

# EMIGRATION OF SLOVENE WOMEN: A SHORT HISTORICAL VIEW

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## INTRODUCTION

What have Antonija Höffern-Sallfeld, Polona Noč, Liza Škofic, Marija from Prekmurje, Branislava Sušnik, Terezija Hlep, and Ifigenija Zagoričnik Simonovič in common? Beside the fact that they are all women, all of them have experienced the destiny of a life of an emigrant. The first, Antonija, sister of the missionary Friderik Baraga<sup>1</sup>, came to the U.S.A. in 1837 to help her brother as a housekeeper and teacher of the natives. A noblewoman by name and a bourgeois by way of life, with knowledge of at least five world languages, she did not sustain among Baraga's Indians; thus, she returned via Philadelphia and Rome to her homeland (Drnovšek 1999: 79-89). The second, Polona, sister of the missionary Franc Pirc<sup>2</sup>, went in 1855 with her husband and her four children from Podbrezje in Upper Carniola to Minnesota in the U.S.A. The elder daughter persuaded her groom to go as well.<sup>3</sup> Their departure has irritated Janez Bleiweis<sup>4</sup>, who imposed the blame for selling the farm at home and leaving for America on Polona, and foretold them dark fortune. His predictions did not come true as the family managed well their 160 acres of land (Drnovšek 1998: 144-149). The third, Liza, was part of the mass wave of Slovenes to the U.S.A. at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Not married and solitary she worked as a cook or servant in more and less rich families. Her life has known better and worse times. However, ill health and last but not least renouncing, even food, have contributed to her premature death (Drnovšek 2001: 43-46). The fourth, Marija from Prekmurje, was like many of her coevals, between the two wars leaving for France as a seasonal agrarian worker. The fifth, Branislava Sušnik, a doctor of sciences, left after World War II as a refugee for Carinthia, and then over Rome to Argentina and later to Paraguay, where she as anthropologist researched

<sup>1</sup> Baraga Friderik Irenej (1797-1868), a missionary and philologist (Plut-Pregelj, Rogel 1996:25-26).

<sup>2</sup> Franc Pirc (1785-1880), missionary (Furlan 1952).

<sup>3</sup> Bleiweis had second thoughts on the departure of the groom as well: »How will a simple and lonely Carniolian peasant start in America? How will he defend his rights? There must have been a strong flame of love burning in the groom to leave with his sweetheart for America! Pray to God the emigrants will not regret their deed!« In: Novice, No. 56, 1855, p. 224.

<sup>4</sup> Janez Bleiweis (1808-1881), a journalist, politician and veterinary (Plut-Pregelj, Rogel 1996: 30).

original peoples of that area (Mislej 1992: 266-271). The sixth, Terezija, was a teacher, yet some decades ago, she worked in Sweden as a factory worker and in her spare time, she was teaching children. And the seventh, Ifigenija, who according to her own words left for London because of love, where as a poet and a potter she perceived the bright and the dark sides of emigrant life. Today Ifigenija is torn between Slovenia and Great Britain, and is asking herself: how should I define myself? (Zagoričnik Simonovič 2001: 99-101). Their, by coincidence chosen stories from a broader space and time frame prove the diversity of emigrant fortunes on personal level, fortunes that are becoming an important theme of researches in historiography as well.<sup>5</sup>

In continuation, I focused on some aspects of the presence of women in Slovene emigrant streams<sup>6</sup> and on sample presentation of the relation of the homeland towards their emigration and life abroad.

### THE SHARE OF WOMEN IN SLOVENE EMIGRATION WAVES

Their presence in number in emigration waves was, in comparison with men, always smaller, but on regional or profession level frequently noteworthy. Let us see on sample cases what their share was, what were the reasons for departing, the degree of their education and vocational structure. Why? Because, women have always been "hidden" in the male "coloured" migration movements. Even in the broader European area, their presence in emigrant waves has many times been overlooked. Mostly women were treated as "dependent" that is, departing wives, daughters, only in a small extent as independent emigrants (Zlotnik 1995: 229-254). Many female researchers of women's movements link that fact with andro-centric (male-centric) view upon the world, and upon emigration as well. By the opinion of some researchers, their maternal and household roles were exaggeratedly stressed, less their working or other activities in public life (Jogan 1995: 49).

