



PROF. KONRAD CZAPIEWSKI'S COOPERATION WITH BULGARIAN GEOGRAPHERS

Margarita Ilieva

Professor Emeritus

National Institute of Geophysics, Geodesy and Geography, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

Acad. Georgi Bonchev Str. Bl. 3, 1113 Sofia: Bulgaria

Kazimierz Wielki University, Institute of Geography (now Faculty of Geographical Sciences)

Plac Kościeleckich 8, 85-033 Bydgoszcz: Poland

ilieva_mm@abv.bg

The bilateral cooperation between scientists from the Institute of Geography and Spatial Organization of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Institute of Geography of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (now Department of Geography, National Institute of Geophysics, Geodesy and Geography) has longtime history. Different forms and intensity have characterised its development in separated periods, but the investigation of rural areas and agricultural activities have been a central topic of investigation the whole time. Of primary importance during the 1960s and the 1970s have been the collaborative researches in the field of agriculture in both countries, as well as the specializations of Bulgarian geographers in Poland and the investigation of Bulgarian agriculture from some young Polish geographers (e.g. in the framework of the Doctoral thesis of Dr. B. Gałczyńska).



Figure 1. K. Czapiewski, M. Ilieva and V. Székely (from the left) in Sofia
(Photo K. Janc)

Prof. Konrad Czapiewski joined this international collaboration with Bulgaria at a later stage, when the Bulgarian-Polish academic cooperation in the field of geography was restored in the mid-1990s after the long break (1980-1995), caused by the political and socio-economic changes that have characterised both countries in the end of XX century. The research projects, implemented under the framework of the scientific collaboration between the Polish and Bulgarian Academies of Sciences, were the main form of cooperation during the period 1995-2014. The main subject of these cooperative, comparative studies were the changes of agriculture, rural areas and border regions after the change of political system and the accession to the European Union, and their demographic, social, economic and territorial consequences in both countries.

More in particular, Prof. Konrad Czapiewski, has been involved in two of the research projects: as a junior researcher, he contributed to the project 'Regional Dimensions of Unemployment Level in Rural Areas in Poland and Bulgaria' (2004-2006) and, at a later stage, in the project 'Socio-economic aspects of the border regions development in the EU new member states (example of Poland and Bulgaria)' (2012-2014). He participated with interest in field investigations in the frame of these projects in Bulgaria – in the Rhodope Mountains, the Mesta River and the Struma River Valleys. All Bulgarian participants are remembering their amazement and admiration for his deep knowledge of tourist sites in our country, which he had visited before, and the details with which he described them and recounted his impressions. Because of his scientific interests that are focus on rural development issues, he presented the results from his investigations in this field and actively participated in the seminar discussions held in the framework of the two projects. One of his reports, 'Development Potential of Polish regions' (coauthored with Prof. Krzysztof Janc) has been published in the scientific journal *Problemi na Geografiata* (Problems of Geography, BAS, 1-2, 2006). In a seminar organised in Bulgaria within the second project, he then presented the report titled 'Spatial aspects of farmers' education in Poland', in so doing enriching the contents of the event with relevant insights from the Polish perspective.

Prof. Konrad Czapiewski collaborated with the geographers of the Bulgarian Academy of Science also as organiser and animator of the biannual conference *Warsaw Regional Forum*, first held in 2004, and organised the publication of the Forum's results as editor of the journal *Europa XXI*. All participants in this conferences won't forget his passionate participation in the discussions, his activity, organizational skills in the conference field trips, the friendly conversations and – above all – his friendship.

As a team-leader of all academic Bulgarian-Polish projects from the Bulgarian side and participant to several *Warsaw Regional Forums*, I got to know our colleague Prof. Konrad Czapiewski very well. Therefore I fully share the opinion of Prof. Jerzy Bański arguing that, beside the scientific activity and cooperation, Konrad valued the friendship with colleagues, both from Poland and from other countries. I will give only one example here. After my retirement, we had not seen each other for several years. In the end of 2021, Prof. Konrad Czapiewski, with his Polish and Slovak colleagues visited the Institute of Agrarian Economy in Sofia for a conference. It was an extremely pleasant surprise for me, when he called me, and then they were dear guests in our home to spend all together one very pleasant evening in a really friendly atmosphere. The gift I received that day from Konrad – 'Atlas Wyszehradzki. Visegrad Atlas', published in the same year – is still for me a very valuable gift and memory. He is one of the editors of this publication, together with Prof. Przemysław Śleszyński, and the author of four highly interesting maps included in the Atlas. This is the first edition of this type of publication, 'presenting the geographical diversity – natural, social and economic – of the four countries, forming the Visegrad Group' (p. 12). Appreciating its high significance for the field of geographical studies, I wrote a review

of the Atlas, which present 'both the potential of the Visegrad Group and the scientific potential' (p.19). This review is now published in *Problemi na Geografiata* (Problems of Geography, BAS, 1-2, 2022). I had wanted to inform him about publication of this review around August, 22-23, 2022, by e-mail. Maybe my message is one of the last that have landed in his e-mail box. Unfortunately, we cannot know if he had the chance to read this one last appreciation of his highly relevant work.

