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PREFACE

This volume of Proceedings has been designed to serve a number of purposes, among which are: 1) an inventory of current research in Latin American geography by North Americans, 2) identification of some of the major research themes characterizing the geographic literature, and 3) a beginning attempt to identify some of the needs for further research. Despite the fact that this is the most comprehensive review of the field yet published, this volume reflects the limitations of its origins as the record of initial attempts at organizing a continuing forum for review of geographic research interests in Latin America. The papers published here were originally presented at the first Conference of Latin Americanist Geographers hosted by Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana. A brief review of the background of the conference is given below.

In June, 1969, a group of fifteen United States geographers met privately during the IX Congress of the Pan American Institute of Geography and History in Washington, D.C. to assess the current status of geographic research on Latin America. It was decided to organize a small-group conference of some twenty-five geographers who would review existing research themes and identify the most urgently needed areas for further efforts. Participation was initially restricted to North American researchers only because we could not envision much financial support and because we badly underestimated the enthusiastic response which the conference theme received. In November, 1969, a formal meeting of some twenty-five conference organizers met at Michigan State University to set a date, time and format for the conference. Dean Robert Carmin offered the use of Ball State University facilities and the group accepted. The conference was planned for April 30 to May 3, 1970. Also, the group decided to apply for grant funds from the National Science Foundation and the Social Science Research Council. The conference was organized in nine panels, which with some minor changes are reflected by the major sections of this book. The organizing committee elected thirteen panel chairmen or co-chairmen,

elected Robert Thomas as Secretary, Robert Carmin and Tom Martinson as a Local Arrangements committee, and Barry Lentnek as Program Chairman. The National Science Foundation funded the conference in January, 1970 (Grant number GS 2865, matched in part by Ball State University) and the Social Science Research Council provided travel monies for foreign observers in February, 1970. The conference was endorsed by the Committee on Geography of the National Academy of Sciences and by the United States National Section of the Pan American Institute of Geography and History (PAIGH). Nilo Bernardes, President of the Geography Section of PAIGH, represented that organization at the conference and Pedro Geiger (Brazil), Carlos Merida (Guatemala), and Silvana Levi de Lopez (Mexico) accepted invitations to observe the conference. The panel chairmen obtained the participation of panel participants and a general invitation was issued to North American geographers to attend the conference. Over one hundred observers came to the conference. From what was conceived to be a small gathering of interested professionals, the program rapidly grew in ten months to a full-fledged conference involving over forty papers and approximately 150 participants. At the close of the conference, participants decided to create a continuing international organization dedicated to progress in Latin American Geography. They elected an executive committee consisting of the thirteen panel chairmen as well as Preston James, John Augelli, and Barry Lentnek.

The growth of the initial idea into an on-going international organization was so rapid that the editors fear a number of "weaknesses" are reflected in the content and organizational format of this first set of *Proceedings*. Readers are cautioned that this review of research is not comprehensive in absolute terms for at least the following reasons. First, it was not feasible financially or in terms of simple timing to include the large number of Latin, European or other geographers who have been conducting a great deal of substantive research in Latin America. Second, authors of papers constituting this book were given complete freedom, and indeed urged to use personal judgement in identifying and evaluating current research themes and areas of needed research; their papers were edited only for style and not for content and the responsibility and credit for the content of papers rests with the authors. Finally, time did not permit detailed analysis of all research possibilities of the topics covered. Our basic purpose was to survey geographic research on Latin America as of the end of the 1960's and to stimulate and give direction to further research. Further conferences such as the one held in Boston, Massachusetts during April, 1971 dealing with population

geography, and a second general meeting at Syracuse University in December, 1971 dealing with issues related to development will build on this beginning. A more concentrated effort to identify research lacunae and to suggest methodological and theoretical innovations will be published in a book approved by the Executive Committee. Provisionally the book is titled *Leading Issues in Latin American Geography*.