<sup>5</sup> From October 24<sup>th</sup> 2001 to October 15<sup>th</sup> 2002 an exhibition was held in the Muzej novejšje zgodovine Slovenije (Museum of modern history of Slovenia) in Ljubljana, titled *Izseljenec: življenjske zgodbe Slovencev po svetu*, which presented 27 emigrant stories of individuals and families from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, among them quite a few female ones. A miscellany was issued; in it those stories are published (*Izseljenec: življenjske zgodbe Slovencev po svetu*. Muzej novejšje zgodovine Slovenije, Ljubljana 2001, 160 pages).

<sup>6</sup> Slovene female emigrant streams have never been entirely ethnically pure. Let me mention the German women from Kočevsko and the German women from the time after World War I and World War II, and the Italian and Hungarian women that joined them (forced deportation). But in my contribution I limit to the so-called economic emigration, although women have been a component part of forced migrations, particularly between the two wars (women from Primorska), and after World War II (refugees in 1945, illegal runaways in the fifties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century).

### **Until the outbreak of the WWI (Austrian period)**

If in the entire Austrian wave in the years 1876-1910 women were presenting a 35% part, we are interested what their share was in the Slovene emigration wave (Chmelař 1974: 112). The answer is not simple, as statistical sources do not offer us exact data. We have more concrete data for Carniola<sup>7</sup> for the years 1892-1893; in that wave women presented 21,4% (1892) and 17,6% (1893). Not taken into account are married women who left as wives or other relatives, nor the children of female gender. That was the time when emigration of men was strongly prevalent.<sup>8</sup> That average can be delusive proves a high share of women from the Kočevsko district<sup>9</sup> where they were represented by 31,3% (1892) and by 24,7% (1893) (Drnovšek 1999: 424). The majority of them emigrated to the United States of America.

In assessing mother tongue in 1900 in Germany (the river Ruhr basin and Westphalia) 9.193 persons decided for Slovene language, of those 29,8% women (Valenčič 1990: 64). For those it is affirmed they were mainly housewives within families. Widows were usually employed as cleaners, and girls until their wedding as servants (Werner 1985).

In that time we know in Slovenia of two markedly female migration streams, one by direction, that is to Egypt, and the other by structure – straw-hat manufacturers from Domžale<sup>10</sup> and vicinity. In 1897, they estimated that 7.700 "Alexandrinians" (those women were given the name after Alexandria where most of them were) lived in Egypt, and only 300 men (Drnovšek 1991: 73). The women from Domžale emigrated to the U.S.A., mainly to New York, in a smaller number to Cleveland and Chicago (Bernik 1923: 245-246).<sup>11</sup> On the basis of the in 1923 published situation of emigrants from Domžale we can estimate that there were as many as 62,5% women in the collective number of all emigrants from Domžale and vicinity.<sup>12</sup>

In the Austrian period, very few women emigrants were surpassing the level of elementary school knowledge. The majority reached the mere knowledge of reading and writing. Towards the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, that condition began to improve, particularly between the two wars, and even more during the time of the second Yugoslavia (Serše 1998: 49-71).

Equal with men and women, the appurtenance to agrarian working people was

<sup>7</sup> Until the 1918, Carniola (Kranjska) was part of the Habsburg Monarchy.

<sup>8</sup> The nineties of the 19<sup>th</sup> century presented the »young years« of Slovene mass emigration, when mainly men were departing. With their settlement and decision to stay for a longer period or for permanent, women and children joined began to them in larger numbers.

<sup>9</sup> Kočevsko area was part of Habsburg duchy of Carniola (Kranjska), predominating inhabited by Germans (Gottschee Germans).

<sup>10</sup> Domžale, a small town, located near Ljubljana.

<sup>11</sup> Individually already in the years 1882 and 1883, massively with the year 1905.

<sup>12</sup> There were 384 all-together, of those 305 in New York, 37 in Cleveland, 30 in Chicago and 12 elsewhere.

prevailing. Redundancy of their work in the province "pushed" young single women to urban centres in Europe and overseas. Within this mobile world, choices for women were limited. In the records of issuing passports for Carniola for the years 1892 and 1893, vocations are stated in feminine form as well. Prevailing in number are (agrarian) female workers, following are female jobs (maidservants) and day labourers, in a very limited extent dressmakers, cooks, proprietors<sup>13</sup> etc. Strong was the group "without declaration" or "without vocation" or "supported family members" in which we can expect quite a large number of women – housewives. Performing work as hotel cleaners, nurses, cooks (Egypt, urban centres in Central Europe and in Italy and in many other immigrant environments) it was nothing else but performing menial tasks in foreign families. According to the opinion of experts, the outflow of women from the helping family members was larger than the one from hired agrarian work force.<sup>14</sup> More precisely, the emigration of women has in Austria affected straw-hat and textile factories in which lack of skilled women workers occurred, which the state organs ascertained after 1906 (Valenčič 1990: 150). Intellectuals were among women emigrants rare, for example teachers, that is the school sisters of the congregation of St. Francis of Assisi – Christ the King in America (Friš 1995).

