

## 7th International Symposium "Cultural Heritage in Geosciences, Mining and Metallurgy, Leiden (The Netherlands)"

The International "Erbe" Symposium, exploring the cultural heritage of geology, mining and metallurgy, has a ten-years' tradition thanks to the support from the organizing countries. In Austria, Germany and other European countries, as well as North America, this Symposium is considered quite prestigious. Usually, the Symposium gains official status from the host country, as well as enjoying the cooperation of the Geological Survey of Austria (Geologische Bundesanstalt) and Austrian Geological Society (Österreichische Geologische Gesellschaft) from Vienna; several universities and professionals from various other institutions, according to the site where the symposium is held, also provide their support. Previous symposia took place in Freiberg (Germany, 1993), Leoben (Austria, 1995), St. Petersburg (Russia, 1997), Banská Štiavnica (Slovakia, 1998), Colorado (USA, 2000), Idrija (Slovenia, 2002). Czech-Austrian cooperative agreements in the field of geology and under the auspices of the Ministry of the Environment, assured that the Czech party had been already involved in these activities.

This 7th Symposium was convened in the second half of May 2003 in Leiden, The Netherlands. The site of the symposium predetermined its contents to a certain degree. Unlike the places where previous "Erbe" symposia were held (e.g., German Freiberg, Slovak Banská Štiavnica or Slovenian Idrija), where long-term mining influenced very significantly the environmental, cultural and natural character of the area, Leiden is not an old mining centre. It is, however, a town with many museums and remarkable collections. This is why the organizers, with the spirit of the cultural traditions of these international meetings, decided to express the central theme of this year's Symposium as "Museums and their Collections". The talks and lectures took place in the Leiden National Museum of Natural Sciences (Nationaal Natuurhistorisch Museum). A tour of this important museum was a natural and significant part of the Symposium, as well as the excursions to other museums: The National Museum of the History of Science Boerhaave, the National Ethnographic Museum (Rijksmuseum van Volkenkunde) in Leiden and the Teylers Museum in the nearby Haarlem. This last one is a very special, generalistic museum largely preserving its 18th century atmosphere, with collections ranging from old drawings and coins to geological objects and pieces of



A part of the imposing interior of the Leiden National Museum of Natural Sciences (Nationaal Natuurhistorisch Museum). Photo by Dr. Andrea Beyer.

scientific instruments, and possessing a magnificent library of old scientific literature.

The majority of contributions and excursions that took place during the Symposium showed museums, archives, and other centres of historical, geological, paleontological, and mineralogical material contained extremely important information, perhaps collected in the past in a different social situation and climate than exists now. It can be, however, successfully used, with the help of current information technologies, for modern goals and objectives. Such goals and objectives include education, scientific learning, strengthening of cultural consciousness and environmental problems. They thus represent indispensable sources of valuable data.

The Czech-Austrian contribution "How to use old maps for the environmental issues in the Czech Republic" was presented as a lecture and a poster and fit well in the total thematic framework of the conference. It was the only contribution that referred to the territory of the Czech Republic. The Austrian co-organizers also characterized it as the result of a 14-years' successful international Czech-Austrian cooperative effort on the theme of using old geological archival materials.

All lectures and contributions of the Symposium can be divided into two groups:

1. The majority were dealing with the presentation of geological, mineralogical and paleontological collections of the museums, archives and libraries in several countries – in the Netherlands, Austria, Russia, Norway, Denmark, Portugal, Slovakia and others. These contributions were not mere descriptions of collected materials with samples but contributions that stated emphatically what these collections could mean for the life of contemporary man and the future generations. Philosophical tone sounded in the lecture of John de Vos (Leiden) about the meaning of the collection and works of the great Dutch anthropologist M. T. Dubois from the viewpoint of the traditional "place of man in nature" and sustainable development. Other contributions pointed out the progress that the museum collections made from their beginning to contemporary use. Two especially interesting lectures were given by the Dutch participant Steven de Clercq (Utrecht) and Leo Kriegman (Leiden) about the "Dutch approach" to establish the second life of museums – new impetus for using geological collections once considered of marginal interest. The entry of F. Sterrenbrug (Utrecht) about the importance of diatoms (using the example of the Kinker collection) from their original identification, through time, to their usage in contemporary environmental protection and their function in microclimate and hydrology, was closely connected with this idea. Most of the lectures of the Dutch specialists had a strong environmental emphasis.

2. The other, much smaller group was represented by contributions on various themes. They concentrated on the importance of geological or mining documents with respect to their positive use for landscape reclamation and the mining history of some localities. This second group included, besides the Czech-Austrian contribution, the lecture of J. Čára and T. Dizdarevič (Idrija) on the influence of mining activities on the environment in Slovenian Idrija.

Apart from these two above mentioned groups, an important opening welcome was expressed and a lecture given by C. Winkler Prins (Leiden) to open the 7th Symposium. The event was concluded by the contribution of L. Jontes (Leoben) regarding the importance of all seven symposia for the cultural heritage of the geological and mining sciences. The invitation by Ch. Hauser (Vienna) to the 8th Erbe Symposium to be held in Tyrolian Schwaz – an important old mining centre – in 2005 made all participants look forward to the next meeting.

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