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BOOK REVIEWS

Côtes en danger, Roland Paskoff, 1993. Masson Éditeur, Paris, 250p., 71 fig., 2 tables, 16 × 24 cm, 159 FF. ISBN 2-225-84009-1.

"Côtes en danger" is a manual in the "Pratiques de la géographie" collection which comprises at present three other books on climate, volcanism and mountains. In addition to its use as a geography manual, the editor mentions in his publicity that the work is also intended to increase awareness in the area of coastal destabilization problems, and it is targeted at the public at large as well as engineers and decision makers and users who will eventually be called upon for proposing remedies to the degradations which are often irreversible.

Roland Paskoff is an old hand in the area of coasts and he is capable of meeting the challenge. He started his university career as a geographer at the University of Chile in Santiago and the University of Tunis, and he is presently working at the Université Lumière in Lyon. Member of the Académie des Sciences d'Outre-mer, he presided over the Commission on the Coastal Environment of the International Geographical Union (IGU) from 1984 to 1992 and has been following its activities during the last two decades.

In spite of a thin soft cover which tears easily, the manual is well bound. Editing and printing are simple and sober in appearance and are well executed; this helps explain the fact that this particular editor proposes affordable prices. The reason for the low price may also be due to the fact that editing probably has been made automatically since the work does not have preliminary pages numbered in Roman numerals and, oddly enough, the title page is numbered as the first page, in Arabic numerals. Again, there is no list of figures and tables and the index, which is solely thematic, is quite concise. However, the metric system is respected integrally. A number of terms, such as "palues" (p. 60) or "perré" which do not have the same meaning in North America and in Europe, should have been the object of a glossary.

At the end of each chapter, we find minimal bibliographical orientation that does not always present the references from which figures and tables have been extracted; this at times is rather annoying. The documents mentioned are mostly in French, but in a third of the chapters the documents are presented mostly in English. The bibliographical orientations should have been mentioned in the table of contents as the other sections of each of the chapters. Going rapidly over these references, we have the impression that the contents of the manual will mostly be French with a few elements from the United States: let us hope that through reading the book this impression will dissipate.

The book offers pleasant reading and the subject matter is easily assimilated. Illustrations are simple and educational. Titles are informative and catchy, at the expense sometimes of not addressing the subject treated: for example, "Les dieux sont à la mer" (The gods are at sea) in the chapter "Plages à la dérive" (Beaches adrift). This is more akin to journalism, although it takes into account the ostensible object for the book to be destined for a "large public".

The nine chapters of the book have an average of 26 pages and 8 figures, and are as a whole relatively well balanced. The examples presented are taken of course from the author's own research area but a member of the Commission on the Coastal Environment of IGU will also find all the coasts visited during the scientific excursions and symposia the Commission has organized since 1976. However, the example of France, which is omnipresent, makes the manual difficult to assimilate as a basic course manual in other countries such as Canada. For example, when the author discusses erosion in coastal marshes (chapter 5), he could have cited an example in the St. Lawrence Estuary and Gulf, which is widely documented. On the other hand, geographers will find in the manual a plea to faculty members for their implication in coastal evolution studies and the diagnostic of infrastructure impacts (p. 71). Geographers are among the best placed for this type of study because of their training in the interrelations existing between Man and Nature (p. 9).

The book has no introduction, although all the

matter presented is well integrated from chapter to chapter. At first, the book deals with the problems related to the short- and long-term changes in relative marine level, their causes and their consequences. In the second chapter, the book discusses all the forms of coastal erosion. The following four chapters address specific problems related to artificial protection structures: (chapter 3), erosion of coastal dunes (chapter 4), erosion of coastal marshes including mangroves (chapter 5), and coral reefs (chapter 6).

Chapter 7 seems at first glance somewhat anecdotal with its title "Côtes disparues: le mythe de l'Atlantide" (Lost coasts: the myth of Atlantis). However, a brief analysis of the potential causes of certain historical catastrophies permits to better introduce the last two chapters in terms of implementing preventative measures. The first of these two chapters deals with conservation initiatives that should be implemented along the coasts, based mainly on the case of France. Reference is made to the incoherence of the vocabulary used in protection laws, vocabulary which would have been better served by the intervention of geographers and which leads to confusion and imprecision. The same problem is encountered in Canada and in Québec. Also discussed is the problem of impact assessment studies which are superficial and "oriented" towards decision-makers and at least cost, and not in the sense of minimal impact on Nature. The last chapter, which is defined as a reflection on a philosophy of coasts, resembles more of a conclusion. However, it leaves the reader with a sense of frustration and gives the impression that the author's inspiration diminished towards the end of his work. It would have taken a much better articulated reflection than the two examples presented concerning littoral protection policies (The Netherlands and Camargue). The author should have presented a true synthesis of the elements involved in setting up an "ideal" littoral protection policy. This never appears in this type of work and, regretfully, the author had the qualifications and knowledge required to do so.

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Impacts of Sea-level Rise on European Coastal Lowlands, edited by Michael J. Tooley and Saskia Jelgersma, 1992. Blackwell, Oxford, xv + 267p., 8 color plates, 83 fig., 5 tables, 17 × 24.5 cm, 74.95 $US, ISBN 0-631-18183-0.

"Impacts of Sea-level Rise on European Coastal Lowlands", the 27th of a series of special publications of The Institute of British Geographers, is a collective work which follows the "Workshop on Interrelated Bioclimatic and Land-Use Change" held in Noodwijkerhout, in The Netherlands, in 1987. It is a contribution to the work of the Commission on Quaternary Shorelines of the INQUA and also presents a few conclusions to "Climate Change: The Intergovernmental Panel on Climatic Change Scientific Assessment" (Houghton *et al.*, 1990). The objective of the book is to evaluate the impacts of a future increase in relative marine level on European coasts with examples from the coastal plains around the North Sea, the English Channel and the Mediterranean. The authors also mention that their "discoveries" and "predictions" are of overwhelming interest for the future of European coasts and for the pursuit of their development.

Overall, the subject itself is of global strategic importance, since more than half of the world's population lives along low coastlines subject to being inundated following an increase in sea level of only a few meters. These coasts also run the risk of sustaining accelerated erosion, increasingly devastating storms, saline intrusions in water wells destined for human consumption, and important modifications at the mouth of rivers and for coastal structures.

The two authors, Michael J. Tooley and Saskia Jelgersma, are recognized by the scientific community. During the period of 1987 to 1991, they were, respectively, secretary and president of the Commission on Quaternary Shorelines. The two scientists originate, respectively, from Great Britain and The Netherlands, while the 13 other collaborators come from Belgium, The Netherlands, France, Great Britain, Spain and Italy.

At first glance, the book is well presented, with an attractive cover and a solid binding. The impression is of good quality, although a certain number of typographical errors can be found either within the different texts or in the figures. Beautiful color plates illustrating urbanized coastal landscapes are inserted in the middle of the book and are thus easily accessible during