

A COMPARISON OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
CONDITIONS IN SLOVENE AND
CROATIAN LANDS DURING THE REFORMATION*

Toussaint Hočevar

The Protestant movement among Slovenes preceded the publication of Jurij Dalmatin's Bible (1584) by 44 years if we consider that by 1540 most wealthier Ljubljana burghers were involved in Protestantism. Moreover, even earlier stirrings are indicated by the prohibition of Protestant books in Ljubljana, in 1527.¹ The publication of the first Slovene book by Trubar, in 1550, was followed by extensive Slovene Protestant literary activity, which reached its apex in the publication of Dalmatin's Bible. I note that by that time the Protestant movement had already reached its turning point: in the same year the Bible was published the Jesuits founded the University of Graz, an ominous sign for the Protestants. Six years later, in 1590, the accession of Archduke Ferdinand (the future Emperor Ferdinand II) to the rule of the largely Slovene Inner Austria (Styria, Carinthia, Carniola, Goriška/Görz, Internal Istra, and Trieste) marked the beginning of the end of the Protestant cause in the region.²

Against this background the period of the sixteenth century *grosso modo* coincides with the rise and demise of the South Slavic Reformation. To what extent economic conditions determined the emergence of the Protestant movement is less clear. Specialists, particularly the "modernists" of the Tübingen group, have recently advanced the thesis that, at least in Germany, cities were the incubators of the Reformation during the 1520s and 1530s and that an urban religious reform preceded a princely one.³ I propose to test this thesis against the experience in South Slavic lands. The question to be answered is whether the existence of an urban milieu was a precondition for the emergence of Protestantism. For this purpose I will contrast economic conditions in the Slovene lands, where the Reformation took roots, with those in the Croatian lands, where such was not the case. The history of a large part

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of the South Slavic territory under Ottoman rule appears irrelevant for our investigation since these lands were for all practical purposes cut off from ideas and social movements which pervaded Western Europe.

Before focusing on Slovene and Croatian lands, it is desirable to view economic changes during the sixteenth century from a broader, West European perspective.

The European Scene

The economic variable which stands out for its marked upward change throughout the sixteenth century are prices, particularly those of foodstuffs. It has been estimated that during the entire century prices of cereals in major European countries rose by 386 percent. Between 1548 and 1580 alone, in Northern Italy the commodity prices, including foodstuffs increased by 65 percent while the prices of foodstuffs increased by 81 percent.⁴

Traditionally, sixteenth-century inflation has been linked to increases in money stock due to the inflow of precious metals, particularly silver, from Latin America. Although this explanation is adequate for the pronounced inflation during the second part of the sixteenth century, it fails to explain earlier price rises which go as far back as the last decades of the fifteenth century, that is before imports of precious metals could have had an influence. This earlier inflation has been attributed by Malanima to demographic growth. He estimates that during 1400-1500 the European population increased from 45 to 60 million, then to 78 million during 1450-1550, and to 78 million by 1600.⁵

The effect of population growth on prices is explainable with the aid of the theorem of diminishing returns. Since toward the end of the Middle Ages the extension of cultivable areas had already reached its limits, population growth resulted in a rising population/land ratio. This meant that the absence of significant changes in agricultural technology, diminishing returns set in: the agricultural output lagged behind the increases in agricultural labor and in the number of mouths to feed. Increases in the price level which occurred prior to the inflow of precious metals can be thus linked to increases in the aggregate on-the-farm consumption, which resulted in a decrease of the marketable social product.

The population pressure against limited land resources appears to have been more severe in Western than in Eastern Europe. Also, nonagricultural, urban activities occupied a larger share of total population in the West than in the East. This meant that in the West a substantial number of people depend on the market for their supply of food. As prices of food rose relative to nonfood products, the complementarity between Western demand for food and Eastern supply of agrarian surpluses came into sharper focus: at higher relative prices it paid to

transport agrarian products over longer distances. Eastern Europe thus began to export agrarian products to the West in exchange for manufactured goods. This initial comparative advantage appears to have determined the specialization of both regions for a long time to come.

