EEPG History/Geography Network Meeting in Zürich, 1–3 June 2005

Participants:

Ms Aija Balcere, Zvaigzne ABC Publishers; e-mail: aija.balcere@zvaigzne.lv
Mr Leo Skulte, Zvaigzne ABC Publishers; e-mail: leo.skulte@zvaigzne.lv
Ms Kärt Jänes-Kapp, Koolibri Publishers; e-mail: kart@koolibri.ee
Mr Christiaan Hollander, Bokförlaget Natur och Kultur; e-mail: christiaan.hollander@nok.se
Mr Evaldas Bakonis, Alma Littera/Sviesa Publishers; e.bakonis@sviesa.lt
Ms Mari Rakkolainen, Otava Publishing Company; e-mail: mari.rakkolainen@otava.fi
Mr Ivan Dukić, Profil International; e-mail: ivan.dukic@profil.hr
Mr Robert Fuchs, Lehrmittelverlag des Kantons Zürich; e-mail: robert.fuchs@lmv.zh.ch
Mr Peter Feller, Lehrmittelverlag des Kantons Zürich; e-mail: peter.feller@lmv.zh.ch
Mr Preben Späth, EEPG Central Office; e-mail: eepg@adr.dk

Guest Speakers:

Mr Helmut Meyer (Author, Lehrmittelverlag des Kantons Zürich)
Mr Peter Gautschi (Author, Lehrmittelverlag des Kantons Zürich)
Ms Astrid Kugler/ Mr Andi Suter (Authors, Lehrmittelverlag des Kantons Zürich)
Mr Lothar Beckel, GEOSPACE, Salzburg

Minutes of the meeting:

Wednesday, 1 June: Arrival of the participants in Zurich

Thursday, 2 June:

Morning session:
Peter Feller, Lehrmittelverlag des Kantons Zürich, opened the meeting by welcoming the participants and giving a presentation of the publishing house.

Preben Späth gave a brief history of the background of the Virtual Classroom project where 10 EEPG members have selected the relevant texts and pictures about the Potsdam Conference in their history books for upper secondary level. These contributions have been translated into English and sent to Götz Schwarzrock, Cornelsen Verlag. Unfortunately he had to cancel his participation in this meeting, so the actual status of this project is not known. On the other hand Preben Späth described the possibilities for EEPG members to connect with the Council of Europe’s History Project (please see the minutes of the EEPG History network meeting in Strasbourg (December 2004) for details on this project). There was interest among the participants to investigate this opportunity further and Preben Späth was asked to contact Ms Mechthilde Fuhrer, Council of Europe, for further information on issues like: guidelines for documents to be put on the CD-ROM series, possibility for EEPG members to distribute the CD-ROMs in their own countries in English, French and/or their own language, find out whether the existing Potsdam documents can be integrated into the CD-ROMs, exclusive rights for each country etc. In addition it was suggested to consider organising the next History network meeting in Strasbourg to deal in more detail with the links between the EEPG and Council of Europe.

Afternoon session:
Helmut Meyer, author at the Lehrmittelverlag des Kantons Zürich, gave a lecture and presentation about Maps and Pictures in History Lessons. Some interesting points formed the starting point of the lecture:
- pictures will often be remembered longer than texts
- maps show more than just geography: religion, technology, and history. In History textbooks only the relevant aspects are shown, all others are hidden
- every picture has a message, 100% objective pictures do not exist

The topics included in this detailed presentation were different types of maps; limitations of working with maps; pictures as sources in History (paintings, sculptures, buildings, caricatures, photos, portraits, pictures carrying political messages etc.); description and analysis of the pictures and the interpretation. Many different pictures in the presentation showed the opportunities but also the limitations (dangers) of using pictures in History lessons.

**Presentations by the participants:**

Ivan Dukic, Profil International, informed about the role of History in the school system of Croatia. Next he presented a new History textbook (‘Povijest’ = History) for the 5th grade with innovative features like cartoons and comic strips along with new topics to awaken the interest of the pupils. In addition Profil has published a CD-ROM with lots of materials for History for 5th and 6th grade

Kärt Jänes-Kapp, Koolibri Publishers, informed the participants that Koolibri has not published any new History books since the last History network meeting (Strasbourg, December 2004). The most important publication in this field is still the world history for the gymnasium (also mentioned in the Strasbourg minutes!).
Mari Rakkolainen, Otava Publishing Company, presented from the series ‘Historian Tuulet’ (The Winds of History) the books for 7th and 8th grade just released. Otava is market leader in History in Finland, now represented in the schools with two parallel series: ‘Horisonti’ and ‘Historian Tuulet’. For both series there is a requirement form the teachers to have guidelines and support materials to use the textbooks in the classroom. Finally Mari Rakkolainen presented the Forum series which will in the end consist of 10 books, six for History and four for Civics. Outstanding features of these books are that young authors write them; that they use a multiperspective approach to History (e.g. documenting the history of ordinary people); and that new types of documents and sources are being used.

