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Peter Vodopivec

O gospodarskih in socialnih nazorih na Slovenskem v 19. stoletju

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Nekaj misli knjigi na pot

Posamezne družbe prav gotovo delujejo in oblikujejo svojo podobo v spletu najrazličnejših načrtnih in naključnih razmerij. In ta razmerja v primeru načrtnih prizadevanj imenujemo politika, pri čemer pridevnik opredeli s kakšno vsebino imamo opravka. Na drugi strani pa družbeno podobo v vzročno-posledičnem součinkovanju pomembno določajo tudi naključna razmerja, ki se vzpostavljajo kot posledica predpisanih politik ali kot samodejne dolgotrajne konstante in povratno učinkujejo na načrtna prizadevanja. Za vsemi temi razmerji, bolje rečeno v srčiki teh razmerij, pa najdemo človeka kot posameznika ali množico, ki s svojimi idejami, zamislili in predstavami o preteklem, aktualnem in prihodnjem času bivanja odločilno kroji historične procese. Z omenjenimi tremi ključnimi kategorijami – procesi, ideje in ljudje – lahko najbolj na kratko tudi opredelimo vsebino knjige pred nami. Gre seveda za združujoče in poenostavljajoče oznake, ki vsebinsko dinamiko reducirajo na najpomembnejše poudarke.

Pred nami se tako izrisuje svet devetnajstega stoletja, ko so Slovenci kot skupnost ogromno dosegli, se konstituirali kot prepoznavna etnična entiteta v kulturnem in političnem smislu. A hkrati je bilo to tudi stoletje, ko so Slovenci, spet kot skupnost, veliko zamudili. Mislimo na dejstvo, da so ostali na obrobju evropskih gospodarskih in socialnih modernizacijskih procesov. V spletu najrazličnejših razmerij naj bi Slovencem po Vasiliju Meliku umanjala polovica meščanstva. Peter

Vodopivec k temu dodaja, da je umanjvalo podjetniško meščanstvo kot nosilec napredka na gospodarskem in socialnem področju. Umanjkale so ideje in pobude, teoretske in praktične, o drugačni gospodarski in socialni strukturi. Miselni svet odločujočih družbenih protagonistov je bil razdvojen med tradicijo in moderno. Ni prav tvegana ocena, da je bil z večjo zazrtostjo v tradicionalno družbeno in gospodarsko sestavo manj naklonjen modernim gospodarskih in socialnim tokovom. Zdi se, da je prevladujoča ideologija postala antikapitalizem in protekcionizem, kot odgovor na nezadostno sledenje modernizacijskim procesom. Najprej sta bila oba pojava posledica, kasneje sta deloma že postajala tudi vzrok zamudništva, saj se je izoblikovalo družbeno ozračje vrednostno nenaklonjeno hitrejši modernizaciji. Namesto individualizma prednjačijo kolektivitete, namesto tveganja gotovost; morda v tem oziru ni predrzno celo reči, da je bilo namesto podjetništva bolj cenjeno rentništvo.

Ta zelo shematična konceptualizacija ene plati devetnajstega stoletja zaradi svoje splošnosti ne izpostavlja podrobnosti, ki pripomorejo k iskanju odgovora na vprašanje o slabotni razvojni dinamiki v slovenskem prostoru v drugi polovici devetnajstega stoletja, ko govorimo o gospodarskih in socialnih procesih. In ravno knjiga, ki se razpira pred nami, nam na ogled ponuja široko, raznovrstno in večpomensko paletto relevantnih odgovorov, ki v tolmačenje o gospodarskem in socialnem zaostajanju slovenskega prostora v obravnavanem času vnaša dodatne, bolj "podrobne" dimenzije. Peter Vodopivec je svoja dolgoletna razmišljanja na to temo smotrno strnil v pregledno in smiselno celoto. S problematiziranjem gospodarskih in socialnih nazorov izstopajočih posameznikov, vplivnih družbenih skupin ter njihovih odzivov oziroma doživljanj počasnih gospodarsko-socialnih modernizacijskih procesov mu je uspelo predstaviti družbeno ozračje, konstrukcijo realnosti kakor so jo videli sodobniki. In ravno te "subjektivne" konstrukcije stvarnosti so bile tiste, ki so poleg povsem ekonomskih dejavnikov pomembno določale parametre gospodarskega in socialnega razvoja na Slovenskem v devetnajstem stoletju.