### The time of the first Yugoslavia (1918-1941)

Between the two wars textile and footwear, industries in the Yugoslav Slovenia have attracted a large number of female workers. Because of agrarian overpopulation, Prekmurje<sup>15</sup> has become a basis of seasonal workers, skilled for agrarian works. Not so wide spread was departing of Slovene women as servants and trained cooks, which presented a continuation of the practice from the Austrian period, as of women from Primorska<sup>16</sup> to Egypt (Makuc 1993).

The emigrant stream directed across the Yugoslav border to more developed European countries, mainly to France, Belgium, the Netherlands, to Switzerland, Germany and elsewhere. Women were in seasonal emigration waves participating mainly as agrarian workers, particularly women from Prekmurje. On 1000 men came 572 women (57,2%)

<sup>13</sup> Let me mention a phenomena – that men who have decided for leaving for America, conveyed their property to their wives; that meant transfer of responsibility to the wife, which was even more burdening as she usually had to maintain it with the work of the elder and children. If the husband was sending money the situation was easier. We find one of the early mentioning of this problem in Bleiweis's Novice from 1872 in: »Nekaj iz kočevskega okraja za prihodnji deželni zbor«, Novice, No. 43 (1872), page 343.

<sup>14</sup> The same is valid for men. In large families only one inherited the landed property (property), the rest left home as hired work force or moved to towns or abroad.

<sup>15</sup> Prekmurje, it is the part of Slovenia from 1920 (Trianon Treaty). (Plut-Pregelj, Rogel 1996: 221-222).

<sup>16</sup> Primorska, it is one of regions of Slovenia, near Trieste.

in the last part of 30<sup>th</sup>. Their increase was ascending: 29% (1929), 36% (1930), 41% (1931) (Maučec 1933: 115). At the 1933 census in Germany they listed 17.258 Slovenes with Yugoslav citizenship, of those 40,3% were employed, 14,3% independent and as many as 45,3% were family members and jobless (Werner 1985). Among the latter, we anticipate a large number of women. Three thousand four hundred and twenty six persons from the Yugoslav Slovenia have in 1939 found work in Germany, of those 45,7% women, in France 1.337, of those 22,6% women, and in other parts of Yugoslavia 1.463 persons, of those 39,3% women. Going overseas, mainly to the U.S.A., were women who joined their partners. Emigration from Primorska under Italy included women as well, but we don not have exact data. The official Italian statistics for Friuli-Giulia Region were stating the number of men and women for the years 1926-1937. As a whole that wave included 32,6% women (Purini 2000: 186).

### **The time of the second Yugoslavia (1945-1990)**

After 1960 a new economic emigrant wave from Slovenia to developed states of Western Europe occurred, which reached its peak around 1969.<sup>17</sup> Limited opportunities for employment at home, wish for a better life and increased mobility of population influenced as well on women's decisions for working abroad. We must expose the want of developed states for workers (male and female), better wages and not large distances from home as external causes, and the numerousness of the first after-war generation and economic changes in Yugoslavia as internal causes. By the 1971 census, of the 48.086 temporarily employed abroad<sup>18</sup> as many as 40,1% were women, of those 62,8% from twenty to thirty-four years of age.<sup>19</sup> According to data from the 1991 census, 52.631 Slovenes lived and worked abroad, 45% of those were women (Geografski atlas 1998: 170).<sup>20</sup> Let me point out that employment of women in Slovenia has been traditionally high since the period between the two world wars, and was particularly strong after

<sup>17</sup> Janez Malačič (Faculty of Economics, University of Ljubljana) divides the after-war economic emigration into four periods: up to 1964 (few in number), from 1964 to 1973 (emigration boom), from 1974 to 1979 (decrease of emigration), and from 1980 to 1990 (re-migrations) (Malačič 1994: 209).

<sup>18</sup> By estimation of the Bureau of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia for planning (Zavod Socialistične republike Slovenije za planiranje) at the end of 1971 as many as 68.710 Slovenes were employed abroad, having taken into consideration temporarily and permanently employed abroad (Družbeni razvoj 1974: 47).

