages of this book a Frenchman, Emmanuel de Martonne, a German, Albrecht Penck and a Pole, Eugeniusz Romer came much closer to each other than they could in normal life. All three used this opportunity to return to their pre-war academic interests, that is: geomorphology. They solidarily spared the Serbian jubilee any political allusions.

This gradual normalization was not an idyll, though. In Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary (and consequently also in Romania) a considerable number of scholars got involved in nationalist polemics around the postulates of territorial revision. More often than not, maps published in Germany would ignore post-1918 borders in the East completely. Besides, in the first half of the 1920s, scientific material gathered under former German and Austro-Hungarian occupation regimes in Serbia, Montenegro, Poland, and Romania figured prominently

---

<sup>26</sup> AfG, Nachlaß Ernst Nowack, sign. 239/518, Letter from 18 April, 1930.

<sup>27</sup> *Zbornik radova* 1924.

among the research topics of German and Austrian geographers and ethnographers. The wave of publications devoted to ethnology, geography and racial anthropology of Central and Eastern Europe coincided with the growth of politically loaded revisionist geography.<sup>28</sup>

All this had an impact on the German reaction when an invitation to Warsaw international geographical congress came, though it was guided by the new philosophy of the Nazi state above all. German geographers manifested discipline and subordination to the politics of the state. The head of the delegation, Ludwig Mecking, a Münster geographer, in a letter to his colleagues preached:

I remind once more that the authorities demand very clearly that the representatives of the German Reich act in an organized fashion as a group. Before the congress starts, they will meet in Berlin, all staying in the same hotel, and they will travel together. In Warsaw, alike, common accommodation and coordinated discussion will be necessary. An official delegation will be formed and it will be led by a leader (Führer).<sup>29</sup>

German participants went through a series of preparatory meetings with experts from the Foreign Ministry. It was decided that congress excursions that would lead to formerly German areas, were to be avoided.<sup>30</sup> Speakers received detailed instructions. They were forbidden to exceed the time of their presentations – a means to avoid the painful situation in which Polish organizers would dare to “silence a German geographer”.<sup>31</sup> They were also advised not to lose their watchfulness. It was suspected that the Poles (Romer in the first place) would do everything to use the congress against the interests of the Reich.

The German suspicion was confirmed quite soon. A couple of months before the congress, a poster was sent to foreign institutions

---

<sup>28</sup> AfG, Deutsche Geographentage, sign. 35–46. See also: *Der XX. Deutsche Geographentag* 1921, pp. 164–177.

<sup>29</sup> AfG, Nachlaß Hans Mortensen, sign. 886–4/551, Ludwig Mecking an die Mitglieder des Verbandes d.H.d.G., 25 May, 1934.

<sup>30</sup> AfG, Nachlaß Hans Mortensen, sign. 886–4/587, Mecking to members of the labour union of academic teachers in geography, 12 June, 1934.

<sup>31</sup> AfG, Nachlaß Hans Mortensen, sign. 886–4/628, Letter from 22 June, 1934.

and organizations. German addressees were astonished and angry to see a schematic map of Poland covering also the territory of Danzig. In a normal situation such a question would probably be ignored. The poster map was an artistic, rather than cartographic, vision and the territory of the Free City was tiny enough not to be meticulously singled out. But the Polish-German relations of the time proved far from normal. Not only was an official protest sent to Romer, but both Germany and the Free City of Danzig approached also Isaiah Bowman, who held the post of President of the Geographic Union. A professor from Danzig, Nicolaus Creutzburg, wrote to him that:

The preparatory committee to the Warsaw Congress ordered a poster and shipped it to foreign countries to popularise the congress. This poster has enormous meaning in one particular place, which has the power to cause grave disorientation to the spectator. It features the map of the Polish state. The territory of the Free City of Danzig has been not only painted with a light grey colour, same as the rest of the Polish territory, but in addition to that, no border line between the Free City of Danzig and Polish territory has been marked. In consequence, the territory of the Free City of Danzig looks as if it was fully integrated into Poland. Contrary to that, all other neighbouring countries have been painted with a darker colour with all remaining political borders set in a proper place.

You, dear Professor Bowman, belonged to the commission that, in 1919, settled the border line between Poland and Germany and Poland and Danzig within the frames of the Treaty of Versailles. [...] No one better than you can see that the poster I mention, in this particular point falsely represents the political borders of Central Europe.<sup>32</sup>

The case with the poster was treated so seriously that it endangered, for a couple of weeks, the very participation of Germany in the Warsaw congress. Finally, the organizers agreed to issue and distribute another version of the print with Free City properly divided from the territory

---

<sup>32</sup> AfG, Nachlaß Hans Mortensen, sign. 886–5/659–662, Letter from 16 July, 1934.

of Poland. Although the Germans doubted if the new version reaches international audience soon enough to undo the damage caused by the previous one, they decided to participate.<sup>33</sup>