In conclusion, the editors wish to express their views of the peculiar opportunities and dangers inherent in a regional approach to geographic research. First, it is obvious from even a brief glance at the table of contents of this book or any similar regional review that regional geography can not be justified on the basis of particular topics. Any sizeable group of regionalists tend to reflect a large range of the interests of the discipline.

Second, it is equally obvious that particular culture areas at a point in time tend to have a somewhat different mix of development and other human problems as well as a somewhat different set of practices regarding utilization of resources to solve these problems. For example, rural-urban migration patterns, problems of industrialization and the problems of subsistence agriculture may well prove to be leading issues facing Latin American populations whereas the mix of problems commanding the most attention in North America will differ, at least in emphasis. In short, the application of geographic research techniques and theories of geographic patterns seems to require a specific tailoring to meet Latin American needs.

Third, theory construction in geography has had roots in empirical generalizations of the past. As a result, much of the current stock of theories and models may not be very useful in the contexts of Latin American regions. We feel that two types of research effort need to be made: 1) a consistent attempt to apply and modify existing models in Latin American contexts, and 2) a consistent attempt to derive new theory and models from the Latin American experience. Both types of research virtually require a knowledge of the situation in particular areas of the culture realm. Hence, local knowledge remains essential for geographers working with Latin American data.

Finally, pure regional specialization in Latin American geography today is a virtual impossibility. Geographers are buried under a veritable avalanche of research output as well as the proliferating knowledge and methodology of the

topical specialists. This situation is further complicated by vast social upheavals in Latin America. Probably the best the geographer can do today is to combine a sound background in a particular topic with an adequate knowledge of a portion of Latin America and a firm grasp of current methodology. The editors fervently hope that this book provides a launching pad for this effort and that the book's content becomes obsolete due to new findings in the shortest possible time.

This book is the result of the efforts of many people. Thanks are due to the small group of organizers at Washington and East Lansing for their generous and unstinting efforts to fashion reality out of dreams. Particularly involved in the project's earliest phases were Robert Nunley, Clarence Minkel, Robert Thomas, John Augelli, Howard Gauthier, and last but certainly not least, Preston James. From November, 1969, the time of the East Lansing meeting, the number of persons actively contributing to the final result were so many that we can not individually recognize all of them. Authors of the papers deserve a great deal of thanks for they contributed valuable time to preparing papers without any assurance of financial support to present or publish their papers. Participants in the conference are due thanks for they came from all over North America – many without any financial support. Their enthusiastic participation was overwhelming. The conference program, printed as an appendix to this volume, lists others who contributed substantially to the success of the Muncie meeting.

Our financial angels (The National Science Foundation, The Social Science Research Council, and Ball State University) made it possible respectively to underwrite the expenses of the conference in general, four foreign observers, and the publication of this book. We gratefully recognize their support of an untried and highly experimental exercise in communication among Latin Americanist geographers. President John Pruis of Ball State University steadfastly supported the conference. Professor Ned Taaffe made it possible for Barry Lentnek to make innumerable and costly telephone calls on behalf of the Conference of Latin Americanist Geographers and to make full use of Geography department facilities at The Ohio State University. In addition, Taaffe and James jointly supported the application of the Conference of Latin Americanist Geographers for endorsement before the Committee on Geography of the National Academy of Sciences. Taaffe's and James' support, as well as that of the Committee and its chairman Saul Cohen, are gratefully acknowledged.

Allen Bushong of the University of South Carolina undertook the preconference

publication of the Proceedings. This was an onerous, frustrating and time consuming job. He and the Department of Geography at The University of South Carolina (which partially underwrote the costs of that publication) did a splendid job and surely improved the quality of the conference. Arthur Burt of the Department of State assiduously supported this project from beginning to end. If it were not for his efforts on our behalf, much of what was projected would never have been accomplished.

Finally, the man who helped convene the initial group of interested geographers and served as a counselor to the Program Chairman throughout the ten months of preparatory work is Clarence Minkel of Michigan State University. Without this continuous help, encouragement and advice, this book and the Conference of Latin Americanist Geographers would remain but a dream.