<sup>19</sup> From Yugoslavia there were in 1971 671.908 persons on temporary work abroad, of those 211.161 were women, that is 31,4% (Tomšič 1980: 95-96). By the opinion of economists that number is too low (Malačič 1994: 210).

<sup>20</sup> In 1991 the majority of emigrants lived in Europe (84,3%): in Germany 26.500, in Austria 7.610, in Switzerland 4.068, in Italy 2.839, in Sweden, France and elsewhere less than 1.000 (Atlas Slovenije 1998: 170).



World War II.<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately, we do not know to what extent that tradition has influenced on women in regard of going abroad.

In the mentioned new economic wave there were before going abroad in 1971 by vocational structure most numerous the "supported" persons (wives), next were employed in services, in administrative posts, in trade, in "unknown", following are experts and artists,<sup>22</sup> industrial and similar workers etc. In short, the majority came from vocational and educated strata. After the decline of immigration to Western European states after 1973 the uniting of families continued, that is, arrivals of wives with children, who joined their husbands and fathers, which presented a kind of prolongation of "temporary" living abroad or approaching permanent immigration.<sup>23</sup>

The consequences of female emigration have been fatal for some regions. Let us have a look at Beneška Slovenija<sup>24</sup> (Venetian Slovenia), which experienced in the 20<sup>th</sup> century an extremely high degree of departing from the region and thus a drastic decrease of population.<sup>25</sup> We find women among peddlers; they worked as servants ("dikle") in wealthy families in other parts of Italy; in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they were increasingly employing in industry. In the years 1951-1981, the extent of emigration of female population exceeded the intensity of male emigration.<sup>26</sup> What has been the result? Ageing of population, decrease of female population and consequently decrease of births, which in a minority environment present an additional problem.

Deciding for the determination of an individual woman to emigrate was her role in the family. An example. In the Austrian period, daughters with no property easier decided to leave than mothers with children did. The latter usually just followed their husbands. Marriage was also often the reason for departure. Frequent were marriages at distance, based on written advice and a photograph, mediation of relatives and similar. We should not neglect migration policies of immigrant states, which were more and more rigorous and selective, particularly in the relation to immigration of family members.

<sup>21</sup> As many as 39,6% in 1931 (Dravska banovina – banate), 39,7% in 1965 and 46,9% in 1991 (Čerňič Istenič 1995).

<sup>22</sup> Of all together 1.864 persons on temporary work abroad in the group "experts and artists" as many as 45,1% were women (Družbeni razvoj 1974: 47).

<sup>23</sup> Beside economic and social reasons, particularly children who arrived with their parents in their earliest age or were born in that environment and attended school there, influenced on permanency of living in the new environment. They were integrated into it and from the formal-legal view Germany for example was their homeland, and the original homeland of their parents only the country of their roots.

<sup>24</sup> Located at the west border of Slovene ethnic territory, which has been under Italy from 1866.

<sup>25</sup> According to official data 28.580 permanent inhabitants lived in 1911 in Benečija, in 1951 24.614 and in 1991 only 9.734 (Stranj 1999: 134). The river Nadiža valleys themselves lost in the years 1951-1984 more than 52% of their population, and Režija over 54% up to the year 1981 (Kalc 1997:203).

<sup>26</sup> The percentage of women in relation to men who went abroad was the following: 31,0% (1951), 32,4% (1961), 18,2% (1971) and 36,9% (1981). The percentage was even larger regarding emigration to other communities in Italy: 27,2% (1951), 49,4% (1961), 50,2% (1971) and 55,5% (1981). (Stranj: 1999, 130).

That is valid for the time between the two world wars and for the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. An example. Germany accepted the most immigrants from Europe in the late fifties and sixties, relying upon temporariness of their stay. It has turned out that the temporariness of staying was prolonging. With the occurrence of economic crisis and with cessation of new immigrating in November 1974 the German migration policy was standing before a dilemma: either to accelerate the uniting of families (with the aim of stabilisation of existing work force) or to encourage returning for permanent to original environments. Both had deciding significance for women. Thus, in 1973, the percentage of women among immigrants in Germany was only 37%; in 1989, it increased to 45%. That was undoubtedly a consequence of uniting of families (Zlotnik 1995: 240). In the case of Yugoslavia, families in the eighties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were as well deciding for permanent life in immigrant countries, influenced by economic, social and political crisis in the state (Malačič 1994: 207-208). Wars after the decomposition of Yugoslavia have triggered refugee streams in which women with children were prevailing. Today Slovenia is the destination of many women fugitives and children from the African and Asian space, and from Eastern Europe (Priseljenci na mejah 1999).

