

Jean-Marie **BECKER**

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I was a young engineer when I met Jean-Marie in 1978. He had finalized the motorized levelling at the Lantmäteriet (the Swedish counterpart of the IGN) by resuming and perfecting the former work of his German colleagues. I had been strongly convinced by his publications and I had obtained the permission to attend the terrain work in the South of Sweden. I met an extremely engaging man, who combined an extraordinary technical common sense with a very developed feeling for human relations and for team spirit. He was one of these people who knew that a group of humans can only work efficiently if those who cannot follow are not forgotten but encouraged to catch up with the others. His personal involvement in the evolution of the techniques for precise levelling made him into the very first specialist in this field, a situation that lasted for at least thirty years. He tried everything, even using inertial units, while remaining as close as possible to the manufacturers and remaining attentive to their ideas and proposals. Each attempt resulted in deep reflexions that, written down in very detailed and honest publications (successes and failures,...), have allowed the world to progress without any discrimination. As the Scandinavian subcontinent rises slowly but visibly, due to the melting of glaciers from the last ice age, these countries have been confronted with particular difficulties when trying to manage this phenomenon that had a huge impact on their levelling networks. I saw Jean-Marie while he was inspiring the works of the Nordic Levelling Group, as far as I know the only task force dedicated to in-depth and operational research on the most efficient and cost-effective ways of keeping up a national altitude network. One of his main achievements was the organization, in 1999, of a congress in Sweden on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of motorized levelling.

In the meantime, Jean-Marie got also more and more involved in the activities of the FIG, first as president of several Commission 5 task forces and eventually as president of Commission 5 itself. He was always inspired by the same preoccupations: all surveyors have to be able to gain profit by the scientific activities of academic organizations such as the ISPRS or the IAG, but they are not up to it. The FIG has to provide the necessary technical vulgarization in order to ensure the technical vitality of the professional sector. In this field, he was always full of energy, communicating and attentive to the whole community, searching for volunteer collaboration wherever he could find it and listening to everybody, manufacturers included. His personal involvement also made him collaborate with several professional organizations, such as the AFT in France, where he has been a board member and active collaborator for some time.

Though he spoke several languages, he opposed himself - in vain, unfortunately - to the introduction of a one-language policy at the FIG, since he thought that the exclusive use of English would diminish considerably the capacities for technical vulgarization. This is why he associated himself with the creation of language groups, to limit the negative consequences of this choice he (and I) deplored very much.

Since he attached much importance to the communication of knowledge and to vulgarization, Jean-Marie became, a short time before his retirement, professor at the Royal Institute of Technology (BMG) in Gävle/Stockholm. He had a profound influence on a whole generation of surveyors, not only in Sweden, due to the aura he gave to the FIG's activities. In 2004, he was awarded honorary membership of this organization. His passing away, after a long and severe illness, leaves a void in the group he gathered around him. Nevertheless, his message remains: dare to undertake, pay attention to the others, judge only by the results.

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