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THE DEVELOPMENTAL TENDENCIES OF THE FARMING ECONOMY IN THE CADASTRIAN PARISH OF KRAJNA VAS AND IN KRAS IN GENERAL

The Institute of Geography of the University of Ljubljana included last year in its research programme a detailed examination of a part of the karst plateau, with the objective to make a study of the farming economy on naturally unfavourable land which is on the one hand bound up with the interior of Slovenia while on the other hand the tradition (intensified in the recent years with the opening of the Yugoslav-Italian border) links it with the Littoral Area and Trieste. In this brief presentation I shall restrict myself to the analysis of some of the processes under way throughout Slovenia but owing to naturally unfavourable circumstances and owing to specific features of social and economic development intensified in Kras.

Krajna vas lies somehow in the centre of the karst plateau which is composed almost exclusively of lime-stone and only to a smaller degree of the dolomites of the cretaceous formation. It lies 300—400 metres high above sea level and represents a countryside of classical karstic shapes and phenomena. Similar conditions show a markedly transitory character between the Adriatic bay, some 12 kilometres away, and the only a little farther-off Julian Alps.

The petrographic composition consists of limestone of varying purity, and here individual types soil have merged. Accordingly, on the comparatively small area of the cadastral parish of Krajna vas we come across as many as five types, or sub-types, of soil, namely: forest »rendzina«, »rendzina« and semicarbonate soil, reddish-brown soil, reddish-brown skeleton and »Kolovial« soil.

The cadastral parish of Krajna vas has 334 hectares of land; its area consists of 138 hectares of meadows, 31 hectares of fields, as little as 4 hectares of vineyards, 33 hectares of pastures, 119 hectares of forests, slightly under 1 hectare of gardens and orchards, while 6 hectares are unproductive land. The distribution of the land categories reveals at first glance already that meadow, forest, and pasture surfaces are in predominance at the expense of field surface. The distribution of categories as enumerated here is typical of any karstic, naturally unfavourable, land.

In the period between the two Wars or even slightly after, the percentage of fields in relation to the percentage of meadow and pasture sur-

faces was quite different. Until the World War I, Kras and so also Krajna vas, was saturated with farming labour. There were no smaller or bigger centres in Kras, and so the population of Kras and of Krajna vas had either to emigrate or to live on farming. Hence it was necessary to expand the tilled surfaces, i.e. on naturally unfavourable land with big efforts and with a big amount of work to prepare the land so far that it was sufficiently suitable for farming economy. In other words, the population tended to expand fields and good grassland surfaces. This could be done only in utilizing the karstic dolinas and clearing the karstic hills. This was the only way how to obtain farming surfaces needed for survival. Cultivated surfaces, or rather individual lots of tilled land and of cleared grassland surfaces were being expanded. The first to expand were those lying close to the village. But since the needs continue to grow, it was later on also the surfaces lying not so close that started to expand. Such tendencies and development can be traced all the time until the end of World War II and even a few years afterwards. With the growth of industrialization in Slovenia and with the emergence of minor industrial in Kras, i.e. in the vicinity of the so-far exclusively agrarian settlements, the emigration of population on the one hand increased, while on the other hand daily migration of labour either started or increased, of labour so far exclusively relying on farming. The chances of employment outside farming and of course a better and more permanent income was the primary factor in the comparatively strong emigration of labour from the karst area, or at least of labour changing to non-farming occupations.

The second factor, which comes into play a little later, is the tendency towards profitable farming which requires increasing application of modern machines and in addition to purely technical devices and ordered market, and above all a possibly quick organized access for the agricultural products. The natural conditions happen to be of the kind only seldom allowing profitable mechanized cultivation. For instance: 1) the bottoms of dolinas are too small for the use of tractors, or the fringes are too steep for the tractor to come to the bottom; 2) the stony character of the plain karstic surfaces makes it impossible to use modern mowing devices. Access to the market was until recently poor. Poor traffic connections and poorly organized possibilities for selling the products in time, regularly, or in any way also had effects of their own. As the third factor which has impeded and continues to impede the development of farming in this part of Slovenia is the extremely petty and dispersed parcelling. This is a consequence of past times as well as of the conditions affective at that time as well as of the naturally extremely unfavourable circumstances, with most of the cultivated surfaces lying at the bottom of dolinas.

All these three factors were accelerating the emigration of farming labour, first of the surplus labour, but later on also of the labour absolutely necessary for normal farming economy. Little wonder hence if in many a settlement older inhabitants become predominant, or if population becomes predominant whose active members are employed outside farming and farming represents only an additional source of income for the individual or the whole family.

The consequences of this are a constant abandoning of cultivated surfaces: the first to be abandoned are those lying far from the village, hence

it is the factor of time necessary to the farm worker to come to the field that is prevalent. Later on it is also the fields lying closer or even in the immediate vicinity that become abandoned. In this several factors participate, among them also lack of interest in income from farming, further the fact that land may be so poor that farming on it is in no way profitable, and the re-orientation of farming. The last is to be seen in some farming and also some of the non-farming estates of Krajna vas and of Kras in general. In this case, regular clearing of the bottoms of dolinas remains. The kind of food plant may be changed: instead of cereals we get growing of fodder plants, or the bottom of dolinas may be turned into cultivated meadows.

All the factors operative in Kras are not exceptional for Kras or for the cadastralian parish of Krajna vas but are known throughout Slovenia, Yugoslavia, or even Europe; in Kras they are only more prominent and owing to the circumstances unfavourable for farming, modified. At the same time it should be pointed out that Krajna vas lies in the vicinity of the border and is hence a border territory. With the open character of the border we get in recent times new tendencies in farming and in economy in general. Because of the specific features of the territory (karst) and the proximity of Trieste as a big urban centre, the tertiary activities are becoming very strong in Kras, this is true above all of inn-keeping which modifies the manner of farming economy.

I would not like enumerate numbers and data concerning the relations between the individual food plants and agricultural products; all I want is to outline a few typical problems affecting in modern times with the development of modern society the development of farming on naturally so unfavourable land. The result of social and above all economic factors operative in Slovenia, Yugoslavia, and in Kras — in this way also in such a tiny area as Krajna vas — represents a consequence of modern time and of wholly different attitudes economy and towards farming in particular. Hence it is my opinion that the shrinking of tilled surfaces, the abandoning of less profitable surfaces, and the tendency towards a change in the farming represents in this part of Slovenia a normal phenomenon. For farming in Slovenia, or rather the agricultural production in Slovenia increasingly tends towards higher profitableness and a more correct orientation.