

THE LAND UTILIZATION AND THE AGRARIAN ECONOMIC SYSTEMS OF THE CADASTRIAN PARISH OF SEČOVLJE

The cadastralian parish of Sečovlje lies in the south-western part of the Littoral Area of Koper. Sečovlje is characterised by a very rapid expansion of surfaces with social follow and represents the type of parish which is in the process of the decay of agrarian production. The reasons for this are to be sought in the effects of the economic transformation and in the political-geographic position of the area, i. e. proximity to the border. And particularly this is due to the difficulties which modern technology has in asserting itself in the given circumstances, to the mobility of the population, and to the parcelled land.

The Littoral Area of Koper is characterised by the fact that agrarian production for the market first started to develop as long as one hundred years ago. Owing to its high concentration and rapid growth of the population, Trieste as a significant centre of consumption formed in the Littoral Area of Koper its food-supply basis, above all for vegetables, fruit, wine, and milk. Sečovlje has mainly specialized for the production of vegetables and fruit and this has represented, in addition to the olive-trees plantations, a permanent source of income.

The development for the agrarian economy for the market was affected by the variable possibilities of seeling goods in Trieste. Between the two wars, Trieste widened its supply basis into Furlania and other Italian regions. The farming production on the narrow terraces and with the dry summer periods could not stand the competition of the new supply basis for Trieste, and consequently the people of Sečovlje and the Littoral Area changed their occupations, emigrating to Trieste as well as to new Continents. But in the last decade, in view of the favourable opportunities for employment in industry, tourism, and other tertiary activities as well as in the Koper port, the people of Sečovlje migrate to other places in the Littoral Area of Koper.

The cadastralian parish of Sečovlje is a part of flagged Coastel Area of Koper, composed of the powdery materials like marl and sandstones. In its relief it is strongly dissected and divided into four different units as regards agrarian economy.

The north-eastern part is an undulating area of flagged ridges, steep slopes and narrow valleys. In the south, the cadastralian parish of Sečovlje is formed by a spacious and, favourable for farming, valley bottom of the river Dragonja and its tributary, Valderniga. More of mildly inclined land

is also in the broader valley between Parecag and Sečovlje. Wider surfaces of mildly inclined land are also on the transitory area between the flagged steep slopes and the river valleys.

The amount of precipitation is comparatively high, reaching in the interior part up to 1000 millimetres. In the summer period it is the dry periods, sometimes lasting as long as two months, that have negative consequences. The shortage of water is acutely felt by the population, while in the agriculture this is an expressed negative factor.

Until the Second War, Sečovlje had three types of landowners: private farmers, town farmer from Piran, and clerical big landowners. The townspeople had their land concentrated mostly around Sečovlje and in the valley of the river Dragonja. The ecclesiastical land was kept by a monastery, on the area of the flagged ridge at the settlement Krog. With their professional re-orienting, the townspeople were leaving the land up to tenants for half of the produce. The farmers were concentrated mostly in the settlements Palecak and Loncan and in other places inside the cadastrian parish of Sečovlje. The tenants were immigrating mostly from the hinterland, at the same time they worked in the salt-works, which were likewise owned by the townspeople. When the farmers or townspeople moved away to Trieste for good, the tenants bought land in the Dragonja valley or rented it.

At the end of the Second War the emigration of population, particularly of landowners already employed in non-agrarian branches in Trieste, became much stronger. In the deserted homes there came now immigrants from the Slovene Primorska, Croatia, Istria, and partly also from the interior of Slovenia and from other places in Yugoslavia. Owing to the high competition for labour, these immigrants could find jobs in nonagrarian occupations, while they tilled only the land around the house. These immigrants settled down only for a limited period of time. Soon they moved into towns, and then we get a new, but this time weaker, current of immigrants. Since the emigration current included the young natural increase of the immigrant as well as of the autochthonous population, there starts a process of aging. The consequences are wide expanses of untilled land.

