

THE EFFECTS OF THE 1976 EARTHQUAKE IN THE SOČA RIVER BASIN

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The Anton Melik Geographical Institute of the Slovene Academy of Sciences and Arts of Ljubljana has among its tasks that of recording and attempting to explain from a geographical perspective various major natural disasters which occur in Slovenia. The consequences of the 1976 earthquake are the first major earthquake disaster effects analyzed by the Institute. The work demonstrated that the methodology for examining natural disasters has not been sufficiently studied and developed. A new set of problems had to be faced and could not be solved in a completely satisfactory manner. In the future, much more attention must be devoted to developing geographical methods for studying natural disasters and applying the findings in practice. The work carried out attempted to record and explain as completely as possible the consequences of the earthquake in the most severely stricken areas.

Various kinds of natural and other disasters occur relatively frequently and, therefore, must be taken into consideration and dealt with as typical phenomena for any social community within some larger regional context. For the most part disasters and catastrophies have in common the two properties that they are space and time specific. The spatial aspect is related to the extent of the disaster and to other influences in process at that time in the affected region and subareas of it. The temporal aspect of the crisis can be very different. A distinction can be made between the time duration of the occurrence or event and the period necessary for recovery. This second period of time can last years or even decades, depending upon the circumstances and the severity of the impact of the event in a specific region.

The earthquake of 1976 was the most severe one in Slovenia in this century. The next most severe was that of the 7th degree MCS in the Kozje area in 1974. See Table 1. A stronger earthquake occurred on April 14, 1895, with the epicenter in the neighborhood of Vodice (the well-known Ljubljana earthquake), estimated at 7th to 9th degrees MCS. The disaster striking the Soča River Basin in 1976 was the strongest earthquake in Slovenia in the last 81 years. Within the epicentral region itself this earthquake was considerably stronger and more