Žarko Lazarević

Summary

»The 19th century was a time of great expectations of progress and utopia, which greatly intensified in the last decades of the century in particular«, says the German historian Alexander Schmidt-Gernig. »More than any other turn of the century, the period around 1900 was a time of excited literary and political deliberation, scientific and technical prediction, religious prophecies of the world's end and redemption, as well as of the certainty of future revolution, and an associated completely new social order. Contemporary diagnoses were greatly influenced by fear of the future as well as by future oriented hopes, which was mainly the result of profound revolutionary processes caused by modern industrialization.«¹

The Slovene space was in the 19th century relatively well informed about the major changes being experienced by the more rapidly developing Western Europe, and particularly by Great Britain, with modern industrialization and the introduction of scientific and technical discoveries in manufacturing and trade. Information on the »miracles« of the new technical and industrial period, accompanied by enthusiasm for modernization and progress, started to advance in lands inhabited by

¹ Alexander Schmidt-Gering, *Zukunftsmodel Amerika, Das europäische Bürgertum und die amerikanische Herausforderung um 1900, Da neue Jahrhundert, Europäische Zeitdiagnosen und Zukunftsentwürfe um 1900*, Hsg. Von Ute Frevert, Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, Göttingen 2000, p. 79.

Slovenes as early as the thirties of the 19th century, when the censorship in the Hapsburg Monarchy was slightly eased. The most important Inner Austrian and Slovene pre-March (1848) windows on the world in this respect were Graz and Trieste. In 1838, the Association for the Promotion and Support of Industry in Inner Austria was founded as one of many institutions established by Archduke Johann, and which, through its journal, the Inner Austrian Industry and Crafts Gazette, became the most important promoter of industrialization and of economic and social change in the Trieste hinterland in the forties of the 19th century. In Trieste, from the beginning of the 1840s merchants and economic planners inclined to the Austrian economic rise grouped themselves around the insurance and shipping company, Austrian Lloyd, led by the future Austrian Minister of Finance Karl Ludwig von Bruck. Their journal was the Austrian Lloyd Journal, written in German, which, in the decade before the revolutionary year 1848, became the main Austrian journal of economics and politics. The articles and commentaries published by the Austrian Lloyd Journal not only expressed the views of the Trieste merchants, but also the standpoints of the more liberally oriented Vienna middle classes and the court itself.

Circles in both Graz and Vienna were persuaded that the future of Austria, of the Trieste hinterland and of Trieste itself, was in industrial development and modernisation of business and trade, following the example of Western Europe. In this sense, as the »producers' spokesmen«, in Graz they proved that changes should be well considered and gradual and should be based on knowledge, reflection, state support and a larger social role of the »productive classes.« In the industry and crafts association and its journal, they saw their leading role in spreading enthusiasm for technology, science and industry, in providing information on technical innovations, new production procedures and tools, and in constantly calling on the authorities to consider the »economic view« in their decisions, and to modernize and liberalize the Austrian economic, political and customs system. In Trieste, there was less enthusiasm for

technology and industry, and the attention of the Lloyd's circle was focused on issues of the Austrian economic and, particularly, foreign trade policy. In the Austrian Lloyd Journal, the Vienna and Trieste correspondents highlighted the harmful effects of high customs protective measures and of Austrian foreign trade regulations oriented towards prohibition, and simultaneously openly called for a shift to liberal economic policy, in their eyes personified by Richard Cobden and Manchester. However, in spite of enthusiasm for modern industrial achievements on the one hand, and for the ideas of economic liberalism on the other, in neither Graz nor Trieste did they conceal the dramatic social contrasts accompanying the formation of modern capitalist industrial society. It is true that they tried to defend modern industry, machinery, and entrepreneurs against the criticism that they were to blame for the workers' poverty but, in the same breath, they warned that strained social, labour-employer relations represented a serious danger and threat to the industrialization process and to the emerging industrial-capitalist society. In the Austrian Lloyd Journal in the last years of the pre-March 1848 period, they already extensively presented in this light the ideas of the French socialists, and even certain findings of the book by Friedrich Engels »On the Condition of Working Class in England«. Hereby, according to Lorenz Stein, they valued the socialist views with certain reservation, and stressed the claims of Saint Simon and Fourier on the connection of an individual with the entire »social organism«, while decisively rejecting communism (they mentioned Babeuf and Buonarotti among its ideologists).