After the Second War, the wide valley bottom of the Dragonja was meliorated and rounded off into larger complexes. The western part with bigger land parcels is owned by the Cooperative Farm Lucia, while the eastern part with smaller land parcels is owned by private farmers from the neighbouring villages outside the cadastrian parish of Sečovlje. The centuries long social development with occupational re-orientation and the emigration of land owners and immigration of new, mostly non-farming, population, is seen in the uncultivated or extensively tilled land. The manner and the intensity of the utilization of land depend not on natural conditions but on factors of social-economic nature. In the Dragonja valley there are some 160 hectares of land owned by the Cooperative farm Lucia; some 100 hectares are cultivated land, while more than 300 hectares are untilled. In 1956 there were 1061 landowners in the cadastrian parish of Sečovlje: 34 % of them were natives, 66 % people from outside. The natives possessed 44 % of private land, owners from the outside 56 %. External owners live mostly in Italy, particularly in Trieste, and in the U. S. A. More than half of the private owners possess less than half a hectare of land. One fifth of them possess from 0,50 to 1 hectare, 10 % of them from

1—1,50 hectares, 6 0/0 of them from 1,50 to 2 hectares, and only 8 0/0 of the owners more than 2 hectares.

In 1961 there were in the cadastrian parish of Sečovlje 57 0/0 of farming estates with non-farming household; the corresponding number for 1966 is 67 0/0. In 1961 there were 19 0/0 farming estates with pure farming households, but in 1966 20 0/0. In 1961 there were 24 0/0 of farming estates with mixed working-farming households, in 1966 12 0/0. The number of working-farming households is on the decrease at the expense of the non farming households because the younger part of the active farming population is turning to non-farming occupations. The age-structure of the population is extremely unfavourable, with half of the examined households all their members over 50 years of age. In the manner of land utilization, 5 types may be distinguished. Farming estates growing:

- a) only vegetables
- b) vegetables, potatoes, beans
- c) vegetables, potatoes, beans, fruit, vine
- d) vegetables, potatoes, beans, fruit, vine, corn, maize
- e) vegetables, potatoes, beans, fruit, vine, corn, maize, fodder plants.

The last type is bound up with breeding of livestock, particularly cattle.

The tendencies to abandon the tilling of land are seen in all regions, yet the differences between the individual areas in the utilization of land are considerable. Most intensively cultivated is the western part of Dragonja, which is rounded off in large parcels and owned by the Cooperative Farm of Lucia. Here the land is variably utilized: partly with plantations of peach-trees, vineyards, and various sorts of vegetables. In the eastern part of Dragonja, on the rounded-off surfaces of the socialized sector they grow clover, which is related to the local stock-breeding farm. Private land of the north-eastern part of the Dragonja valley is utilized by growing vegetables, vine, fruit-trees, but a comparatively large part of it is unutilized. A little more intensively and in the form of mixed plantations, fruit-trees mixed with vegetables, is utilized the slope between the flagged slope and the valley in the area of Parecag and Lonzan. Here slightly bigger land-ownership has been preserved, with more than 1.50 hectares and autochthonous population (which is rapidly getting older); it is only on the land of individual farms that we can still observe the old farming system of economy which was before last war relying on the growing of vegetables, vineyards, fruit-trees, a little livestock, and a small percentage of cereals and fodder plants. In the remaining part of the reliefwise undulating flagged area of Sečovlje farming has almost wholly died out. The land is cultivated almost exclusively around the houses only, in the old system of mixed plants of fruit-trees and vegetables. The steep slopes with plantations of olive-trees and vine are abandoned, and meadows not closely at hand are hardly mown.

The territory of the flagged hills also in the future cannot be transformed into cultivated land because owing to the inclination of land and the summer dryness modern technology cannot be used. The areas in the valleys and the remaining flat areas as well as mildly inclined slopes between the plains and the flagged slopes wait for the reorganization of the social-ownership conditions, melioration and installation of an irrigation system — for these things only can lead to an intensification and commercialisation of the agrarian production.