

The Czechoslovak Geographical Society is one of the oldest geographical societies in Europe. It originated on May 1, 1894 in Prague under the name of the „Bohemian Geographical Society“ (Česká společnost zeměvědná) and associated geographers, botanists, geologists and other natural scientists. Prior to its origin the geographers met either in the Historical Club or in the Society of Bohemian Professors. The newly founded Bohemian Geographical Society concentrated its attention on geographical studies in all its scientific branches on the territory of Bohemia. One of the main tasks was the publication of a periodical called the Journal of the Bohemian Geographical Society (Sborník České společnosti zeměvědné), the first number of which appeared at the end of 1894. Later, the Society changed twice its name, in 1920 in connection with the proclamation of the State Independence, and the extension of its activity also to Slovakia. It was then called the Czechoslovak Society for Geography (Československá společnost zeměpisná). In 1978 its name was changed into the Czechoslovak Geographical Society (Československá geografická společnost). Similarly, also the name of the bulletin was changing. The mission of the Society, however, has remained unchanged: it is a voluntary, freechoice organization associating scientific, and scientific-educational workers and workers employed in the sphere of geography. Its aim is to contribute to a further development and increase of the level of geography, to contribute to its popularization and realization of the achieved results in practical experience. The concrete aim and forms of work have been changing in agreement with the development of the geographical science and the external conditions. In this respect signified stages in the development of the Society form the congresses of Czech geographers (15 congresses up to now) which kept on determining the conception of work of the Society for the next period.

Another important aim which the society planned to realize was the publication of a large world atlas. Its individual parts were published for several years up to 1901. Since 1903 the Society started publishing some more important scientific works in an edition called „The Library of the Bohemian Geographical Society“. It ceased to exist in the Fifties. The activity of the Society was interrupted only during World War II when high schools in Bohemia were closed down. After the war, however, the Society began developing its activity very quickly taking a considerable part in the building up of socialist Czechoslovakia. The last stage in the development of the Society is its affiliation to the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in 1956, and a subsequent cooperation with the newly formed Geographical Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences.

An independent part of the Czechoslovak Geographical Society is the Slovak Geographical Society attached to the Slovak Academy of Sciences founded in 1946. Both Societies cooperate very closely in the scientific field as well as in the popularization of geography. They exchange their representatives in both principal committees, exchange information and organize various joint establishments.

The present seat of the Czechoslovak Geographical Society is Prague where it also has its secretariate dealing with all the administration and organization business. The activity of the Society is coordinated by the main committee with a chairman at its head. Since the last congress in 1981 this function has been performed by Václav Gardavský PhD, head of the department of Economic and Regional Geography, Faculty of Science, Charles University, Prague. The professional activity of the Society is performed by five sections: section for socio-economic geography, physical geography, environment and natural preservation, cartography and school geography. The section for geographical prognoses is under preparation, its research project being a closer co-operation of science with practical experience. The main form of activity of the above sections is to organize seminars, discussion groups and conferences with the participation of the most prominent scientists in individual geographical disciplines where current problems of the geographical science as well instruction in geography are solved. Some of the seminars held during the last three years dealt with the following themes:

- Instruction in economic geography on high schools
- Biogeographical and biocenological differentiation of the landscape
- Present development trends in cartography
- Theoretical problems of Marxist geography
- Social Geography in areal, regional and ecological planning
- Innovations in physical geography

- Problems of universal physical geography and the landscape
- School geography, etc.

The members of the sections are also engaged in research projects in the basic as well as applied research.

The Czechoslovak Geographical Society publishes the Journal of the Czechoslovak Geographical Society whose 89th volume appears in 1984. Copies of this bulletin are exchanged for 141 geographical magazines and periodicals from all continents. The periodicals together with other geographical publications obtained from abroad are at the disposal of the society members as well as the public in the library located in Brno.

The main committee of the Czechoslovak Geographical Society develops cooperation with many geographical societies abroad, before all with societies in socialist countries. It also cooperates with many other Czechoslovak societies, institutions, research institutes, high schools, etc. Traditionally it assists teachers of geography in organizing for them special in-service supplementary courses or seminars in connection with the reorganization of the study of geography, and with the introduction of a new Czechoslovak educational system. The members of the Society take also part in the publication of new textbooks, atlases, maps and other school aids.

The greatest part of activity of the Czechoslovak Geographical Society is performed by eight branch committees situated in Prague, Ústí n./L., Plzeň, České Budějovice, Hradec Králové, Ostrava, Olomouc and in Brno. The largest and most active are the branch committees in Brno (South-Moravian branch committee) and in Prague (Central Bohemian branch committee) where most of the geographical institutes and research institutes are concentrated. The activity of the branch committees is much differentiated and concentrates especially on the traditional forms of work: lectures for members as well as for the public, seminars, conferences, courses, excursions, projection of geographical films. Most of these activities have proved successful, the number of participants having increased in the last years to about 4000 persons. Most of the activity is performed in order to popularize geography in the public and to increase the general instruction in this field of science. Only a smaller part is of a professional character. The professional activity is performed by members in professional sections. In 1983, on the whole 15 professional sections existed attached to the branch committees. In a majority of branch committees the most active are professional sections working in the field of school geography since half of all members of the Czechoslovak Geographical Society is formed by teachers of geography on primary or secondary schools.

In branch committees with an academic staff undergraduate students in geography have their own unions and participate in the activity of the Society as extra members. The branch committees have a close cooperation especially with the District Educational Institutes and the District Educational Centres under the assistance of the members — mostly university teachers — in the instruction of teachers for primary or secondary schools. Most of the branch committees cooperate also with the Czechoslovak Scientific-Technological Society in the preparation of lectures treating of geographical problems. Some branch committees have good relationships with geographical societies in the neighbouring states and organize for their members excursions to these countries.

The most important event in 1984 will be the 18th Congress of Czechoslovak Geographers organized by the Central Bohemian branch committee in Prague. Its motto will be „Geography in the building up of socialist Czechoslovakia“.

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