Christiaan Hollander, Bokförlaget Natur och Kultur, described the situation in Sweden where Natur och Kultur is market leader in History, Civics and Geography. New aspects of their textbooks are the addition of packages with transparencies and detailed teacher’s guides for History, Geography and Religion. For most textbooks in these subjects a light version is being produced for pupils with reading difficulties, for children of immigrants etc.

Aija Balceres, Zvaigzne ABC Publishers, presented the situation of Geography books in Latvia. It is not compulsory to publish workbooks whereas teacher’s guides for these textbooks are felt more important. It is required to have a progression in Geography from 6th to 9th grade starting with the Basics in the first year and then expanding to the main continents in the next two years and finishing in the 9th grade with the Geography of Latvia.
Leo Skulte, Zvaigzne ABC Publishers, described how all History textbooks must be accompanied by exercise books and teacher’s guides. Furthermore he presented an Encyclopaedia of Latvia (published by Zvaigzne) which has become a very big success both on the school market and on the home market.

Evaldas Bakonis, Alma Littera/Šviesa Publishers, told that the Alma Littera group has now more than 70% of the textbook market in Lithuania. As for History he presented a new project called ‘Lithuania in the World’ for grades 7 to 10. Here everyday life has more weight than kings and generals; e.g. life in Soviet times is described with original photos and documents. For each piece of text and/or each picture many questions are asked to the learners. For example for a two double page there is normally 40 questions and more per topic.

In the evening the participants were taking a guided tour through the old town of Zürich after which the Lehrmittelverlag invited everybody to a typical Swiss dinner in the centre of the old town.

Friday, 3 June:

Morning session

Peter Gautschi, author of many History books, gave a lecture (with illustrations) on the topic Learning History through Stories – Narrative Aspects in Teaching Aids „Viele Wege - eine Welt“. Using some texts of
fiction from a new History textbook as a starting point Peter Gautschi showed how fictional texts and other types of narratives can give a new entrance to and new perspectives on History. Among other things he described is the movement from reconstructing to deconstructing events in History using narratives. Not all historical fiction is suitable, among the requirements are: a) the text must provide an opportunity for identification; b) the text should allow questions as to the meaning, i.e. it should deal with timeless questions and enable discussion of universal principles; c) the text must allow the learners to understand the background of other people’s life and living conditions. Finally there were suggestions for teachers to ask students questions to build their own narratives reflecting their own history

Preben Späth, EEPG, gave a presentation on the use of maps in Geography and History from a semiotic perspective. First he introduced the main concepts of Semiotics (different types of signs, paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes etc.). Then he presented the world of maps from a Semiotic perspective (projections, visual variables and constants in a map, Semiotic interpretation of signs in a map etc.) and finally showed examples of maps from History books (from members of the EEPG) commenting on the Semiotic perspectives of the maps in the textbooks (e.g. why is Germany often depicted in a brown colour?)

Astrid Kugler and Andi Suter, authors of textbooks for Geography from the Lehrmittelverlag, presented the use of maps in their new textbook „Europe – People, Economy, Nature“ (the book participated in the EEPG Schoolbook Awards 2004). They presented and discussed many very different types of maps and gave hints about how to use them in the classroom
Lothar Beckel, GEOSPACE (Austria), presented the School Atlas project from the European Space Agency. He described various ways of using satellite images as maps in History and Geography. The complete School Atlas will hold 272 pages allowing the individual countries to have several pages of maps dedicated to the specific country. A DVD will soon be released with lots of relevant data. The structure of the atlas follows these lines: first a global view of the Earth, then chapters describing the continents, then the natural sphere is presented and finally the cultural sphere (i.e. those features of the Earth that have been created – or destroyed! – by man. More information can be found on the web site: www.esa.int/education/eduspace.

Afternoon session

Preben Späth, EEPG, gave a presentation on the Narrative Aspects of History Books, using the concept of narrative as a starting point. Building on the definitions of narratives he demonstrated the actant model of Greimas and the four main types of heroes found in historical texts. The final topic was censorship and the pressure of interest groups regarding schoolbooks. The issue was inspired by the fact that Veritas Verlag had had to withdraw and change their History textbook „Durch die Vergangenheit zur Gegenwart 8“ (Through the past to the present). The photo on the cover of Israeli soldiers threatening Palestinian persons had been criticised by the Jewish community in Vienna and subsequently withdrawn and changed. These two covers were the starting points of a very interesting discussion. Examples from the countries represented were pressure from Hinduists and homosexuals, the balance between different religions as they are depicted in textbooks, problems of acceptance or non-acceptance of genocides throughout history etc.
As the last item of the network meeting the participants agreed that the meeting had been very fruitful and made the following suggestions for topics to be discussed at coming meeting(s) of the network:

- Drama in History teaching (e.g. materials for dramatising historical events and situations)
- Next meeting should spend one day on History and one day on Social Science (since Geography has been dealt with extensively during this meeting)

On behalf of the participants I wish to thank the hosts from Lehrmittelverlag des Kantons Zürich for their valuable contribution to this meeting and their work to make the meeting a success.

25.06.2005
Preben Späth