

**REGIONAL CONFERENCE OF LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIB-
BEAN COUNTRIES; LATIN AMERICA IN THE WORLD: ENVI-
RONMENT, SOCIETY AND DEVELOPMENT
(HABANA, CUBA,
JULY 29 TO AUGUST 12, 1995)**

In Habana (Cuba) a regional geographic conference of Latin American and Caribbean countries has taken place between July 31 and August 5; I participated on behalf of the Karst Research Institute ZRC SAZU with the financial support of Ministry of Science and Technology RS.

The Conference has taken place in spacious and well-preserved, and well equipped congress center in Habana (Palacio de las Convenciones). The program included the plenary sessions, postconference field-work, symposium and free topics.

Among the the scientific issues let me enumerate the following: Natural processes and geodynamics, Space and region serving to people, Environment: problems and new alternatives (within this issue the topic for karstology appeared under the title **PROBLEMATIC ENVIRONMENTS: KARST REGIONS**, guided by Dr. Javier Rodriguez Rubio, Cuba), New methods and technologies, Geographical mind and education, Latin America: conflicts and directions.

The main topics of the "karstological issue" of the Conference were: Relations between Eastern and Central Cuba tropical karst, Hydrology and dynamics of karst proceses, Test karst terrain, Human impact on karst environment, Exploitation, use and safeguarding of karst regions and Methodology issued from the theoretical researches applied on karst.

The lectures went on the whole day, in the morning from 8 a.m. to noon and in the afternoon from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. Apart from frantic introduction and fare-well parties of South American type, several facultative activities were organized. The Conference's official languages were English and French although great majority of participants were Spanish spoken.

As a co-author of Andrej Kranjc I presented the paper entitled Highways across Karst - Environmental Risk with Special Regard to World Natural Heritage. I tried to present and emphasise the problems of motorway constructions over the karst terrains and to stress the problem of the karst underground safeguarding in respect to UNESCO's World Heritage (Škocjanske jame).

The Conference was attended, according to estimation by more than 1000 people from 45 different countries and from almost all the continents. The president of the Organization Committee was well known Antonio Nunez Jimenez, the President of the Cuban IGU National Committee.

The Conference was organised by a joint cooperation of Cuban National

Committee of Geography, Academy of Sciences of Cuba, University, Habana, Pedagogical Institute "Enrique Jose Varona, Cuban Geographical Association and International Geographical Union (IGU).

Within the field work on the tropical karst we visited a karst doline, near capital Viñales, in the province Pinar del Rio, some 200 km W of Habana. The karstic landscape with famous carbonate mogotes in the middle of more or less flat country is supposed to be, besides China, Puerto Rico, and Vietnam, the unique in the world.

We visited not only the superficial karst features but also the longest Cuban cave Gran Caverna de Santo Tomas (45 km in length), and the cave Majaguas-Cantera Cavern System (37 km in length). On our return we visited some shorter show-caves (Great Cavern, Dos Anas) in the Ancon valley.

The participation in the Conference and the visit to tropical karst near Habana were, without doubt, extremely interesting, instructive, and advantageous. I formed connections with the colleagues (Cuban and others) dealing with the karst researches, on behalf of the Karst Research Institute ZRC SAZU and on my own behalf; consequently I think that the voyage to Cuba achieved its purpose.

Martin Knez