

From the President's Desk

Dear Colleagues,

The untimely death of ESEH regional representative Alexei Karimov overshadows ESEH business. Please take time to read the obituary Jan Oosthoek has compiled for this issue of the Notepad.

In order to honour Alexei's concerns, which he shared with me, I would like to draw your attention to the role and place of environmental history in a changing world. At one of the conferences of our sister organisation the American Society for Environmental History, I heard a talk by Roderick Nash, who shared his memories of the unexpected overwhelming success of a class in environmental history he offered way back in the 1970s, where literally hundreds of students had shown up. A few days ago I was informed that a lecture about environmental history I had been asked to give for history teachers had to be cancelled due to lack of interest. In recent dealing with a publishing house about a book on the subject to be produced, I was given the simple reply that environment was a 'non-seller'.

While the world seems concerned with security and terrorism, the environment has slipped out of public consciousness and concern. Species continue to go extinct at alarming rates and while smog does not kill as many as it did, the ozone hole has become a threat to humans in the southern hemisphere. Global warming is not a scenario any more: it is very real, and the effects can be measured not only in degrees, but also in lives lost and homes damaged by the increased rate of storms. The floods which were discussed in the opening plenary at the Prague ESEH conference are another sign of this real change. ESEH's upcoming conference has 'History and Sustainability' as its major theme, in an attempt to make the connection between Environmental History and Environmental Policy more visible. I would like to invite you to use the conference to share not just our scholarly results, but also our concern about the role of environmental issues in society at large. I hope for panels and round-tables that will pick these themes up to allow for the exchange of experiences and, hopefully, some new and good ideas to bring environmental themes into mainstream politics. After all, how can we feel secure if the ecosystems around us are not?

Best wishes,

Verena Winiwarter

Alexei Karimov

The field of environmental history has sustained an enormous loss with the unexpected and vastly premature death of Alexei Enverovich Karimov. He was involved in a fatal car accident while returning to Moscow from a conference in St. Petersburg on 28 February 2004. Alexei worked as a Senior Researcher at the Institute for the History of Science and Technology of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

Alexei was a familiar face at ESEH meetings and acted for many years as Regional Representative of the European Society for Environmental History for Russia and Eastern European countries. Many of us met him first at the ESEH meeting in St. Andrews where he stood out by virtue of his genial and enjoyable personality, as well as his knowledge of the history of land mapping, land-use and land assessment in Central Russia from the seventeenth century to the present. He was the recipient of awards and international recognition, including a visiting fellowship from the British Academy, the Russian Federation State Stipend for Talented Young Sciences, awarded by the Russian Academy of Sciences, and a fellowship of the Russian Federation Foundation for Basic Research.

It is due to Alexei that we have learnt to look more eastwards, and to appreciate the rich research tradition in the former Soviet lands, as well as the problems faced by researchers there. He also promoted ESEH tirelessly in Russia and he created an ESEH website in Russian in order to reach more colleagues.

Alexei was a true gentleman who had learned Oxbridge English from his grandfather. He was also very proud of his car and showed it to a few people in Prague. As always, he put things in perspective when he pointed out that the car was no beauty, but he stressed how strong it was and how it took him wherever he wanted to go. Alexei apparently liked to be on the road, and drove once all the way from Moscow to The Hague in the Netherlands. In September 2003 it took him eight days to drive to Prague to attend the second ESEH International Conference. It is hard to believe that we will never meet Alexei Karimov again. He will be missed as both friend and colleague.

Travel Grants for ESEH 2005 Conference

Due to generous funding from the regional Government of Tuscany, the ESEH is pleased to announce a travel grants competition for presenters attending the 2005 Florence conference: Ten travel grants of 500 Euro each, and more than twelve grants of 200 Euro each will be available for participants whose paper or poster has been accepted for presentation.

In particular graduate students and scholars from low-income countries are encouraged to submit an application for a travel grant.

If you would like to compete for one of these grants, please submit your application through the conference website at www.eseh2005.unifi.it/grants.html. Please note that the deadline for applications is 15 September 2004.

SOCIETY PAGES

Your application must include the following information:

- Your approximate travel costs
- One-page CV. Please do not exceed one page
- One-page statements describing why you need this travel grant

If you are a graduate student, this letter should include information about how close you are to finishing your degree, and how you are currently funding your education, as well as the abstract of your presentation, indicating the panel or poster session for which it was accepted for presentation (if known). We regret that no late applications can be accepted, and we can only handle applications submitted through the website. We will notify applicants of the decision as early as possible, by 15 October 2004 at the latest. If you have any queries regarding this grant competition please email ESEH Treasurer Ulrich Koppitz at: <koppitz@uni-duesseldorf.de> or <info@eseh2005.unifi.it>.

Historical Geography and Environmental History

The Founding of the Section for Historical Geography and Environmental History within the Czech Geographical Society (CGS)

In response to the demonstrated interest of some members of the Czech Geographical Society (CGS), its Steering Committee approved the establishment of a new CGS Section for Historical Geography and Environmental History at its meeting in Prague on 12 February 2004. Dr. Leoš Jeleček from the Department of Social Geography and Regional Development, Faculty of Natural Science, Charles University, was elected chairperson of the Section on the basis of results of a prior secret ballot of those interested in its founding.

The establishment of the Section is, amongst others, a logical outcome of the successful course of the 2nd ESEH International Conference, which took place at the Faculty of Natural Science in Prague in September 2003. The Local Organising Committee of the conference was mostly composed of members of the Dept. of Social Geography and Regional Development and of the Institute for Environment in the same faculty. For more details see <www.natur.cuni.cz/ICESEH2003> or go to the website <www.eseh.org/conference_2003/prague_2003.html>.

Both the disciplines have a markedly interdisciplinary character, putting emphasis on historical approach in geography and geographical approach in history and helping to deepen a holistic paradigm of geography. Generally speaking, environmental history and historical geography may serve as a bridge between geography and ecology, sciences concerned with living nature on the one hand and humanities on the other hand.

The major aim of the Section is to associate all geographers interested in the field and create a discussion platform for those scholars who more or less deal with the above-mentioned disciplines. We will make an effort to support teaching of both disciplines at Czech universities and strive for greater application of the historical approach in regional and socio-economic geography, in a Czech context but also beyond. Furthermore we shall strive to inform the wider public about the subjects and their results. We would like the Section to

become a platform for discussions of interdisciplinary approaches, in the case of environmental history particularly with physical geographers and landscape ecologists. The Section may at the same time be an institutional partner for ESEH and the international community of historical geographers and, last but not least, create a background for authors and editors of the journal *Klaudyán* (edited by Jiri Martínek, <www.klaudyán.psomart.cz>), etc.

We intend to organise at least once a year a half- to one-day seminar or workshop interchangeably dedicated to topics from the field of historical geography and environmental history, where we will invite colleagues from all Czechia.

Leoš Jeleček

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European Society for Environmental History

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ESEH aims to promote environmental history in Europe, by encouraging and supporting research, teaching and publications in the field. The ESEH maintains its web site at <www.eseh.org>.

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Items for the next Notepad should be sent by 1 July 2004 to the address below.

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