## VIEWS UPON EMIGRATION OF SLOVENE WOMEN

Undoubtedly, the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries were the time of impetuous economic, social, intellectual and political commotion. In those events, we can follow changes in the sphere of the role, behaviour patterns, status, education, and vocational possibilities of women, including with their endeavours for equality from legal and political viewpoints. Differences in the degree of development or modernisation of societies have influenced the forming of their status in individual environments. That was valid for individual emigrant and immigrant environments between which large differences in cultural-civilisation development existed. The degree of democratisation of individual environments exhibited as well in the attitude towards women.

What were the viewpoints of Slovene institutions and holders of ideologies (power) upon the emigration of women? They were formed within the frame of the general attitude towards women in Slovenia, which has been particularly in the field of education for a long time excluding (Serše 1998), patriarchal within the family, and in vocational sphere pushing women into the so-called feminine vocations.<sup>27</sup> Undoubtedly, women have been from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century on persistently entering into public life, which was linked particularly with the rising of their education level and contacts with the world (Plut-Pregelj, Rogel 1996: 289-290).

<sup>27</sup> We can follow the phenomena of the so-called »feminine vocations« up to the present, in emigration as well. If we have before our eyes employments outside family environment, women are servants, cooks, agrarian workers, teachers, employed in service jobs, hospital nurses, workers in textile and footwear industry etc. Those jobs were defined as »easier« (which does not hold) and consequently less paid.

### At the time of mass emigration

From the time of mass emigration of Slovenes at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century on the Catholic Church has been paying great attention to emigration of women, adult and young. In the spirit of the Holy Bible the Church was stressing that the husband is the head of the family, and the wife its heart.<sup>28</sup> The Church exposed the role of the woman as of the mother, responsible for housework, nursing, educational and guardianship tasks (Jogan 1986). All in the spirit of the idea: a woman's place is in the home – a world of the kitchen, the children and the church. That is why the Church dissuaded from emigration the husband and the wife in order to prevent the braking of families. Of course, the Church did not shut its eyes before the fact that emigration was performed despite its warnings. Thus, it recommended that the husband – emigrant as soon as possible calls his wife and children after him, and that abroad they immediately join the Catholic community. They attributed the mother – emigrant a deciding role in national and religious education of children.

Even more stressed was the concern of the Church for young women who presented the majority of the female emigration wave, if we have in mind the time before World War I.<sup>29</sup> Undoubtedly, the teacher Antonija Stupca comprehended at a Catholic assembly in 1913 the fundamental reasons for the going of young women abroad: "Many young women are driven abroad by yearning, the wish for easier work, comfortable life ... (as) they have high aspirations, they want to take chances, become noble, but many a time they wade into the marsh ..." (Katoliški shod 1913: 183). The Church opposed those wishes despite they represented the essence of personal reasons for going abroad, and advised: "Stay at home, an unspoiled heart will be a pledge for true happiness and contentment!" (Katoliški shod 1913: 63). However, America was tempting in the eyes of the Slovene missionaries and priests in America as well. They wrote about it and thus unintentionally rejected the simplified black-and-white image of that country on the other side of the Atlantic. The bishop James Trobec expressed it in a metaphor: "Slovenia is our mother, America our bride!" (Trunk 1912: 3). The mother was meant as a metaphor for a home hearth and a warm embrace, the bride as new life, new chances.<sup>30</sup> In short: the Church warned women before the dangers of foreign parts,

<sup>28</sup> In the Austrian period Catholic assemblies were in the years 1892, 1900, 1906 and in 1913.

<sup>29</sup> Not so few were warnings about prostitution of young women, about the dangers of foreign countries, procurers, emigrant ports, and similar. The Church had many organisations that were taking care of young women in order to protect them from the mentioned perils. An example. The Zavod sv. Nikolaja in Trieste was a shelter for unemployed servants and girls who came to town for earnings. They taught them cooking, ironing and sewing. In: *Slovenka*, vol. 14 (1898), pages 326-327. In 1900 the Zavod sheltered 607 young women (223 from Carniola, 202 from the Littoral, 116 from Styria, 46 from Carinthia, and 22 from Croatia and Dalmatia. In: *Občni zbor Zavoda sv. Nikolaja v Trstu*, *Slovenka*, No. 5 (1901), pages 129-133. Working on similar tasks in Trieste were the Marijin dom and Društvo sv. Marte, and in numerous transport centres (in Ljubljana as well) the so-called railway station missionaries etc.