The Inner Austrian Trade Journal and the Austrian Lloyd Journal had subscribers and readers in Styria, Carniola, Carinthia and the Littoral, but local and provincial papers in these areas did not adapt or reprint their articles. In selecting articles and in reporting on progress, science and industry, their editors were much more reserved, and from time to time even published negative and pessimistic reflections in the pages of the papers they edited, striving for the preservation of traditional relations and »immutable« inherited moral and

religious values. Nevertheless, in the provincial capitals and in agricultural societies they cautiously joined the persuasion that one should gradually open to »novelties«, improvements and modernization. Thus even Jan- ez Bleiweis, prior to 1848, gave his *Novice* (News) the slogan: «He who does not swim with time, drowns in its gallop», although he remained an advocate of slow and deliberate change, right up to his death and, as he said in 1867, rejected any idea of revolution or radical social transformation.

Bleiweis was an adherent of reforms and a realistic practical man, brought up in the enlightenment and rationalist spirit, who constantly pointed out that national prosperity and national autonomy could not exist without a firm economy. He and his supporters believed that the lands with a Slovene population should continue for some time (that is also in the second half of the 19th century) to retain the prevailing agrarian-farming social and economic system, and gradually to industrialize only on the basis of modernized agriculture. On the one hand this standpoint was founded on the physiocratic image of the farmer as the most important of the »productive states« and an indispensable element of social stability and, on the other, on entirely factual finding that the Slovenes, lacking capital and an extended trade network, had no real potential for their own industrial development, while opening to foreign capital would bring Germanization. In his judgement of the most urgent modernization mechanisms, Bleiweis remained throughout his life bound to the messages and images of the Enlightenment. According to him, the precondition and principal factors of economic development were education, self-discipline, diligence, ingenuity and »willingness« to change. Economic and social processes were supposed to run simultaneously by maintaining balance in the »social organism« and by enabling its »organic growth«, while the State was supposed to keep watch over them and provide protection of the most endangered (classes) by preventing their exploitation. Consequently, although they agreed that the economy should get rid of the »old chains« and that liberal competition was an important incentive to eco-

conomic development, Bleiweis and the collaborators of *Novice* (News) decisively rejected the Austrian flirtation with liberal economic policy and, from the sixties of the 19th century on, accused the government in Vienna of unilaterally supporting »large factory owners, large merchants and large capital«.

Ever since the first half of the 19th century, Bleiweis's modernization endeavours and the activities of the Bleiweis Novice circle were supported by some physiocratically oriented clergy, who wrote farming manuals and encouraged the transformation of the Slovene countryside by drawing attention to the principles of modern farm management. In contrast to Bleiweis, his collaborators and his fellow thinkers among the clergy, the members of the Carniolan Chamber of Crafts and Trades, the majority of which were Slovene since 1866, thought that the lands in the Trieste hinterland also had favourable possibilities for the development of trade and industry. They needed, though, an efficient and up-to-date traffic infrastructure. Optimistic ideas in this direction were additionally encouraged by the construction and opening of the Suez Canal in the 1860s. The Slovene chairman of the Carniolan Chamber of Crafts and Trades, the Ljubljana merchant Valentin C. Supan, together with the Slovene members of the Chamber and some Slovene politicians, persuaded that the new waterway in the eastern Mediterranean opened entirely new development potentials to Trieste and the Inner Austrian lands, called for the construction of an ambitious railway network, whereby Carniola and Ljubljana would become a major international traffic crossroads. The Illyrian Railways programme, published in 1872 and signed by Valentin C. Supan, Etbin Costa and Lovro Toman, was the first plan of traffic and economic linkage of the Slovene territory. Its signatories advocated the construction of a railway transversal, which was to connect south Germany (Bavaria) with Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Ottoman Empire and Istanbul through Carniola and Ljubljana. In the East-West direction, the railway was supposed to run from Budapest through Styria and Ljubljana to Trieste and Italy, while the Austrian capital, Vienna, was supposed

to get a new connection with Trieste, independent of the private »southern railway«, in a North-South direction, similarly running through Carniola. The railway plans of V.C. Supan and Slovene political leaders were earnestly backed not only by both Slovene political camps, but also by the Carniolan German party, since its leaders agreed that such a traffic network, with a railway from Ljubljana towards Karlovac, Bihać and Sarajevo, would open the door to the very promising »eastern, Ottoman and Levantine markets« for regions in the Trieste hinterland, which would accelerate their industrial development. »Carniola is not just the key region on the way to the Adriatic Sea, but also the key region on the way to the Orient«, stated the German *Laibacher Tagblatt* in 1873. »One need only consider how much concealed power there is in this (Carniola) province, and how rapidly this province, as soon as these powers are stimulated and used, would promptly and rapidly develop towards a new Belgium.«²

