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## ELEMENTS OF THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE BISTRICA PLAIN

The Bistrica plain is the land along the Bistrica river: from Kamnik to the outflow into the Sava. Deagrarization and urbanization meet halfway in this region.

Natural conditions for farming are here comparatively favourable, the large gravel terrace with a good pedological basis and the even ground on the east and west brims, with favourable central-European climatic conditions and a comparatively long vegetation period formed the basis for an early settlement of the Bistrica plain.

The fact that the plain is open towards the regional centre of Ljubljana and was thus in respect of traffic early connected with the outside world by paths for transport on horseback, the comparatively early construction of the railway between Kamnik and Ljubljana and the construction of modern roads since the end of the World War II were the factors promoting the industrialization of the Bistrica plain.

With the favourable natural conditions the land-ownership structure with the predominance of production units of more than 5 hectares of land was during the 19<sup>th</sup> and at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a good basis for the supporting of farming families. Since up to the end of World War II industry had been a rather less reliable source of support for the family, the farmers tended to retain in their hands more than 5 hectares. The factory worker, on his part was out to buy some land to have an additional source of income. Industrial workers before World War II came mostly from the ranks of native farming population. On the inherited they put up their houses at the fringe of the village, in the gardens or orchards. Orchards, gardens and fields represented the minimal requirements in the frequent economic crises. Since the passing of farming land into nonfarming hand was limited to the area around the villages, the meadows and fields of the village passed from one generation to another unparcelled, the number of farmers with more than 5 hectares of land during the period 1825 — 1960 increased (in spite of the fact that the number of farmers with parcels of land grew as well) while the percentage of farming surfaces of this group decreased only by 8 %.

Deagrarization has become more expanded as recently as since World War II, and particularly during the last decade. Land-ownership of small size or of more than 5 hectares can no longer be a basis to cover the growing demands of the modern man. Investments for mechanization are

for a farmer with 5 or more hectares of land no longer profitable, and for that reason farming has become for most farmers during the last decade only an additional source of income. The grown-up members of farming families have, with the exception of the older people, found jobs in other economic activities, mostly in industry. In 1961 there was only 12 % of farming population, and the percentage of pure farming families decreased by 1967 to a minimum below 5 %. And even these are mostly families with rather old members.

Trough the concentration of industry on the Bistrica plain the percentage of industrial population and of population of the tertiary activities was already increasing before World War II. Up to the decade that population was closely relying on the land, for it was in most cases living in mixed working-farming families. An the rest of the non-agrarian population as well had small parcels of land on which to grow vegetables for home use.

The development of the types of farming economy and manners of land use was closely connected with industrialization and the development of other non-agrarian economic branches. The growth of the non-agrarian population as well as the good traffic connections with the bigger centre of consumption are the two basic factors which were affecting the partial re-orientation of the old poli-crop economy towards the production of milk, meat, and potatoes. This re-orientation of the farming production, however, differed from one region to another, from village to village, and from one farm to the other. It depended on the natural conditions, the vicinity of the market, and the labour available. Up to the eighties the farmers were generally trying to expand the field surfaces towards poorer ground. During the present century, however, with the partial transition to the production of goods, we witness a process of poorer fields being abandoned and on others an intense cultivation of fodder crops.

With the professional transstratification of the farming families and with the decrease of the active farming population and owing to the shortage of labour and mechanization, the process of fields overgrowing into meadows was accelerated. The shortage of labour also accounts for the poorer cultivation of orchards, which are in places no longer cultivated at all.

After World War II on the land of former big land-owners social farming production units were formed. Since 1960 these holdings have become united to the large-scale social farming enterprise »Agrokombinat«, which started to expand its land by purchasing land from private landowners and from people who had found jobs outside farming.

By 1965 almost a half of the cultivated surfaces of the Bistrica plain had passed into the possession of the »Agrokombinat«. On naturally equal grounds two types of land have formed as regards the size of the parcel and the manner of land use. On former rounded-off farming holdings, taken over by »Agrokombinat«, big, rounded-off parcels predominate and they are sown with one crop. Around the settlements and on the brims of the plain, however, old pretty farming parcelling has remained and here fields and meadows change at small distances. Comparatively small fields — from 20 to 40 ares — are sown with two, sometimes even with six crops.

The Bistrica plain is an example of the countryside which became under the influence of industrialization in a period of twenty years almost wholly deagrarized. The transitory phase of this process falls into the period before World War II. In the village we had the formation of the worker-farmer, who, owing to the low earning, had to produce some food on his own land around the house, and in the same period the farming families are turning into semi-farming. Since World War II most of the farming population became transstratified professionally. Most of the land suitable for agrarian utilization was rounded-off and passed into the hands of the social sector — the Agrokombinat. The remaining land, which remained privately owned by semi-farmers, old-farmers, and farmers with parcels around the settlements, between the houses and on the fringe of the Bistrica plain is from year to year less cultivated.

By the arrival of non-farming inhabitants and through the farming families turning into non-farming ones, the percentage of the working population who has no longer any connection with farming is increasingly growing.

The transstratification of the farming population in the nuclei of old agrarian settlements, the changing of farming houses into houses with flats, garages, workshops, etc. — all this is changing the agrarian physiognomy; newly built houses along the roads and along the village paths connecting former agrarian settlements with places of industry make towards a more or less connected area built up with non-farming houses. (The Map: Land use of the Bistrica Plain). In the industrialized parts on both sides of the Bistrica the settlements have already grown one into another, whereas on the fringes of the Bistrica plain we still witness a predominance of locally separated settlement nuclei with agrarian elements predominant in the general physiognomy.