

MAPPING HUNGARY'S ORIENTAL OTHER: HUNGARIAN GEOGRAPHERS AND THE COLONIAL PROJECT IN THE BALKANS, 1908-1918

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Keywords: Hungary, knowledge production, mental mapping

Abstract: In October 1908, the Austro-Hungarian Empire annexed Bosnia, a former Ottoman possession that had been jointly administered by the two empires since 1878. Beyond intensifying the Habsburg colonial project in the Balkans more generally, the annexation of Bosnia heightened Hungarian “imperial” interests in the region as well. Triggered in part by fears that the newly acquired territory in the south would upset the already delicate balance between Slavic and non-Slavic speakers within the empire, Hungarian interest in the Balkans was also fueled by nationalist fantasies of imperial expansion, and by a long-standing fascination with the Balkans as Hungary’s proximal Oriental other. Focusing on field diaries and published reports produced by geographers working with the Hungarian Geographical Society, the Oriental Committee [Keleti Bizottság] of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and the Balkan Bureau [Balkán Iroda], this paper employs postcolonial perspectives to identify and interrogate the interconnected Orientalist fantasies and colonial aspirations that informed geographical studies of the Balkans between 1908 and 1918, and which also played an important role in the construction of Hungary’s late-imperial geographical imaginariy.

THE IMPERIAL SHIFT OF SOVIET HEGEMONY AND COLD WAR POLITICS IN HUNGARIAN GEOGRAPHY: THE “MARKOS SCHOOL” OF ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

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Keywords: Cold War, economic geography, György Markos, Marxism-Leninism

Abstract: As in many European countries, in Hungary, World War II brought a permanent rupture in the production of geographical knowledge, as geography experienced the collapse of a national-conservative regime and a shift towards a Sovietized communist regime. Elucidating the transformative period of 1945-49 and the 1950s is key to understanding the scope and effects of this regime change in the production of knowledge. This decisive break meant the dissolution of the Hungarian Geographical Society in 1949, and its problematic resurrection from 1952. This paper will follow the sociology of scientific knowledge to conceptualize the effects of the Soviet empire’s science policy on restructuring the local agendas and knowledge production of Hungarian economic geography, with a specific focus on local conflicts, rhetorical battles and strategies of intellectual power struggles between the new cadres and the “old guard”. In this context, the study will aim to unravel the biography of György Markos, who was summoned at this time as a political journalist to become an economic geographer and high-ranking member of the Society. His “revolutionary” and controversial personality is rather intriguing, as he was prominent in enforcing the adaptation of Marxist-Leninist ideologies, and with his students consolidated a narrowly empirical economic geography, which had a long-lasting effect even into postsocialism. This study builds on previously untouched archival materials in order to decipher the untold story of this decisive period, and to situate these local intellectual and political agendas of Hungarian economic geography in a wider Cold War context.

SLOT2

Chair: *Charles Withers*

Schedule: Wednesday, 2 September, 08:30–10:15

GEOGRAPHIES OF POWER: THE CASE OF THE GESELLSCHAFT FÜR ERDKUNDE ZU BERLIN

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Keywords: geographical epistemology, geography and war, knowledge production, state power

Abstract: The Gesellschaft für Erdkunde zu Berlin (Berlin Geographical Society) belongs to the oldest Geographical Societies in Europe. It was established already in 1828, and from the 1871 foundation of the German Empire at the latest, the Society claimed national leadership in the production and communication of geographical knowledge. The talk will, for the period between 1914 and 1940, examine various practices through which the Society and its members attempted to gain political influence in various social and scientific contexts. The focus will be on three points: The establishment of “Commissions on Regional Geography” during World War I; reactions to the spatial reorganization of Europe after 1919; and the Society’s function as an arena of National Socialist propaganda after 1933.

