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Peñafiel (Valladolid): An archetypal little regional centre specialized in the transformation of local resources

In large areas of inland Spain, nowadays deeply affected by depopulation, there have been phenomena of population concentration and activity that, particularly on the northern Plateau, altered the articulation of the historical settlement. As a result, dynamic axes and enclaves coexist with wide declining areas; this is not only a consequence of the most recent transformations but is rooted in the way the Middle Ages-based structures were adapted to the modern market economy. In the same way, Peñafiel, a town and municipality with a current population of only 5,000, serves as a model of successive adaptations to changing socioeconomic conditions and geographical consequences, from the Christian repopulation of the Douro Basin to globalization, but maintaining throughout its thousand years of existence its position in the regional urban hierarchy. The (late) arrival of the railway was the main vector of its industrialization and modernization, although the evolution of the counties without a prominent city, as is the case, shows substantial differences with respect to the stages that are usually considered typical of the Spanish industrial and urban evolution.

Peñafiel, born as a fortress city to ensure the Christian advance to the south and head of a village and land community (“comunidad de villa y tierra”) wider than the region to which it currently serves, had first in manufacturing and later in the industry its major driving force. The craftwork production, which maintained its essential features until the second half of the 19th century, was oriented to the production of agricultural tools and tools and the transformation of local raw materials, a fact that is kept

constant. The manufacturing tradition was mainly based on leather, both in terms of its production and the production of final products. In 1849 three tanning factories of medieval origin were still working; they had an extramural location because of the water they needed and the odours they produced. There was also a remarkable number of shoemakers (almost a third of the 143 craftsmen in 1752), as well as arreos for cavalry manufacturers and wine barrel makers, among others. Textile manufacturing was second in importance, including thirty canvas and cloth weavers. Milling was essential, dedicated to both cereal and blonde for dyeing grinding. It was hydraulically moved by the Douro and Duraton rivers; its economic importance is proved by the high price paid by buyers of the disentanglement monastery’s convent mills. The list of the main artisanal productions was completed by underground wine cellars, rope and string factories and pottery.

In Peñafiel the first technical innovations linked to the industrial revolution were those incorporated into the flour milling, nothing strange considering the secular milling tradition and the abundance of grains; other factors were the protectionist policy on cereal and the prior development of an industrial bourgeoisie with investment capacity, especially in provincial capitals. A good example of the consolidation of the long-distance commercial relationship is the flour factory that was installed in an old water mill, owned by a neighbour of the Cantabrian port of Santander, where grain and flours to America were shipped.

But in Peñafiel, as for other historical towns, the differential fact was the arrival of the railway, in this par-

ticular case the opening to traffic of the transverse branch line Valladolid-Ariza (also called Douro Line, which connected the Douro and Ebro basins and the main lines from Madrid to the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts) at the end of the 19th century. This line was a typical product of the second stage of railway construction in the 19th century, as it combined the interests of both the commercial and agricultural bourgeoisie. This finally resulted to be the innovation key factor in Peñafiel, as it favoured the market orientation of agricultural productions, the modernization of manufactures (a transition from traditional milling to the flour milling and biscuits industries), as well as the improvement of Peñafiel status in the regional urban hierarchy. Opened in 1895, the new railway station (located north of the village and with a remarkable size in relation to the size of the town centre), initially served to load the regional grain surpluses and, as early as the 20s of the last century, to attract the installation of two modern flour mills, assembled according to the Austro-Hungarian system and moved by hydroelectricity, produced in converted old flour mills. This was the symbol of the modernization (although it had not gone through the steam stage as a driving force), but in that moment the bulk of traditional manufactures destined for the regional market were still open.

The second industrializing impulse (1940-1980) was closely linked to agricultural modernization, since the irrigation of the meadows in the area (through the late Riaza Canal, 1945) enabled the expansion of industrial crops, the operation of factories for their transformation and the development of others aimed at supplying agricultural machinery. In parallel with the splendour of the flour industry after the Spanish Civil War, favoured by state interventionism, the Sugar Mill of Peñafiel (1956-2009) became the symbol of local industry; its implementation was relatively late in the Douro basin, already converted into the country's first soaking area after taking over the Ebro basin. The mill had state-level capitals which allowed the set up and operation of extensive facilities that occupied 30 hectares north of the population, with machinery partly moved from a closed factory in Pinos Puente (Granada); it was equipped with its own railway system as well as an employee neighbourhood; the "Azucarera de Peñafiel" came to the fourth place in the Douro Basin by grinding capacity, being favoured by the closure of other older factories and absorbing some of the previously transformed raw material into them, as supply areas and contracts with farmers were restructured. The sugar mill was effect and factor of the expansion of irrigated beet and grinded more than 300,000 tons in

the 1982 campaign. However, the increase in sugar beet production was not incompatible with other agri-food industries, as flour and sugar are basic ingredients in the manufacture of biscuits. At this stage, the manufacture of dietary products runned by foreign capital was also initiated (a specialization that allowed Santiveri to be the single survivor of the biscuit factories). Other of the survivors is the cheese factory (which still produces the "Flor de Esgueva" brand); the expansion of the factory led to its relocation to the southeast of the town, giving account of its importance the fact that having its origin in local investments has then belonged to multinationals. Directly linked to agricultural production, it is worth highlighting the importance of the feed manufacturing (two companies) and that of agricultural machinery, in this case as a result of the adaptation in the 60s of old cart workshops.