<sup>30</sup> In emigration as well we often find the comparison that the homeland is the mother and the foreign



stressing the sacredness of motherhood and the role of the wife; yet its warnings did not always fall on open ears.

The priest Jurij Trunk<sup>31</sup> intended a large amount of attention to women immigrants in his book *Amerika in Amerikanci* (Trunk 1912).<sup>32</sup> Regarding the relation between husband and wife in the family Trunk did not recede from the standpoints of the Church in Slovenia. Surprising is the radicalisation of his attitude towards the collective life of the complete family in emigration. He suggested that if the husband emigrated the whole family should do so. A step further is his advice that the family should emigrate for permanent, create their home and that its members take American citizenship. As examples, he was giving them English, French, German and Swedish immigrants in the U.S.A. At the same time he stressed that did not mean they should renounce "the Slovene homeland". Therefore, Trunk modified Trobec's metaphor: "The homeland must remain the mother, America must become the bride!" (Trunk 1912: 406-407).

Interesting is his observation that women were more subjected to nostalgia and were pressing their husbands to return. Why? By his view, they were lacking homeliness and from the homemade bread to the native village. According to Trunk, men were supposedly more used to the world (Trunk 1912: 398). Regarding employed Slovene women, Trunk exposed housewives in the so-called "boarding houses",<sup>33</sup> female workers in utensils factories in Cleveland, and straw-hat manufacturers in New York (Trunk 192: 439; 340-341). He also mentioned the activity of the "women's sub-committee" at the Družba sv. Rafaela (Society of St. Raphael) in New York (Trunk 1912: 412), which was taking care of guardianship of the arriving young women, and the Dekliška Marijina družba (Society of Young Women) in New York (Trunk 1912: 428).

If one leafs through the women's gazette *Slovenka* (1897-1902) for that time, which among other strove for women's equality, one might find in it the idea that the family was not the only sphere of action of a woman and that the women's question was actually a social question – in the meaning of the woman's social status and her presence in the public. Let me mention the writer Zofka Kveder,<sup>34</sup> who strove for emancipation<sup>35</sup> of women on Slovene territory. The modern age demands educated

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world only a step-mother. The family as a metaphor was transferred into the broader space, for example »the whole nation as one family«, which meant a call for unity.

<sup>31</sup> Jurij Trunk (1870-1973), a priest, fighter for the rights of Carinthian Slovenes, journalist and emigrant historian. In: Klemenčič 2001; Drnovšek 1998: 313-360; Drnovšek 1989: 606-609.

<sup>32</sup> His views were formed during his journeys in the U.S.A. In the years 1909-1911 he visited the U.S.A. four times. Trunk received many written reports from the American Slovenes, he was also using competent literature. We can therefore characterise his view upon America as a view from the outside, despite his visits to that country. He left for America for permanent only after the unsuccessful plebiscite in Carinthia (1920).

<sup>33</sup> Not a few immigrant women in the U.S.A. improved the family budget with letting rooms for men for whom they laundered and cooked as well. Many thus earned more than their husbands, who were working in mines or factories (Drnovšek 1997: 25).

<sup>34</sup> Zofka Kveder (1878-1926), writer and publicist.

<sup>35</sup> According to Kveder »emancipation« means liberation and independence of women in spiritual

people, believes Kveder, who strive for progress, for something new ... She estimated that women in Slovenia have made only the first step on the way to emancipation, as patriarchal relations and attachment to the family were still prevailing. Incidentally, Zofka Kveder herself experienced life abroad and as well dedicated quite a few of her literary<sup>36</sup> and travelogue<sup>37</sup> works to emigration thematic on Slovene territory. Not only women were writing about themselves and the women's question, we find men among the writers as well. Albin Prepeluh - Abditus<sup>38</sup> equated from the socialistic positions the women's question with the social question and claimed "the connexion of the woman and the proletariat is natural", the "punctum saliens" of the women's question. At the same time, Prepeluh belittled the struggle for women's equality that was in course in the bourgeois circles (Abditus 1912: 198-201).<sup>39</sup> In his opposition to emigration as such, Prepeluh was of identical thoughts as many from the Church circles.<sup>40</sup>

In 1900, an unsigned female author of the article "Slovenke v Ameriki" wrote, "When our Slovene girls start breathing the liberal American spirit, they too change."<sup>41</sup> She was amazed how they changed from timid and indifferent servants to conscious, proud and eager women for their own and their families' welfare. A prove for the author was an advertisement in the Catholic *Nova domovina* from Cleveland, which was calling Slovene women in the U.S.A. to join the benevolent society "Kranjsko žensko podporno društvo sv. Srca Marije".<sup>42</sup> The society's intention was to offer help in times when the husband was jobless or the wife sick. At the same time, she asked herself why Slovene women in the U.S.A. who were scattered across the whole state, were capable of such deeds, but not the Slovene women in homeland, where there were several more.