Slovenia's Role in Transit Traffic and Reexport Trade

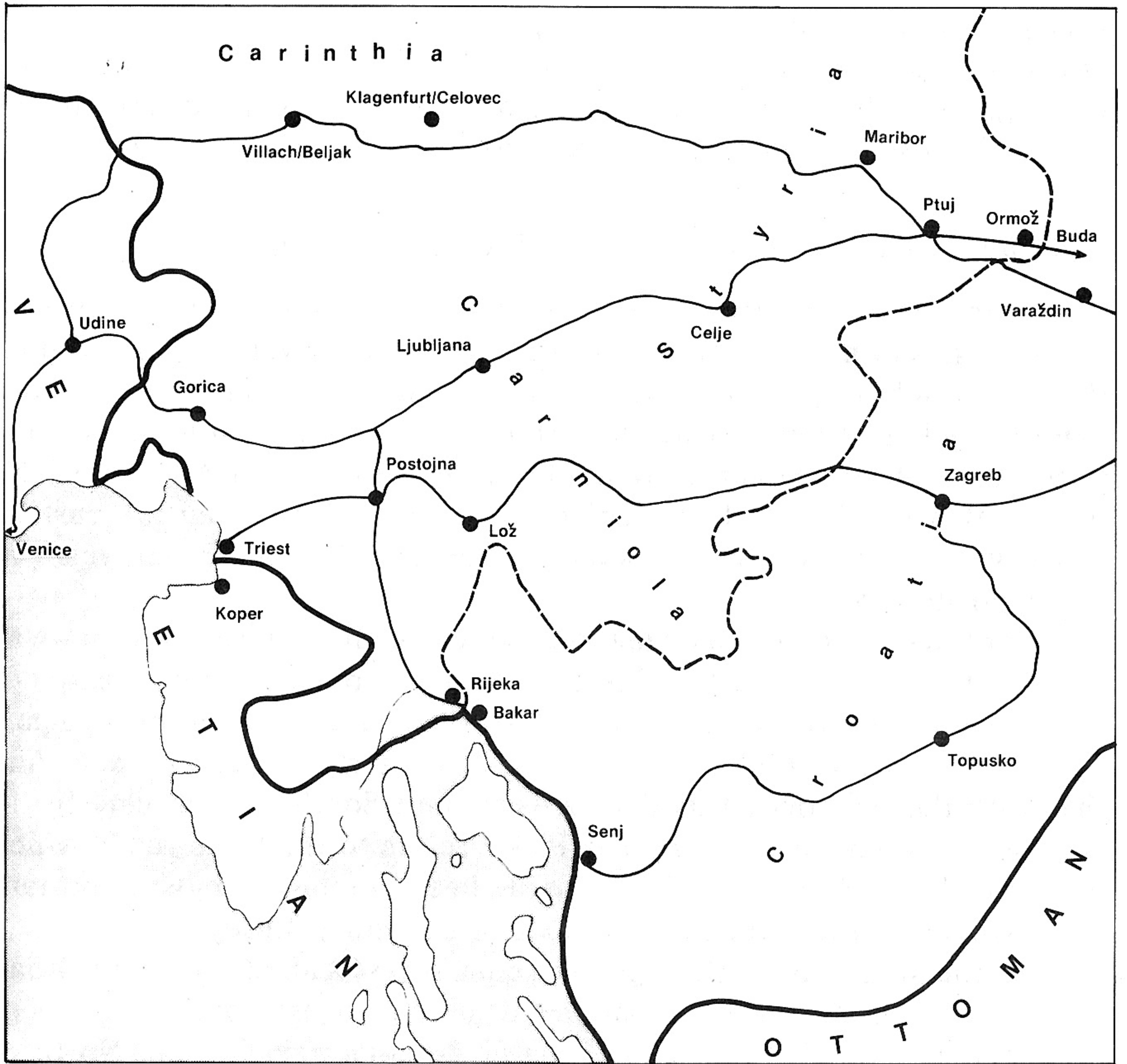
From the perspective of East-West trade Slovene lands occupied a strategic position. They can be compared to the lower end of a funnel through which agrarian products from the Hungarian plains had to pass before reaching Venice, with its 100,000 inhabitants a large market for agrarian surpluses. Other destinations were the northern Adriatic ports, from which goods could be carried by sea to towns along the eastern coast of Italy. Manufactured goods, particularly fine fabrics, traveled in the opposite direction.

Contrary to the earlier view that much of the Hungarian trade was directed to Vienna and other German-speaking areas,⁶ recent research of customs records has shown that by 1500 one third of the entire Hungarian trade with the West was in the southwesterly direction, exceeding that with the territory of modern Austria and Southern Germany by 10 percent.⁷ No wonder that Othmar Pickl⁸ refers to the three roads which led through the Slovene lands as having been among the most important trade routes of the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Europe.