THE COMMUNIST LEADERSHIP OF THE HUNGARIAN GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY AFTER THE HUNGARIAN SOVIET REPUBLIC, 1919 – SIN, PENANCE AND ABSOLUTION

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Keywords: Hungarian Geographical Society, political ideology, science history

Abstract: In the spring of 1919, shortly after the communist takeover in Hungary, the old leadership of HGS (like the leadership of all Hungarian learned societies) was replaced by a new one loyal to the new system. However, when the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic collapsed in August, 1919, the first committee of the Society’s reinstated board decided to investigate the collaboration with the previous regime. To make the case more delicate, one of the sinners was the renowned meteorologist,

member of the old board, Antal Réthly whose professional legitimacy was beyond question. Reading the protocols of the well-documented investigation it gradually unfolds that, the heated climate of the political turmoil notwithstanding, this case could not be reduced to a simple political condemnation. While the Hungarian Geographical Society and its leadership supported the counter-revolutionary, nationalist-conservative regime of interwar Hungary, old ties, friendships and scholarly reputations might have helped geographers to transcend ideological barriers. In my paper I want to show that, though connections between ideology and politics certainly mattered, on a personal level the story is much more complicated.

“THOSE UNCONSCIONABLE MAPS OF EMPIRE”: THE AMERICAN GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY AND THE POLITICS OF IMPERIALISM, 1916-1945

Author: *Mike Heffernan**, University of Nottingham, United Kingdom

Keywords: American Empire, American Geographical Society

Abstract: This paper provides a critical commentary on the American Geographical Society's geopolitical activities between the wars. Particular attention is paid to the Society's attempts to promote a more internationalist and assertively imperial vision of the United States as a modern, 20th century power that could challenge and eventually replace the global authority of older European states in seemingly terminal decline. This was a contentious view, to be sure, and was fiercely rejected by more isolationist elements within American political culture. Drawing on unpublished, previously unknown archival sources, the paper considers the Society's apparently disinterested and objectively scientific attempts to influence American policy towards Europe and the Middle East during and immediately after World War One, and towards Latin America during the 1920s and 1930s, the latter exemplified by the Society's Map of Hispanic America, a 20-year compilation project to devise a new cartographic representation of the Americas south of the United States.

TERRITORIAL REVISION AT THE SERVICE OF EUROPEAN CIVILISATION: THE FOREIGN LINKS OF A CONCEPT IN INTERWAR HUNGARIAN GEOGRAPHY

Author: *Ferenc Gyuris**, Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary

Keywords: civilising mission, geography and war, Hungary, mobilities of knowledge, territorial revision

Abstract: After being traumatised by the immense territorial losses resulting from the 1920 Trianon Peace Treaty, Hungary's political leaders, alongside a vast majority of Hungarian scholars, considered territorial revision as a major goal. Geographers played a crucial role in this process by creating a wide array of arguments to provide scientific justification for reestablishing the pre-1920 boundaries. One of these arguments presented the Carpathian Basin as the scene of a grandiose civilising mission, with Hungarians destined to bring civilisation to other nationalities who were, from the Hungarian perspective, “at a lower cultural level”. The geopolitical struggles of interwar Hungary were thus projected onto the European level by implying that the fulfilling of Hungarian revisionary goals should be of crucial interest to the entire continent, and to the flourishing of European civilisation. Similar to many other notions serving the revisionist aims of Hungary, however, this concept was not a uniquely Hungarian one, but it strongly relied on a language and methods already present in several national geographies in Europe and North America. Hence, the aim of my paper is to reveal the international roots of this narrative, to analyse the way it arrived in Hungarian geography in bits and pieces from various foreign geographies, and to compare the concept with its counterparts in other countries during and after World War I.

THE AIMS OF THE BELGIAN GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETIES, FROM THEIR FOUNDATION TO THE EVE OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Authors: *Christian Vandermotten**, Université Libre de Bruxelles, Académie Royale des Sciences, des Lettres et des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Belgium; *Henri Nicolai*

Keywords: Belgium, colonialism, geographical societies

Abstract: Belgian geographical societies were born during the last quarter of the XIXth Century. Moreover their scientific pretensions, their aim was to contribute to the building and the reinforcement of the national feeling, to support the commercial expansion and to contribute to the building of a colonies. Framed by some University professors and general officers, their members were mainly issued from the petty bourgeoisie, civil and military officers, teachers, etc. Through some documents coming from the archives or the publications of these societies, the communication will present how they assert the national identity through the exaltation of the beauties of the country or through launching inquiries with the concurrence of teachers; how they encourage explorators, if not paying for the explorations, due to a lack of money, at the difference of the main French and British societies; how they produce first-hand informations on the external markets; and how they will be involved in the debates between King Leopold II, the Belgian government and the colonial companies about the future of the Independent Congo State, which will only become Belgian Congo in 1909.