However, most of the Slovene national leaders strongly supported the anti-liberal orientation of the Carniola Chamber of Crafts and Trades, presided over by Valentin C. Supan from 1866 – 1874. Valentin C. Supan was one of the first men in the Slovene camp to realise, as early as the second half of the 19th century, the importance of knowledge of economic history and economic theory and so tried to substantiate his economic-political ideas by relying on various economic-political thinkers. In several of his writings, in German and in Slovene, published in the sixties and seventies of the 19th century, he decisively rejected the liberal trade orientation of the Austrian government and, citing Friedrich List and the American protectionist Henry Carey, advocated a return to a policy of protection of domestic production. In contrast with List and Carey, according to Supan Adam Smith was a big »destroyer of the countries and their economies« since, together with leading English politicians and in line with »egoistic English interests«, he supported the disastrous »laissez

² Since the first half of the 19th century, Belgium had been an example of a small country with efficient and rapid industrialization.

faire«. The principle »buy cheap and sell expensive«, imposed by Smith as the guideline of economic science, although true in itself, was still misleading under concrete conditions, since the work of other people can only be bought by someone able to sell his own work. With Great Britain's major economic advantages, free trade was only an utopia that could not be implemented until »the world becomes a single state.« As long as different countries with different spiritual and material potentials still exist, more rapidly developing countries will always destroy weaker ones, Supan claimed. In short: for free trade it was only necessary to create a world with equal natural resources and equal spiritual, material and human resources, – so in given specific relations among European countries and economies the Hapsburg Monarchy, which, according to Supan, supposedly had extraordinary natural riches and »everything it needed«, should turn away from liberal economic principles and refocus on the »protection of domestic labour.«

Supans' opposition to the liberal economic and political trends prevailing in Vienna government circles in the sixties and first half of the seventies of the 19th century, were supported equally by Staroslovenci (Old Slovenes) and Mladoslavenci (Young Slovenes). Both thought that »simple national-economic conditions« should be changed as soon as possible, and that it could only be done by raising »national culture«, and by »material help to the nation«. In this sense, the Slovene liberal camp, from the end of the sixties strove for the systematic founding of »local savings banks all over Slovenia«, and for the promotion of »the productivity of Slovene lands through all types of national efforts« while, similar to the Old Slovene conservatives, they rejected more radical economic and social change, and mistrusted the market economy and modern industrialization. In the sixties and the seventies, certain notable representatives of the Young Slovenes (Ferdo Kočevar, Janko and Josip Sernec and Josip Vošnjak) even said that the Slavs and Slovenes, if they wished to avoid the decay of farmers and agriculture and the social tensions caused (in their own words) by liberal capitalism and individualism, should take a different route to de-

velopment than Western Europe. In this respect, they idealized the Russian and the South Slav agricultural collectivism and Russian craft cooperatives and thought that the social tensions that followed the introduction of capitalistic social and economic relations, could be alleviated by stimulating an awareness of common interests, by forming family and craft cooperatives and even by »social ownership of people's labour, producing in the same areas of the economy«, as Josip Serbec wrote in 1874. Josip Vošnjak was a little more down to earth, saying categorically that Russian »mir« and South Slav family cooperatives could not serve as a model in solving the problem of the Slovene farmer and proposed the legal imposition of the indivisibility of farm land within the scope of a »permanent farmer's home«, which was intended to ensure the survival of the farming family. But Vošnjak also pointed out that progress and the 19th century »inventions« had not increased general prosperity and »happiness«, mostly due to »liberal capitalism«, which »enabled the unlimited accumulation of wealth« by individuals and caused the poverty in which »the present human race is writhing and moaning.«

Under such conditions in the Slovene territory of the sixties and the seventies of the 19th century, liberal economic principles were fairly sporadically advocated only in the circle grouped around the Carniolan German journal *Laibacher Tagblatt*. In *Laibacher Tagblatt* (and partly also in *Laibacher Zeitung*), particularly during the time of the German liberal regime in Austria, they emphasized the importance of free competition and free exchange for economic development and said that, at a time of ever more rapid communications, steam engines and telegraphs, economic freedom was an inevitable precondition of »any progress.« Among the most enthusiastic advocates of progress and economic freedom who contributed to *Laibacher Tagblatt*, was the »Slovene renegade«, Vinko Fereri Klun. Already in the fifties, when he was still a member of the Slovene camp, Klun was arguing that the regions in the vicinity of Trieste had all the necessary conditions for the »factories of the future«, and could become the »Austrian Manchester«. Meanwhile, in the sixties and seventies, Klun and the