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and material sense. In socialist spirit women achieve it only in collective struggle for improvement of material and moral conditions of the working class. With sorrow she ascertained that women's emancipation was in Slovenia in its early stages. In: Zofka Kveder, *Emancipacija* (Prague), Slovenka, No. 3 (1901), pages 53-60.

<sup>36</sup> Zofka Kveder-Jelovšek, *Amerikanci*. (Stage play). 1908. Ljubljana: Slovenska matica.

<sup>37</sup> Zofka Kveder, *Slovenci na tujem*, *Naši zapiski* V/1, Ljubljana 1907, pages 7-10. She visited Slovenes in Essen (Germany) and considering women, she wrote: »Many married miners are here permanently settled. Their wives are Slovenes. They are more economical and unpretentious than German women; therefore the miners risk the journey to their distant homeland to bring from there their family for life« (pages 8-9).

<sup>38</sup> Albin Prepeluh - Abditus (1880-1938), politician and publicist.

<sup>39</sup> See also: Abditus, *O ženi in njeni ravnopravnosti*, Slovenka, No. 4 (1901), pages 82-85.

<sup>40</sup> After 1908 he was in friendly terms with Janez Evangelist Krek who was as well a connoisseur of the emigration problematic on Slovene territory.

<sup>41</sup> Leaflet. *Slovenke v Ameriki*. Slovenka, No. 2 (1900), p. 46.

<sup>42</sup> It was founded in 1897. Its seat was in the old school of the parish of St. Vid (Klemenčič 1995: 188).

### Between the two world wars

In the year when the emigration law was adopted in the Kingdom of SHS (1922), Ana Župančič published in the magazine *Ženski pokret* an article titled "Izseljenišтво in ženstvo".<sup>43</sup> In it, she appealed to educated Yugoslav women to take more interest in emigration problematic, and demanded from the state to include women through Yugoslav representative bodies abroad into environments with many Yugoslav emigrants. To her opinion women had a better sense for social problematic than men. Belgrade did not listen to those calls.

During her visit in the U.S.A. Alojzija Štebi<sup>44</sup> had contacts with the National League of Women Voters, she visited the settlement Hull House in Chicago, which Jane Addams<sup>45</sup> established. She also visited the state Children's Bureau and Women's Bureau in Washington. Despite the fact the U.S.A. are a capitalist state she was enthusiastic about the care of the state in regard of protection of women workers and children. Only fleetly, Alojzija Štebi<sup>46</sup> visited a few Yugoslav societies in the U.S.A. and perceived the consequences of assimilation, which were exhibiting above all in the language.<sup>47</sup> We find the first survey on the role of women in the past on Slovene territory and in emigration as well, particularly in the United States of America and in Egypt, in a publication that was issued at the occasion of the exhibition *Slovenska žena* in Ljubljana in 1926.<sup>48</sup> The Catholic side did not renounce from the traditional family values that we are familiar with from earlier, particularly in regard of stressing the role of the emigrant woman as the mother and educator of her children. Undoubtedly, the issue of endangerment of the family was so much the more in the forefront because the majority of the women emigrants to European space were seasonal workers (women from Prekmurje). We can comprehend that best from the *Izseljenski vestnik* (1932-1940), a Catholic gazette for emigrants in Western Europe.

Between the two world wars, the ideological partition to the Catholic, socialist and even more radical communist attitudes<sup>49</sup> towards women emigration and their life in the new environments – particularly in Western Europe – was increasingly sensed. As an example, we will state the attitude towards the Spanish civil war of the Slovene

<sup>43</sup> Ana Župančič, *Izseljenišťvo in ženstvo*, *Ženski pokret*, III/7-8, July-August 1922, pages 207-209.

<sup>44</sup> Alojzija Štebi (1883-1956), editor, politician, fighter for women in children rights.

<sup>45</sup> Jane Addams (1860-1935), the first American woman that has received in 1931 the Nobel prize for peace.

<sup>46</sup> Alojzija Štebi (1883-1956), woman politician and journalist.

<sup>47</sup> Alojzija Štebi, *Rad žena u Americi*, *Ženski pokret*, VI/9-10, November-December 1925, pages 299-312.