Of the three roads through Slovenia the so-called Ljubljana Road carried most of the traffic. It paralleled the Northeast-Southwest axis of Slovenia: Ormož-Ptuj-Celje-Ljubljana-Hrušica-Gorizia/Gorica. North of it, the so-called Royal Road led from Ptuj to Maribor, then along the Drava valley to Villach/Beljak and on the Tarvisio/Trbiž. Finally, the so-called Postojna Road went from Koprivnica on the Hungarian border to Zagreb, and then through the Krka Valley and over the Bloke Plateau (Lož) to Postojna, where it separated into branches going to Trieste and Rijeka, respectively (see map).

Quantitative information on Italian trade with Hungary during the last third of the fifteenth century is scanty. However, there are indications that following the marriage of the Hungarian king Matthias Corvinus (the legendary Kralj Matjaž) with the daughter of the King of Naples, in 1476, the trade with Italy increased. A number of Italian traders, first from Florence and then from Venice, settled in Buda. They exported cattle and imported expensive fabrics.

Aware of the strategic importance of both Ljubljana and Ptuj for the East-West trade, and of revenues connected there with, Maximilian I granted, in 1503, these cities extensive storage privileges. Foreign traders who brought skins and other merchandise to Ljubljana and Ptuj had to store their goods for a prolonged period. In Ptuj the obligatory storage



PRINCIPAL ROADS CONNECTING VENICE WITH HUNGARY,
AROUND 1570

Source: Adapted from Othmar Pickl, "Die Auswirkungen. . .," (see footnote 8), p. 75.

was from the arrival of goods to the next "free market" day, i.e. to Pentecost or to August 5. Only then could the goods be sold to other guest traders. Local burghers as well as burghers of Ljubljana, Trieste, and Rijeka could, however, trade at any time.

Restrictions applicable to foreign traders provided an incentive for permanent settlement of Italian traders in Ljubljana and Ptuj. Their economic power can be gauged by a 1515 offer of the Ljubljana wholesaler Kaspar de Lantheri to deliver 1,000 steers per month to Maximilian I for the needs of his army north of Verona, provided de Lantheri be given exclusive supply privileges. The merchants of Ptuj were in no way second to those of Ljubljana, or for that matter to those of the most prosperous South German cities, where some of them took refuge as the Turkish danger came too close to Ptuj for safety: in 1490 three of the nine wealthiest Nuremberg burghers were immigrants from Ptuj, including Hans Thumer, who with a wealth of 100,000 gulden topped the list. Ladislaus Swetkowitz, who stayed in Ptuj, left at his death, in 1490, 27,000 florins invested in Southern German cities in the form of annuities (*Ewiggeldrenten*).

During the war of Maximilian I with Venice (1508-1516) the trade over the Ljubljana Road shrunk considerably because of the economic blockade imposed by Maximilian. It should be noted that at that time the minimum annual requirements of the city of Venice amounted to 14,000 grown cattle, 13,000 calves, and 70,000 sheep. The 1515 attempt by the Zagreb businessman Zuan Pastor to circumvent the blockade by shipping 4,500 cattle by sea from Senj to Venice was only partially successful because several cattle laden ships capsized.

Following the peace with Venice the volume of traffic going through Ljubljana grew rapidly, with temporary interruptions due to Turkish summer offensives into Hungary and Austria in 1526, 1529, and 1532. From 1534 on, the trade between Hungary and Italy continued to increase up to 1555, as evidenced by the revenues of the Ljubljana excise office (*Ober-Aufschlagamt*) presented in the adjoining table.

It should be borne in mind that the usefulness of these data as indicators of the physical volume of trade is not affected by price changes, since the excise was specific, rather than ad valorem. The effect of increases in the amounts of the tax per unit which occurred in 1554, 1555, and 1559 are less clear. Between 1556 and 1560 total revenues increased considerably, indicating that at least in the short run the demand for transportation services through Slovenia was inelastic. However, the drop in revenues starting in 1561 shows that in the long run the demand for the use of roads passing through Slovenia was elastic. This suggests substitution, which in fact occurred: trade in easily transportable skins, of which 200,000 went annually through Ljubljana before 1555, was gradually diverted through the Turkish controlled Bosnia to Dubrovnik. From

Revenues of the Ljubljana Excise Office and
Its Branches,^a 1534-1596
(Annual Averages)