The Congress itself was rather free from such controversies. It surpassed former meetings both in numbers of the participating scholars and the number of official delegations. Not only did Germany appear in Warsaw for the first time after a long break. The Polish congress was also the first to host the Soviet and Turkish delegations. Traditionally, the hosts dominated the proceeding. One of the sessions was fully devoted to Poland and the participants were virtually buried under the avalanche of Polish geographical publications. There were exhibitions of Polish cartography and Polish paintings and, as always, excursions. It was no accident that most of them led to the border areas of Polesia, Podolia, the Niemen (Nemunas) and the Dźwina (Dvina), Pomerania and Silesia. They were prepared well. Participants received specialist guidebooks filled with all possible data concerning statistics and geography on the rout.<sup>34</sup> Even the Danzig geographer Creutzburg, who was so prompt to criticize the Polish poster, was in the end satisfied with the offer of the organizers to prolong one of the excursions so that the participants can visit Sopot as well as the city he taught in.<sup>35</sup>

## 5. Conclusions

The geographers of Central and Eastern Europe developed couple of strategies for the period of the German absence in international scholarly exchange, in the wake of the Versailles Treaty. Firstly, they invested in their representation on the post-war congresses in Cambridge and Cairo, where the Polish delegation appeared among the most numerous. With time, another strategy designed to facilitate international cooperation was introduced in the form of Slavic geographical congresses. All this was accompanied by stubborn Polish attempts to acquire the privilege to organize an official international Geographical Congress, the most prestigious form of academic exchange in the field of geography.

---

<sup>33</sup> AfG, Nachlaß Hans Mortensen, sign. 886–698–95, Mecking to Mortensen, 26 July, 1934.

<sup>34</sup> See Smoleński, Ormicki 1934.

<sup>35</sup> Lencewicz 1934, pp. 167–183.



These attempts succeeded in 1934, which also marked the end to the boycott of Germany and its former allies.

From a different perspective, the same chain of events can be interpreted as a learning curve of the region's geographers. During the early post-war international congresses, it became increasingly clear to them that none of the newly created or enlarged states of Central and Eastern Europe, even the biggest both in terms of territory and the development of geography, can seriously hope to gain an advantage from the German absence. To the contrary, the boycott affected not only institutions and individual scholars, but also research topics eliminating themes characteristic to Central and Eastern Europe, while at the same time the ban on using German during international conferences complicated the life of local scholars the most of whom had been trained at German and Austrian universities. Slavic congresses could not be a remedy for this twist in international research agenda and, furthermore, they had not fulfilled professional hopes attached to them. It became increasingly clear that the exclusion of Germany and its allies had brought about the marginalization of Central and Eastern Europe on the level of international scholarly cooperation. As shown by Katrin Steffen, Martin Kohlrausch and Stefan Wiederkehr, the "remarkable increase in professional communication" was the order of the day in interwar Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>36</sup> Given the experience of the early post-war period the prospect of Germany's return to the international community of geographers ceased to be a controversial issue from the perspective of the region's scholars. Instead, it became an ambition of the organizers of the Warsaw congress to attract German colleagues. Given the choice, the Poles and other Central and Eastern European scholars preferred an open controversy to a boycott.

## Bibliography

### PRIMARY SOURCES

Archiv für Geographie, Leipzig. Deutsche Geographentage, sign. 35–46.

Archiv für Geographie, Leipzig. Nachlaß Hans Mortensen sign. 886–4/551; sign. 886–4/587; sign. 886–4/628; sign. 886–5/659–662; sign. 886–698–95.

---

<sup>36</sup> Kohlrausch, Steffen, Wiederkehr 2010, p. 11.

Archiv für Geographie, Leipzig. Nachlaß Ernst Nowack sign. 238/223; sign. 239/288; sign. 239/518.

Archiv für Geographie, Leipzig. Nachlaß Albrecht Penck sign. 871/3.

Arhiv Srpske Akademije Nauka i Umetnosti. Belgrade. Fond Jovan Cvijić sign. 13484–953–48.

## SECONDARY SOURCES

Briesewitz, Gernot 2014: *Raum und Nation in der polnischen Westforschung 1918–1948. Wissenschaftsdiskurse, Raumdeutungen und geopolitische Visionen im Kontext der deutsch-polnischen Beziehungsgeschichte*. Osnabrück: Fibre Verlag.

Górny, Maciej 2017: *Kreślące ojczyzn. Geografowie i granice międzywojennej Europy*. Warszawa: Instytut Historii PAN.

Happel, Jörn; von Werdt, Christophe; Jovanović, Mira (eds.) 2010: *Osteuropa kartiert – Mapping Eastern Europe*. Münster: LIT Verlag.

Haslinger, Peter 2010: *Nation und Territorium im tschechischen politischen Diskurs 1880–1938*. München: Oldenbourg.

Haslinger, Peter; Oswald Vadim (eds.) 2012: *Kampf der Karten. Propaganda und Geschichtskarten als politische Instrumente und Identitätstexte*. Marburg: Herder Institut.

Jović, Vidojko; Petrović, Ana M. (eds.) 2016: *150th Anniversary of Jovan Cvijić's Birth. Proceedings of the International Conference Held at the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts*. Belgrade: Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts.

