

THE INTELLECTUAL
LEGACY
OF ERNEST GELLNER

Special Memorial Issue

GUEST EDITOR Peter Skalník

EDITOR'S PREFACE

This special issue of *Social Evolution and History* reflects an unabating interest in the thought of Ernest Gellner (1925–1995).

On the one hand Gellner's intellectual fellows and students are still quite many, on the other the time has allowed them and others interested to submit his work to scientific critique, in the exact spirit of falsifiability he so passionately defended against the 'betrayers of modernity'. The credit for the initiative to convene panel XVIII of the 2nd International Conference on Hierarchy and Power in the History of Civilizations, held in St. Petersburg between 4 and 7 July 2002, goes to Declan Quigley (then at the University of St. Andrews). He also gave the panel its title, 'The Intellectual Legacy of Ernest Gellner'. Quigley invited the undersigned to join him in the role as the second convenor, in order to help bring to St. Petersburg as representative a sample of scholars working on Gellner as was possible. Sixteen scholars sent in abstracts (Madawi Al-Rasheed, Jackie Assayag, Michał Buchowski, André Czeglédy, John Davis, David Eickelman, John Hall, Chris Hann, Patrick Heady, Anatoly Khazanov, Emanuel Marx, Benni Neuberger, Declan Quigley, David Shankland, Peter Skalník, and Eftihia Vou-tira). However only Assayag, Davis, Eickelman, Hann, Quigley and Skalník arrived in St. Petersburg. The panel took place on July 5, 2002, in the Green Hall of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Each paper was accorded in average one hour which enabled both detailed presentation and thorough discussion. What surprised us was the very weak presence of Russian scholars. After all, Gellner was a frequent visitor to Moscow and Leningrad and his work should have been known among Russian social scientists.

All participants and authors of abstract were invited to submit their papers for publication in the new journal, *Social Evolution*

and History. The journal's editors kindly accepted the current editor's suggestion to publish the papers in the form of a special issue. The gestation period of this collection of essays number has been slow but finally the response proved good. Unfortunately, Declan Quigley had to withdraw from editorship due to unforeseen changes in his academic position. Eventually Assayag, Buchowski, Czeglédy, Hann, Heady, Shankland and Skalnik submitted their papers. As Davis and Eickelman addressed a very important issue of Gellner's fieldwork in Morocco and theories flowing out of it, but did not submit papers for publication, I used an editor's discretion to invite a young scholar, Radim Tobolka, to add his analysis of the issue to the rest of the papers. Appended to the eight papers are two review articles. One deals with Ernest Gellner's last book, the other is an account about, and so far, the only monographic evaluation of Gellner's work.

I believe that the present volume forms a coherent whole which complements previously published collections of critical essays about Gellner. It is hoped that social scientists around the world, Russia included, will welcome it. If reading of the texts collected here inspires more social scientists than previously, to study Gellner's work and to then be encouraged to apply his ideas in their own thinking and research then the purpose of this special issue of *Social Evolution and History* will be realized. Last but not least I wish to thank Leonid Grinin for his unrelenting support and patience. Dawn Hammond kindly and promptly helped with language editing. Grant Agency of the Czech Republic made possible my trip to St. Petersburg.

Peter Skalnik

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