Period	Thousands of Florins	Index
1534-38	16.2	100
1539-43	19.6	121
1544-55	21.3	131
1556-60	31.6	195
1561-65	28.3	175
1566-70	24.9	153
1571-75	29.9	185
1576-81	n.a.
1582-86	44.3	273
1587-91	40.2	248
1592-96	34.5	213

^aIn 1529 branch offices existed in Kranj, Škofja Loka, Postojna, Lož, Vodice, Podkraj, Planina, Kočevje, Koren. By 1561 additional branch offices were opened in Kanal, Kobarid, Brezovica, Lokev, Bohinjska Bistrica, and Štivan. In 1561 the revenues of the following branch offices exceeded 1,000 florins per annum: Postojna, 7,710 fl.; Vodice, 2,298 fl.; Podkraj, 1,559 fl.; and Kranj, 1,440 fl.

Source: Othmar Pickl, "Die Auswirkungen . . .," *op. cit.*, 107-08.

there as well as from Makarska skins were shipped by sea to Venice and Ancona. In this way both the duty at the Hungarian border with Austria and the Ljubljana excise were avoided.

Since much of the Hungarian-Italian trade was on a barter basis, so that trade in one direction complemented the flow of goods in the opposite direction, the diversion of skin exports diverted the trade in Italian fabrics from the Ljubljana Road to Dubrovnik as well. From Dubrovnik Italian goods were transported to Požega and Osijek in the Turkish territory, where Dubrovnik merchants had established their colonies. Based on Buda customs records, the percentage of fabric imports into Hungary via Ljubljana decreased from 36 percent in 1571 to 21 percent in 1575, and finally to 3 percent in 1580.

Unlike the trade in commodities, the flow of Hungarian cattle through Slovenia remained unaffected by increases in excise taxes. In 1544 and again in 1587, around 18,000 cattle passed the tollgate at Gorizia/Gorica on the way to Venice. Half of the herds were driven over the Ljubljana Road and the other half over the Postojna Road, since grazing grounds along the Ljubljana Road were not sufficient to support much more than half of the total number. A major part of this cattle may have originated in Croatian lands. Thus, between 1545 and 1558, 2,381 head of cattle were exported to Slovenia by Zagreb traders, but some of these animals, too, may have come from Hungary. On the other hand, there may have been unrecorded exports by Croat nobility, who were exempt from border duty on products from their allodial lands, a privilege of which they made use in a rather liberal fashion.

Seasonal peaks in the number of cattle driven through Slovene lands were reached in December and April in anticipation of increased demand for meat during the carnival and post-Lent seasons, respectively. A part of the cattle which arrived in Venice during the spring had wintered in Slovenia: the peasants bought cattle in the fall and sold them to Venetian butchers in the spring.

Although livestock traffic continued into the 1590s, benefiting the peasants as well as the state budget, Ljubljana and Ptuj burghers no longer served as intermediaries in cattle trade. The process which led to their exclusion started with Turkish advances into Hungary, which severely reduced the supply of cattle to Venice. The Venetian Senate reacted by adopting, in 1566, regulations according to which 50 percent of the cattle destined to Venetian territories had to be sold to slaughterhouses in Venice. Maximum live-weight prices were also set. Moreover, all sales in the Gorizia/Gorica market had to be executed in the presence of agents of the Venice Slaughterhouse Company (*Compagnia del partito della beccaria*).

In the subsequent turn of events, the company's principal, Joseph de Francesco, used his power to exclude other Venetian traders from the

market. He then proceeded to use his monopsonistic position to depress prices in the Gorizia/Gorica market to the detriment of Ljubljana and other Inner Austrian traders, who after suffering substantial losses withdrew from the market. Now the Venetian Slaughterhouse Company and traders from Bergamo entered into direct exchange with Hungary. Even though Ptuj and Ljubljana attempted to invoke their established storage privileges, their efforts were thwarted by Archduke Karl II of Inner Austria, who, in 1572, allowed Venetian buyers direct access to the Hungarian market. Medieval city privileges were thus subordinated to fiscal interests of the state, since Venetians were in a position to advance money to the state treasury. Following the near-bankruptcy of the leading cattle trader on the Ljubljana road, Peter Valentin of Ptuj, no local trader was able to compete with the powerful Venetian buyers, so that by 1576 practically all trade became concentrated in their hands.

