

EVAPORATION OF AN ILLUSION IN SLOVAKIA

BY

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The illusion of which mention is made below is merely one of the many that have for a time been forfeited in Slovakia since political independence was achieved, and which have had disastrous consequences for the people of the Slovak Republic.

The New Year's issue of the „Národné Noviny“ boldly questions this statement and publishes data refuting it. For the sake of greater authenticity we shall adhere strictly to the contents of the article in question, omitting none of the data published. In the first place the „Národné Noviny“ puts the question: how could certain statisticians have arrived at so large an export surplus of cattle when it is well known that the consumption of meat in Slovakia at present is extremely low, practically a mere minimum? The article contains a table showing the consumption of meat and fat in the various provinces of the old Czecho-Slovak Republic. We give that table here. —

Consumption of meat and fat per capita per annum in kilogrammes:

<i>Province</i>	<i>Beef</i>	<i>Veal</i>	<i>Pork</i>	<i>Fat</i>
Bohemia	16 kg.	3 kg.	14 kg.	4 kg.
Moravia	14 kg.	2.8 kg.	14.5 kg.	4.6 kg.
Slovakia	6 kg.	2.2 kg.	8 kg.	1.9 kg.

This presents an astonishing picture. A comparison of the figures gives us a precise indication of the conditions under which the several peoples lived in the Czecho-Slovak

Paradise. According to those figures the people of Slovakia consumed less than half the quantity of beef eaten by the Czechs. Per head the Czechs consumed 10 kilogrammes more beef per annum than did the Slovaks.

As regards the consumption of lard, we find that the difference between the quantity consumed by a Czech and a Slovak respectively was 4 and 1.9 kilogrammes, the larger quantity naturally being consumed by the Czech. Only 44 per cent, of the quantity of lard consumed per person per annum in Bohemia fell to the share of an inhabitant of Slovakia.

If we take this minimum consumption as our basis of calculation, what do we find as regards the exportation of animals from Slovakia? Slovakia has 2.700.000 inhabitants (according to the „Národné Noviny“), and if we wish to calculate their aggregate consumption of meat we must reckon it on the basis of 8 kilogrammes (6 of beef and 2 of veal) per person per annum. This amounts to 216.000 quintals *If now we count 480 kilogrammes as the average live weight of an animal and allow a 50% reduction for hide, bones, etc., it is evident that Slovakia requires 90.000 head of cattle for domestic consumption. This is ten per cent of the present stock.*

But — asks the Slovak newspaper — can the consumption of meat and fat remain on this extremely low level? The answer is „No“. The article shows that it is only by estimating domestic consumption at the present low rate that it is possible to show a surplus for exportation. The situation changes when we recognize that the desperately meagre consumption of meat must somehow be raised. This would be the first duty of Slovak social policy. Dr. Martin Kvetko (the author of the article in question), too optimistically, would like to raise the consumption of meat and lard in Slovakia to a higher level than that obtaining in

Bohemia. In that case each inhabitant would have to eat 11 kilogrammes more per annum, a rise of 120 per cent. To supply that quantity 123.750 head of cattle would be required. In connection with this Dr. Kvetko says: — *„If we take this simple comparison as our starting-point and raise the quantities of meat and fat consumed by the poorer classes accordingly, instead of having an export surplus of from 60 to 80 thousand animals, we shall be obliged to import from 45 to 65 thousand.“*

The same methods were employed as in the case of the reports on the export surplus of wheat. There, too, the method of calculating the minimum quantity was by including the whole of the barley needed in Slovakia among the bread cereals. In the present instance, in order to prove the viability of the State as regards its ability to export animals, Slovak statisticians and politicians take as their basis of calculation the present alarmingly low level of meat consumption, and do not trouble to think that it would be time to raise the standard of life in Slovakia above the miserable level at which it was kept during the twenty years of Czech rule. Slovak politicians do not think of this. They cannot afford to think of it, *for were they to do so, they would have to look around for imports, which they cannot obtain except from their southern neighbour.*

If the quantities of meat and fat consumed are to be raised, the live stock must naturally be increased too. Here, because of the light it throws on the subject, it will be interesting to examine the following table, which shows the distribution of live stock per 100 hectares (arable land) in the various provinces of former Czecho-Slovakia.

<i>Province</i>	<i>Horses</i>	<i>Horned cattle</i>	<i>Milch Cows</i>	<i>Goats</i>	<i>Sheep</i>
Slovakia	8.6	36.7	17.4	2	11.1
Bohemia	7.5	68.6	38.2	14	1.1
Moravia	9	52.5	32.3	18.6	0.6

For the sake of comparison we give some of the data for Germany: —

<i>Horned cattle</i>	<i>Goats</i>	<i>Sheep</i>
69	9	15

Here, too, as in the case of the consumption of meat the situation in Slovakia is — to say least of it — a sad one. It would not, however, be impossible to reach the level of the surrounding provinces of former Czecho-Slovakia. But to do so Slovak policy, especially Slovak agrarian policy, must turn over a new leaf. For where is Slovakia to obtain brood animals for the purpose of increasing her live stock? Only from her southern neighbour. Slovakia must therefore reckon with an economic gravitation towards the south. To close her eyes to this would result in a further deterioration of the standard of living. In the „Národné Noviny“ Dr. Martin Kvetko himself writes as follows: — „By 1934 we had not reached the level on which Slovakia stood in 1910 before the world war.“ With these words Dr. Kvetko shows the difference between the Czecho-Slovak „Paradise“ and the years of alleged „oppression“. Neither after the war nor since she became independent has Slovakia been able to reach the level on which she stood in 1910, when the laws of economic gravitation were able to assert themselves freely. This is the real gist of the Slovak statisticians' and agrarian politicians' lamentations.