Tagblatt correspondents and editors, headed by Karl Dežman, proclaimed themselves to be the only genuine representatives of the Carniola middle classes. They thereby underestimated and negatively evaluated Slovene economic efforts and stated with self-satisfaction that Austria could only be grateful to the dynamism of the »German tribe« for its trade and industrial development. Klun and the Tagblatt editors extensively stressed the social contrasts caused by the workers' poverty and said that advocacy of better conditions for workers with the help of legislation and various reforms, was one of the important tasks of the liberal movement. In spite of their enthusiasm for economic freedom, they thought that liberal tendencies to restrict certain state competences did not mean that the state should completely renounce regulating political, social and economic relations. In this sense, they rejected radical individualism and claimed that total freedom and unconditional »independence of an individual« were only an ideal, which had already failed to survive the test of practicality at the time of the French Revolution. In the unstable sixties and the critical seventies of the 19th century, the liberal economic views disseminated by Laibacher Tagblatt, did not gain a larger circle of adherents and social support, even among Carniola Germans. German craftsmen and »manufacturers«, similarly to Slovene ones, supported the »protection of domestic labour«, while Slovene and German notions of the potentials and perspectives of the Carniola economy and measures to be adopted for its more rapid development, were much more alike than either side was willing to admit. It is true that the endeavours of the Carniolan German politicians to implement liberal economic and social ideas subsequently familiarized the Carniolan public with the principal tendencies of European and Austrian liberalism, but it simultaneously got stranded in a blind alley with the economic recession after 1873.

As elsewhere in Austria, the economic collapse of 1873 also caused a several years of stagnation in Slovene territory, but it was not followed by a long term economic depression and more radical economic halt, which could greatly obstruct already established eco-

conomic trends or deeply interfere with trade and production flows or the socio-economic structure. In this sense, the crisis in Slovenia also had more tangible ideological, political and psychological than economic and social consequences. Slovene papers responded to the stock exchange crash and to the economic collapse with similar assessments and unanimously ascribed responsibility for the encountered conditions to liberalism and to the liberal economic policy. Thus, after the crash of the Vienna stock exchange in May 1873, only *Laibacher Tagblatt* continued to advocate government economic and political orientations, and even its writing on economic policy and trade freedom became more and more contradictory and inconsistent. In this way, the crisis strengthened the anti-liberal disposition in all sides, and simultaneously reinforced the conviction, at least in part of the Slovene elite involved in economic issues, that the Slovene economy had more decisively to tread the path of modernization. While Bleiweis and his standpoint that physiocratically modernized agriculture should remain the basis of the Slovene economy for some time more, still had numerous adherents in the eighties and even in the nineties, not only in the Old Slovene but also in the Young Slovene camp since the beginning of the seventies and particularly after the 1873 crisis ever more voices were heard arguing that capitalism and »large factories« were inevitably the Slovene future, unless the Slovenes wanted to lag behind the developing Austrian and Western European nations even more than then. In the last decades of the 19th century, optimistic expectations that Trieste and its port would accelerate economic and social modernization of the large Slovene (and Inner Austrian) hinterland proved equally unfounded. Ever since the beginning of the 20th century, when, through its new railway connection, it could reach the South German, Czech and Lower Austrian area, hitherto dominated by the North German ports, the port of Trieste struggled with heavy development problems, since, together with poor traffic connections, it could only connect with a small portion of Austrian trade. Trieste thus had no power substantially to influence modernization processes in its hinter-

land, for which, as regretfully stated by representatives of the Trieste middle classes in the second half of the 19th century, it had no financial resources or capital, nor institutions which could stimulate economic change in regions linked in one way or another to the port of Trieste.

The outline of economic and social opinions in Slovenia in the 19th century shows that the men involved in the economy in Slovene lands were only partly or to a limited extent aware of the long-term effects of economic and social changes experienced by more developed Austrian regions and by Western Europe through industrialization and modern industrial capitalism. On the one hand, until the end of the 19th century, they discussed how to protect the traditional structure of Slovene society against profound disruption and how to direct it on the path of modernization in the least risky and conflictual manner and, on the other hand, fearing more radical change, they rejected more liberal economic policy and, from the 18th century on when, in the choice between physiocratic and cameralist ideas they favoured cameralism, they continued to turn for support and help to the state. It is true that such views were in a way bound to the Austrian reformistic political tradition and to state managed modernization, but they were simultaneously also founded on the economic and social weakness of the Slovene middle classes, which were only slowly parting with tradition and hesitantly flirting with the modern age.