Towards the end of the century, Venetian purchases in Hungary began to interfere with the supply of cattle to the Vienna market, which prompted Emperor Rudolph II to suspend the buying privileges of Venetian traders in West Hungarian cattle markets. As Venetians moved further east to make their cattle purchases, the roads leading through Croatia and through Turkish occupied territories to the Adriatic became a feasible alternative to the route through Slovenia. From the ports of Bakar, Kraljevica, and Zadar, cattle were being shipped by sea to Venice. As a result the revenues of the Ljubljana excise office declined from 40,000 to 13,000 florins between 1596 and 1599.

To sum up, during the later part of the fifteenth and over much of the sixteenth centuries Slovenia's comparative advantage as a passageway for East-West trade determined her specialization in reexport trade and transportation services. However, by the end of the sixteenth century increases in indirect taxes imposed on goods flowing through Inner Austria and the associated development of alternative routes through Turkish-controlled territories, eroded the initial cost advantage held by Slovenia, causing a substantial decline in traffic.

*The Interregional Trade*⁹

Besides opportunities provided by the reexport trade, other opportunities for trade sprung from the fact that Slovene lands straddled the natural boundary between the Alpine and Mediterranean regions. Diverse climatic and physical conditions prevailing on each side of this boundary led to complementary trade within Slovene lands as well as to external trade between Slovenia and the adjoining regions.

From the Coast, wine and olive oil were carried into the interior. Another important product was sea salt, most of which came from salt beds in the area then under Venetian sovereignty. The boundary of the

market area for sea salt coincided roughly with the course of the Drava and Dravinja rivers. The area north of this line was supplied with rock salt from the Salzkammergut (Aussee).¹⁰

In the Alpine interior of Slovenia, the availability of iron ore, charcoal, and water power favored the development of iron and steel works (*fuzine*), which exported to the Mediterranean area such articles as nails, agricultural implements, various tools, cutlery, and cannon balls. Cloth (loden, *rašovina*), wooden articles, and cereals were also exported, some 200 articles in all.

Towards the end of the fifteenth century, Koper served as the principal port from which goods from the interior were carried to points along both sides of the Adriatic. However, during the sixteenth century Koper experienced a decline due to Habsburg regulations which diverted much of the trade between the coastal and Alpine zones to Austrian Trieste. Rijeka, too, shared in the trade with the interior, but after 1523 its relative importance declined because of Turkish interference with the flow of traffic from Rijeka's northeastern hinterland. Among smaller ports Gestrin cities Devin, Stivan, Milje, Izola and Piran, all in the Bay of Trieste, as well as Bakar, Bakarac, and Senj, in the Bay of Kvarner.

From the second part of the fifteenth century onward, the annual volume of traffic between the Slovene Alpine and Mediterranean regions has been estimated by Gestrin at up to 200,000 packhorse loads, or 34,000 metric tons, in both directions. Of this, prior to its decline Koper alone handled close to 100,000 loads in peak years. Around 1475, Rijeka accounted for 25,000 loads, while Trieste and Piran handled 20,000 loads each. The preceding data, which are based on excise and customs records, no doubt understate the actual volume of trade, since they exclude clandestine traffic. The latter, incidentally, was sufficiently important to have become part of Slovene folklore, and it subsequently entered into the literature with Fran Levstik's classic story *Martin Krpan*.

As to the volume of trade by principal commodities, data for 1620 indicate 50,000 loads of salt, carried from the Coast to the interior. Of this, 42,000 loads originated in the salt beds along the Venetian controlled northern Istrian Coast. The balance was supplies from salt beds in Trieste and on the island of Pag.

The annual volume of iron and steel products exported from Carniola to Italy during the sixteenth century is estimated at 25,000 loads: in 1569 the annual output of Carniolan forges amounted to 4,000 metric tons, of which one half was produced from local and the other half from Carinthian iron.

There was also a lively trade in nonferrous metals. At the beginning of the sixteenth century between 560 and 1,020 tons of Slovak copper were transported via Ptuj to two destinations: Fuggerau near Arnoldstein/Podklošter and Trieste. In the opposite direction went

smaller quantities of lead from Bleiberg/Plajberk and Litija. For the purpose of their metals trade Fuggers built a storage facility in Ptuj.¹¹ Quicksilver was exported from the state owned mine in Idrija.

Although the merchants of Ljubljana occupied a leading role in the trade with the Coast, other smaller places participated in this trade, notably Villach/Beljak, Celje, Gorizia/Gorica, Gornji grad, Kamnik, Kočevje, Kranj, Lož, Maribor, Metlika, Postojna, Ptuj, Radgona, Sežana, Slovenska Bistrica, Stična, Škofja Loka, Turjak, Vipava, and Višnja Gora. Moreover, during the sixteenth century the so-called rural trade expanded considerably, so that it actually exceeded the trade carried on in towns and boroughs. The annual volume of rural trade has been estimated by Gestrin at 550,000 loads for all of Slovenia.

