
PREFACE

The tradition of fruitful relationship between Polish and Hungarian geographers looks back to several decades. In the scope of the scientific co-operation between the two Academies of Sciences not only mutual study trips of individual researchers are possible but the organization of joint conferences as well. Among the latter, the bilateral seminars on different topics held every two years gained special importance.

This volume includes the lectures of the 7th Polish-Hungarian Geographical Seminar organized by the Settlement Research Group of the Centre for Regional Studies in Kecskemét, Hungary, between 17-21 September, 1990. The Polish delegation of five researchers, all working at the Warsaw Institute of Geography and Spatial Organization, Polish Academy of Sciences, was led by professor Andrzej Stasiak. Hungarian lecturers represented different departments of the Centre for Regional Studies; on their behalf György Enyedi, member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences welcomed the participants. The three-day professional program was completed by a study trip to Bács-Kiskun county.

The topic of the seminar was the analysis of social-economical processes making way for the systemic change and the evaluation of spatial aspects of the initial steps. The majority of the lectures dealt with problems on the country level but some experts reported on their small-region investigations, and Eastern European countries other than Poland and Hungary were also mentioned. Thus the information obtained is variegated and valuable: that is the way we identified and interpreted our problems in 1990.

For the last two years the geographical and political map of Eastern Europe has gone through a profound change: the "Iron Curtain" no longer exists; there are no "satellite states"; COMECON has been dissolved; federal borders, earlier believed perennial, have been re-organized (the unification of Germany, the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Jugoslavia or the division of Czechoslovakia may be considered as examples); the process of political and economic change in the system has been in progress in each post-socialist countries. All this sheds different light on everything discussed during the seminar. Undeniable, though, that these lectures document a state that has changed by today, still, they are comparable to analyses carried out during the decades of socialism and can serve as bases of reference for the interpretation of later changes. These are the reasons why, in spite of the changed circumstances, our Institute decided to publish this volume.

The editor's task was shouldered by a young colleague of our research group. She strived to compile the book so that reports by Polish and Hungarian authors are placed in parallel to each other as much as possible. Thus different approaches, scientific methods and results can be compared. Accordig to their subject matter the eleven papers can be arranged round four major topics:

- (1) General issues of regional policy;
- (2) Industry and economy in the transitory period;

- (3) The role of the tertiary sector and the services;
- (4) Changes on the local level;

Not a single lecture has been "adapted" to time passed; their original texts have been retained without any change or supplement.

This volume is published with the hope that it can promote a better understanding of regional development in Eastern Europe and that the interest of others than Polish and Hungarian social geographers will also be aroused.

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Bálint Csatári,
head of the
Settlement Research Group,
Centre for Regional Studies,
Hungarian Academy of Sciences