As the agri-food industry is the engine of the Peñafielense economy, its expansion led to the modernization and development of other manufactures destined for the regional market, both those of consumption (coffee roasters, ice, sodas, bleach, leather, alphas factories etc.) and those of building materials that also transform regional resources: mud for brick and lose; plasters, sands and limestones for prefabricated concrete and stone pieces for slabs and facades; wood for carpentry; etc. In the second industrial stage, therefore, various types of industries are combined: the heirs of the traditional ones directly linked to the regional market, more or less modernized; factories of a remarkable size that have national capital and markets due to interventionism in commodity and agri-food markets; the innovative agri-food industry, which survived the stage by expanding markets and with the participation of state and multinational capital; and industry aimed at meeting the needs of agricultural production and urban growth. The linkage with the regional resources and the variety of markets to which industrial production was intended to explain the relative strength of a small town that was able to overcome the inconvenience of its proximity to the industrious city of Aranda and, especially, Valladolid, the main industrial centre of Castilla y León, from which Peñafiel was too far away to be able to take advantage of its irradiation capacity.

In recent decades those balances would have to face the challenge of progressive market liberalization, European first and global later, while increasing the standard of living was profoundly transforming the food diet. In addition, the industry in Castilla and León shows a strong spatial concentration in the so-called Castilian diagonal,

marked by the nodes of Valladolid and Burgos and a peripheral arch where provincial capitals and other cities of the third level of the regional urban system are integrated, with Aranda being the closest to Peñafiel. The industrial restructuring of recent decades, caused by its modernization but also by the new market conditions, have led to the disappearance of almost all of the traditional workshops oriented to the local market, as well as the large historical factories of the town, such as the flour mills or the sugar mill factory. It should be noted for this specific case the great incidence of the definitive closure of the railway line in 1994, together with the accumulated delay in the construction of the Douro highway, circumstances that have detracted from Peñafiel competitive advantages over other locations, such as Aranda de Duero, which benefit from better rail and road links. If we add the progressive reduction of the capacity of the industry to generate employment, it is understandable that Peñafiel has only been able to maintain its dynamism thanks to the tertiarization of its economy, favoured by the Public Administrations, which have concentrated in the town some services and equipment of supramunicipal scope that have served to consolidate it as the economic head of a large territory located between the areas of influence of the towns of Quintanilla de Abajo and Roa, the latter belonging to the neighbouring province of Burgos. In this process of tertiarization, it was also a role the new use of part of the industrial heritage by an emerging subsector: the tourism (flour mills converted into hotels, old mills in restaurants, etc.).

However, the old and small town, which we take as a model of adaptation to the successive stages of the not based in large centers-Spanish industry, has still a firm manufacturing base, anchored in the renewed and quality agri-food industry. To the remaining productions already mentioned (the cheese production and that of dietary products, now belonging to a French company) we must add the distillation of aromatic plants, special sugars and, above all, the recent strength of the wine industry. The traditional production of wines (preserved in under-

ground wineries) by small companies was replaced by quality wines with a geographical indication (Certificate of Origin "Ribera de Duero"); the cooperative "Protos", promoted by the Peñafiel agricultural union, was pioneering in the production of market-destined wines. "Protos" raised the first modern winery (already not subterranean) as early as 1927, located next to the flour mills, between the historic centre and the railway station. However, the vineyard decayed to a low in the 1980s, taking off the vines in favor of irrigation, so it was not until 2000 that it had a noticeable increase; as a result, nowadays there are 29 wineries in Peñafiel. This expansion has transformed the agricultural landscape with its facilities and vineyards annexed, but also the urban landscape, as the new facilities not only located on the margins of roads but also in the new polygons designed by the different urban plans approved by the municipal corporation in recent years.

On the other hand, the industrial activity is now concentrated on the industrial areas by the sides of the main road. Apart from the four largest companies (Protos, Pago de Carraovejas, Flor de Esgueva and Casa Santiveri, with more than 50 workers although not reaching 250), the industrial areas serve as a location for most of the secondary sector, in which 90% of companies were created after 1990. However, apart from modern food industries and a glass transformer, the majority of companies carry on with traditional productions: food, machinery, building materials and metal constructions, derived from wood (including barrels) and furniture.

In resume, Peñafiel is an example of the capacity for survival of the towns that are part of the lowest levels of the urban hierarch when they are able to simultaneously fulfil two urban functions: serving as head of their surrounding rural area, thanks to a good number of services and equipment; and to produce quality goods from endogenous resources (especially – but not only - food) that, for that reason, can be sold in global markets. Significantly, more than 20% of the working population works in the industrial sector, with the population remaining around 5,000 inhabitants since the 1970s.