Even though noblemen were selling their agricultural products in such markets at Trieste, they were not adverse to trading by peasants for their own account, since the income derived in this way facilitated the payment of feudal dues, which by the beginning of the sixteenth century had been already commuted from payments in kind to payment in money. This explains why, after a protracted dispute with towns, the provincial estates of Carniola, controlled by the nobility, adopted, in 1552, regulations (*Polizeiordnung*) which allowed peasants considerable freedom of trade, in particular the carrying of their goods to the Coast in exchange for salt, wine, oil, and other Mediterranean products. Similar regulations were adopted in Carinthia, whereas in Styria the regulations facilitated the trading by landed nobility, rather than by peasants.¹²

The situation in Styria approached that in Croatia, where the nobility succeeded in concentrating all trade in their hands, including the provisioning of the army in the Military Frontier. The peasants were effectively excluded not only because the nobility enjoyed the exemption from border taxes, but also because they secured for themselves preemptive rights for marketable surpluses of agricultural products.¹³ A leading position in the trade between the Croatian interior and the Coast (*Hrvatsko primorje*) was occupied by the counts Zrinski, who possessed a string of properties stretching from Medjimurje in the north to the ports of Bakar and Kraljevica in the south.

Another distinction between Slovene and Croatian lands concerns the role and character of towns. Whereas in Slovenia the towns derived their wealth from reexport trade, in Croatia the towns were created by noblemen as places in which artisans served local needs. In the two most important towns, Zagreb and Varaždin, burghers owned vineyards and other agricultural land. Moreover, many town dwellers were feudal dependents, in Osijek as many as 73 percent, in 1469.¹⁴ A typically urban class was, therefore, practically nonexistent.

The Agrarian Sector

Both in Western and in Eastern Europe increases in food prices could not have remained without effects on the distribution of income in the agrarian sector, that is on the relative income shares going to landlords as rent and to peasants as that part of total output which remained after the payment of feudal dues. Had the land been leased out competitively one would have seen a rise in the income share of landlords because of the increased demand for land. However, under the then existing feudal conditions changes in relative income shares associated with increases in peasant population under conditions of diminishing returns depended upon the method by which rent payments, that is to say feudal dues, were determined. Historical observations suggest the following models, each with different redistributive effects.

1. Rent varied in proportion to output, as for example in the case of the tithe. Here, rent increased *pari passu* with output, while income shares of landlords and peasants remained constant. However, real income per unit of peasant labor decreased due to diminishing returns. Whether proportional dues were collected in kind or in money (a) did not matter as long as market prices were used in calculating the payment, but (b) where prices were prescribed, inflation had a negative effect on rent.

2. Rent was constant relative to output and payable in kind, for example, so many measures of grain per year from a given holding. In this case rent remained unchanged, but its relative share decreased as output increased. The relative share of peasant income increased, while real income per unit of labor fell, but by less than in model 1.

3. Rent was constant relative to output and fixed in money. Under inflationary conditions real rent declined not only relatively, but absolutely as well. The share of peasant income rose by more than in model 2. The real income per worker (a) fell by less than in model 2 or (b) conceivably increased if the reduction in real rent per worker exceeded the drop in average productivity of labor due to diminishing returns.

How does the situation in South Slavic lands, pieced together from available literature, fit the preceding models? As regards the method of rent collection, both proportional levies, i.e. the tithe, as well as fixed levies were in use. During the emerging money economy of the fifteenth century, most dues had been commuted from dues payable in kind to dues payable in money. In calculating the amount of the tithe, the tenth part of output was determined first. Subsequently, it was common, at least in Croatia, to apply fixed prices to determine the money equivalent.¹⁵ Thus, the inflation had a negative effect on income derived from the tithe, as indicated by the preceding model 1b. No wonder that during the sixteenth century in Croat lands the tithe was commuted to pay-

ments in kind. This occurred as the nobility began to lease the collection of the tithe from the Church. In addition, the tithe was extended to lands to which it did not apply earlier and the collection was made more rigorous. Since payments to the Church were kept at a minimum, rent derived from the tithe was thus largely secularized.