Kohlrausch, Martin; Steffen, Katrin; Wiederkehr, Stefan 2010: Expert Cultures in Central Eastern Europe: The Internationalization of Knowledge and the Transformation of Nation States since World War I – Introduction. [In:] Martin Kohlrausch, Katrin Steffen, Stefan Wiederkehr (eds.), *Expert Cultures in Central Eastern Europe: The Internationalization of Knowledge and the Transformation of Nation States since World War I*. Osnabrück: Fibre Verlag, pp. 9–29.

Kondracki, Jerzy 1935: Czwarty zjazd geografów i etnografów słowiańskich. *Przegląd Geograficzny* CV, pp. 139–150.

Lencewicz, Stanisław 1922a: XIII-ty Międzynarodowy Kongres Geologiczny. *Przegląd Geograficzny* III, pp. 1–8.

Lencewicz, Stanisław 1922b: W sprawie udziału Polski w opracowaniu milionowej mapy ziemi. *Przegląd Geograficzny* III, pp. 81–91.

Lencewicz, Stanisław 1925: Międzynarodowy Kongres Geograficzny w Kairze. *Przegląd Geograficzny* V, pp. 127–143.

Lencewicz, Stanisław 1930: Trzeci zjazd słowiańskich geografów i etnografów. *Przegląd Geograficzny* X, pp. 115–121.

- Lencewicz, Stanisław 1934: Międzynarodowy Kongres Geograficzny w Warszawie. *Przegląd Geograficzny* XIV, pp. 167–183.
- Martínek, Jiří 2008: *Geografové v českých zemích 1800–1945 (biografický slovník)*. Praha: Historický ústav AV ČR.
- Mommsen, Wolfgang J.; Müller-Luckner, Elisabeth (eds.) 1996: *Kultur und Krieg. Die Rolle der Intellektuellen, Künstler und Schriftsteller im Ersten Weltkrieg*. München: Oldenbourg.
- Mroczo, Marian 2010: *Eugeniusz Romer (1871–1954). Biografia polityczna*, Słupsk: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Akademii Pomorskiej.
- [NN<sub>1</sub>] 1915: Kleinere Mitteilungen, *Allgemeine Zeitschrift für Psychiatrie und psychisch-gerichtliche Medizin* 72, p. 189.
- [NN<sub>2</sub>] 1931: The Paris Congress of the International Geographical Union, *The Geographical Journal* 78/6, pp. 544–550.
- [NN<sub>3</sub>] 1924: *Zbornik radova posvećen Jovanu Cvijiću povodom tridesetpetogodišnjice naučnog rada od prijatelja i saradnika*. Beograd: Državna štamparija Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca.
- [NN<sub>4</sub>] 1921: Der XX. Deutsche Geographentag in Leipzig. *Geographische Zeitschrift* 27/7–8, pp. 164–177.
- Reinbothe, Roswitha 2010: Languages and Politics of International Scientific Communication in Central Eastern Europe after World War I. [In:] Martin Kohlrausch, Katrin Steffen, Stefan Wiederkehr (eds.), *Expert Cultures in Central Eastern Europe: The Internationalization of Knowledge and the Transformation of Nation States since World War I*. Osnabrück: Fibre Verlag, pp. 161–179.
- Schroeder-Gudehus, Brigitte 2012: Probing the Master Narrative of Scientific Internationalism: Nationals and Neutrals in the 1920s. [In:] Rebecka Lettevall, Geert Somsen, Sven Wildmalm (eds.), *Neutrality in Twentieth-Century Europe. Intersections of Science, Culture, and Politics after the First World War*. New York: Routledge, pp. 19–43.
- Smoleński, Jerzy 1927: Drugi zjazd słowiańskich geografów i etnografów w Polsce. *Przegląd Geograficzny* VII, pp. 100–105.
- Smoleński, Jerzy; Ormicki, Wiktor 1934: *Excursion B3L. La Silésie polonaise*, Varsovie: Kasa im. Mianowskiego.
- Vasović, Miroslav 1994: *Jovan Cvijić. Naučnik, javni radnik, državnik*. Novi Sad: Izdavačka knjižarnica Zorana Stojanovića.
- Vujević, Pavle 1924: Prvy Kongres Slovenskih geografa i etnografa v Pragu. *Glasnik Geografskog Društva* 19, pp. 88–91.
- Seegel, Steven 2012: *Mapping Europe's Borderlands: Russian Cartography in the Age of Empire*. Chicago – London: University of Chicago Press.

**Maciej Górny**

**A vacuum to be filled. Central and Eastern Europe in the times...**

Wardenga, Ute; Hönsch, Ute (eds.) 1999: *Kontinuität und Diskontinuität der deutschen Geographie im Umbruchphasen. Studien zur Geschichte der Geographie*, Münster: Universität Münster Institut für Geographie.

Warland, G. 2011: Henri Pirenne and Karl Lamprecht's Kulturgeschichte. Intellectual transfer or *théorie fumeuse*? *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Nieuwste Geschiedenis* 3–4, pp. 427–455.

Zaborski Bogdan 1925: Zjazd geografów i etnografów słowiańskich. *Przegląd Geograficzny* V, pp. 119–126.