

THE 100th BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF PROFESSOR SVETOZAR ILEŠIČ (1907-1985)

The homage at the 100th birth anniversary of Professor Svetozar Ilešič in this journal is written mainly because he was the head of the Karst Research Institute of the Slovene Academy of Sciences and Arts in the years 1972 to 1976. Since 1969 he was member of the Scientific Council of

The Slovene University was founded after the First World War when most of Slovenia passed from the Austro-Hungarian Empire to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and was shortly afterwards renamed Yugoslavia. The first Slovene professor at the Department of



Academician Svetozar Ilešič (on the extreme right) presiding over the »field meeting« of the Karst Research Institute on Pivka (1977)

the Institute and for several years its president. But his important work for the development of the Slovene karst studies is of longer standing and includes also university teaching of the Slovene geographers, being attended by numerous future karstologists during their regular study at the University of Ljubljana who later work at Postojna. As *Acta carsologica* developed into an internationally renowned journal there is a need to explain these words in a wider context.

Geography was Anton Melik well known for his studies of fluvial geomorphological features of the Slovene Dinaric and Alpine karst and for detailed geographical accounts of the Slovene regions. Svetozar Ilešič was his assistant since 1933. After the Second World War when the number of geography students started to increase, in 1947 Ilešič became a reader and in 1950 a regular professor. Until recently the only University in Slovenia was that in Ljubljana. After the independence of Slovenia in

1991 another University was established at Maribor and later two other specialized young universities at Koper and Nova Gorica; the Postojna Karst institute researchers participate at the last two but they also lecture on the subject of karst at the Ljubljana Geography department.

As the lecturer of general geography S. Ilešič has written six textbooks for his students and as the lecturer of regional geography he has published the geography of other continents at public publishing houses for a wider public. Because of these and other publications he was highly esteemed as a geographer and public worker in his country and in the whole Yugoslavia. Especially his book about the systems of land division in Slovenia that was translated and published also in Germany earned him fame abroad also. Chroniclers calculated that during his life (1907-1985) he published texts in common length of 5000 pages. By such a rich literature and by lectures at home and abroad he has essentially increased the professional level of his students there included the researchers of the Postojna institute. During the entire existence the highest number of geographers represented the Postojna interdisciplinary karst institute.

Ilešič was predominantly regional and social geographer yet he studied terraces, fluvial regimes and longitudinal river profiles as a physical geographer within the regional geography of Slovenia but also landscape composition on Dinaric and Alpine karst. Also the writer of these lines was the student of Ilešič who renovated the knowledge of settlement types and land parcelling registered in old cadastre maps in student teams on the karst of Littoral.

Today the Karst Research Institute belongs to the Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (ZRC SAZU) at Ljubljana. In 1967 Ilešič became the associate member of this Academy, which is the highest scientific institution in Slovenia, and its regular member in 1970. The Postojna institute belongs to its fourth class of natural science. This class appointed Ilešič to be the head of the Karst Research Institute at Postojna (1972-1976). Older members of this Institute remember Ilešič as a friendly and obliging person who used to continue professional and social talks after the official meetings in other environments. Thus he succeeded to make out of professionally heterogeneous group a strong homogeneous team. As the new editor of the Institute's journal Ilešič changed its name from Poročila (Reports) into *Acta carsologica* and by this change implied the widened area of interest covering the whole Dinaric karst. Into the first number he included the papers from the 6th Yugoslav Speleological Congress and in the last, edited by him, he placed the results of interdisciplinary and inter-institute researches of the Cerknjško jezero. This publication also helped that a wider public prevented the exploitation of the lake for hydro energetic accumulation lake. After the Slovenia's independence in 1991 and in particular after its incorporation into European Union our journal continued with the international editorial board the process started by Ilešič to widen the interest spheres. Now this is an international journal included into ISI Thomson SCI Expanded/Current Geographical Contents.

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