From extensive data collected by Adamček, I give as an illustration the case of ecclesiastical properties in Topusko, where information contained in a 1555 complaint by peasants reveals that the tithe on grains increased between four and five times and that on pigs by four times, expressed in money terms.¹⁶

For Slovene lands systematic data comparable to those collected by Adamček are not available. However, it appears that recommutation to payments in kind was less prevalent in Slovene than in the Croatian lands and that alternative methods were used to neutralize the redistributive effects of inflation. Where feudal dues were expressed as a fixed amount for a given land area (model 2) a discretionary payment collected at the time of peasant succession came into use. This was possible because peasant property rights were a gray area, a matter in which the view of the peasants differed from that of the landlords. The right of occupancy and usufruct of a given peasant holding, against payment of established dues, was considered by the peasants as permanent and hereditary. The landlords, on the other hand, viewed it as a lifetime lease, the transfer of which was at the option of the landlord. Thus, the landlords began requiring the payment of lease money at the time of succession.

Also, in the Slovene lands the peasants could sell their property rights, in which case both the seller and the buyer had to pay a sum of money to the landlord. These transactions, known as *Verkaufrechtung*, became another means of the landlords to increase their revenues.¹⁷

It is certain that through aforementioned additional contributions the nominal rent increased, but whether this can be said, as it is generally assumed, of the real rent as well has not been empirically determined.¹⁸ In any case, for the large mass of rural population any changes in agricultural income may have been less important than changes in income derived from nanagricultural activities such as transportation and rural trade. This appears to be confirmed by the close correspondence between peasant uprisings¹⁹ and fluctuations in trade. I note that the 1515 uprising coincided with the interruption of trade with Venice due to Maximilian's blockade. By contrast, at the time of the peasant war in Germany, between 1524 and 1526, which found no echo in Slovene lands, trade with Venice was on the rise. In fact, after 1515 no uprising occurred until the Croat-Slovene peasant uprising of 1573, which remained limited to the areas along the Croat border and had its origin in conditions which were perhaps less typical of Slovene than of Croat

lands, where the nobility severely restricted peasant trade, thus starting a process leading toward what became known as the "second serfdom."

The Reception of Protestantism by Various Socio-Economic Strata

I return to the thesis according to which in Central Europe urban population, that is the burghers, constituted the social group which provided the breeding ground for Protestantism, while the acceptance by the nobility came later. Concerning the South Slavic lands the preceding survey suggests the following conclusions.

At the outset of the sixteenth century two towns in the Slovene interior, Ljubljana and Ptuj, served as important reexport centers in the exchange of goods between Hungary and Venice. The designation of Inner Austria as "a relatively town-scarce country (*relativ städtearme Landschaft*)"²⁰ may be, therefore, an overstatement attributable to the fact that the discovery of the sixteenth century importance of the Ljubljana Road is of recent date: I note that the map of trade routes around 1500 in the *Atlas Ostliches Mitteleuropa*, published in 1959, omits the road connection between Venice and Hungary.²¹

When applied to South Slavic lands, the thesis of the urban origins of the Reformation is supported by the fact that it was among the burghers, particularly those of Ljubljana, that Protestantism put down roots. In this, the Italian immigrant traders certainly played a role, since it is known that in Ljubljana Protestant services were being held also in Italian. Nevertheless, the Slovene element must have supplied the bulk of supporters, otherwise the Carniolan Estates would not have appointed Trubar and other Slovenes to serve as Church superintendents, once Protestantism had been legalized. The same conclusion follows from the sheer numerical preponderance of the Slovene element. Vlado Valenčič²² has estimated that out of the 4,400 persons who lived within the Ljubljana city walls, 83 percent were of Slovene language, while before the end of the sixteenth century 80 percent of the Ljubljana's population was Protestant.²³ A Slovene Protestant community, with their own preacher, existed also in Klagenfurt/Celovec²⁴

Although the influence of Rome prevented a similar bloom of Protestantism in Coastal towns, the fact that bishops Peter Bonomo of Trieste and Peter Pavel Vergerius of Koper were both propagators of reformational thought suggests at least tacit support of the reformation movement by their urban constituencies. Even though Bonomo remained outwardly a Catholic, he was a mentor and benefactor of the young Trubar, in whom he instilled reformational ideas. Vergerius, while in Württemberg, in 1553, joined in Trubar's publishing efforts there. A year later he left Koper for good and renounced the Catholic faith.²⁵

In order to view the role of Trieste in the Slovene Protestant move-

ment from an economic perspective, it should be remembered that Bonomo was not only a religious, but a leading political figure as well. In this latter capacity he supported economic interests of the city, whose volume of trade trailed behind that of the Venetian Koper. Following the 1522 division of Habsburg lands in Brussels, which returned Trieste to Inner Austria, Bonomo successfully opposed the annexation of Trieste by Carniola. In doing so he strived to protect the fiscal and political autonomy of the city and to assure Trieste a leading role in trade with the interior at the expense of Koper.²⁶

Thus, although ruling out political annexation by Carniola, Bonomo aimed at linking Trieste commercially to its Inner Austrian hinterland. The economic unity was to be complemented and strengthened by religious unity in the Reformation, both in opposition to the interests of Catholic Venice. The fact that Bishop Vergerius of Venetian Koper was a supporter of the Protestant cause as well may reflect Koper's economic dependence on Slovenia's interior.

An interesting parallel to the situation in Koper can be drawn for the Prekmurje area, then under the Hungarian crown, but commercially linked to Inner Austria's Styria. It is precisely the commercial ties between the noblemen of the two areas which explain the religious conformity of the nobility in Prekmurje with that of Styria. As soon as the nobility of Styria turned Protestant, the nobility of Prekmurje did the same. When the Styrian nobility reconverted to Catholicism, the nobility of Prekmurje again followed suit. However, they did not force the peasants, who had also become Protestant, to reconvert, which accounts for the survival of Protestantism in Prekmurje to this day.²⁷

For the peasantry in other Slovene lands, Mirko Rupel²⁸ maintains that in the vicinity of towns Protestantism was adopted more readily than elsewhere. The same was true of the population on Church estates, apparently in opposition to the Catholic landlords. In addition to adherence to the Lutheran Church, adherence to various non-legitimate sects was widespread among the peasants. It is illustrative of the religious tolerance prevailing in Trieste that Anabaptists sent there as forced labor were being released for even minor physical deficiencies, while others were being helped to escape.²⁹

According to Ferdo Gestrin³⁰ the tightening of the fiscal screw by the Prince, who represented the central government and who was a Catholic, contributed to the urban support of the Protestant cause. Although the economic interests, of the landed nobility diverged from those of the burghers, particularly in respect to rural trade, common opposition to the Prince led both these classes to ultimately join forces in the Reformation. From 1560 on, the provincial estates, controlled by the landed nobility, assumed the sponsorship and financial responsibility for the Protestant Church in Carniola, Styria, and Carinthia. As an illustra-

tion of the relative importance the estates of these provinces attributed to the Slovene Protestant element, I note that of the total cost of Dalmatin's Bible in the amount of 8,000 gulden, Carinthia and Stryia assumed 1,300 gulden each, while Carniola covered the balance.³¹

If, as the Slovene case seems to indicate, the existence of an urban class was a precondition for the emergence of Protestantism, then the absence of the Protestant movement in Croatia is explainable by the lack of comparable trade flows which in Slovenia created an urban milieu. The Croatian lands were too close to the Ottoman danger to attract trade. Moreover, what trade there was, was in the hands of the nobility.

In contrast to the Slovene Protestant literature, which was part and parcel of a full-blown Reformation movement, the reasons for the emergence of a Croato-Serbian Protestant literature were purely external. This literature was initiated by Trubar with the express aim of proselytizing the Turks. In this context, two observations, both of which strengthen the urban thesis, are in order. First, I note that at least two Croatian clergymen whom Trubar was able to engage for his project, Stjepan Konzul and Antun Dalmata, came from Istria and Dalmatia, respectively, where conditions may have been similar to those which led Bishop Vergerius of Koper to opt for the Reformation.

Second, and this is more important: if the aim of Trubar and his supporter Baron Ungnad, was to convert the Turks, what reasons may have impelled them to publish in Croato-Serbian, and not in Turkish? The answer to this question would require a thorough study of language use by various social strata in South Slavic territories under the Ottoman rule, a subject beyond the scope of this paper. It is, however, my impression that during the period under consideration, the leading social stratum in the Balkans was Turkish and, of course, Moslem. The peasant strata were in the main Slavic and Christian, while the rather important urban middle class³² consisted largely of Slavs who had converted to Islam. Since the upper class Turks could have been scarcely expected to read a Slavic language, and since the peasants were already Christian as well as illiterate, Trubar's proselytizing efforts must have been directed at the Slavic converts to Islam, that is at the urban middle class. If this strategy reposed on Trubar's experience with the spread of Protestantism in Slovene lands, it goes a long way to confirm the conclusions drawn from our survey.

University of New Orleans

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