<sup>48</sup> Minka Govekar, editor of the publication, wrote an article *Slovenke v tujih državah*. Of 28 authors only three were male writers (*Slovenska žena* 1926).

<sup>49</sup> At the Provincial conference of the Communist Party for Slovenia the »ženska komisija« (women's commission) was in operation since 1933. At the Executive committee of the Liberation front the »ženska komisija« operated from 1941 on as well (Tomšič 1978a).

immigrants in France. The majority were miners, and their wives homemakers.<sup>50</sup> The Catholic side was stressing that Slovenes should not involve in politics, that they must be loyal to the host country, take care of their families. The socialist and communist side were exposing social and political engagement, as well in the attitude towards the Spanish civil war. Women too included themselves in the support to the republican side in that war. Slovene women were members of societies against war and fascism, for peace, they were collecting aid for Spanish combatants, sending parcels and letters of encouragement, taking care of the mutilated in that war and similar (Drnovšek 1988: 105-108). All in the spirit of the appeal of Adela Kosec from Ales (Grand): "We do not want fascism to kill our husbands and sons ... Come out Slovene women in emigration, in Ales and Grand Combe!"<sup>51</sup>

### After the 1945

"The liberation of work (is) the way to the emancipation of woman," wrote Vida Tomšič in 1968. Inclusion of women into the working process was the way to their emancipation, to equality of genders and in public life. The adoption of the declaration on abolishment of discrimination of women in the United Nations (1967) was to her opinion an achievement, which she attributed to successes of socialism. The view upon women in capitalist societies as "by nature in advance defined mother and housewife" was to be surpassed in socialist societies. Therefore, the image (myth) of the mother-worker, educated, self-confident, deciding about her own fate, and politically and socially equal with men, was created (Tomšič 1978b: 145-162). Theoretical deliberations and practical life were many times apart, particularly from the Yugoslav perspective where the status of women was very varied. The same was valid for women in emigration. It has been spoken and written about Yugoslav women emigrants and very seldom about the differences between them in regard of education, vocation, the role in the family and similar (Tomšič 1980: 95-96).

Similar to during and after World War I, women-emigrants were collecting aid for the homeland after World War II. The difference was in the fact that such actions during and after World War II as well meant strong political agitation for the new Yugoslavia.

Women were part of the refugee wave in 1945, and of illegal migrations in the fifties. After 1946, especially families of the pre-war emigrants were returning home from Western European countries and Argentina (repatriations). After the loosening of emigration in the sixties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we no more find disapproval of emigrating from the side of state and political structures. Increasing was the number of women leaving as work force and not as merely housewives. If women from other parts of

<sup>50</sup> Not so few were Slovene maidservants, in Paris for example; we must not forget seasonal workers.

<sup>51</sup> Glas izseljencev (Paris), III/13, July 2<sup>nd</sup> 1938.

Yugoslavia were going abroad because of deficiency of work, Slovene women went for better earnings.<sup>52</sup> According to the opinion of some researchers, women in Slovenia have reached in the same time a formally high degree of equality and employment (Ferligoj, Renner, Ule 1990).

In women's magazines,<sup>53</sup> we find numerous warnings in connection with guardianship and education of children that stayed at home.<sup>54</sup> For Yugoslav women emigrants in Germany it was ascertained they were employed in branches of ("lighter") industry, which were traditionally more feminine and therefore less paid, women were less including in public activity, lived more isolated and adapted with difficulty to the environment. Troubles occurred when a woman worker became pregnant. At the same time, the concern of Yugoslavia for those women was weak as the state believed in temporariness of their absence.<sup>55</sup> In the course of time the political and state organs became aware of the problematic of "workers on temporary work abroad", and within this problematic, of the issue of women-emigrants. It has shown that despite the organised going abroad many women emigrants were not sufficiently informed on the conditions of life in immigrant countries, for example in regard of social security, maternity leave, tutelage of children, their education, uniting of families, possibilities of returning, and similar (Tomšič 1980: 95-97). At least on the principal level, strong obligation of the native country to women emigrants was emphasised. Sooner than social workers from the homeland, organisations in immigrant countries offered them help, for example Arbeiterwohlfahrt in Germany.

Still topical was the old theme: the woman emigrant between home (family) and employment. Thus Marija Omahen, an immigrant to Switzerland, advocated the role of the mother and the housewife of the woman-emigrant, and the husband as the one to take care of the material side of the family. She referred to the thought of a Swiss writer, Jeremias Gotthelf (1797-1854): "The foundation of life is neither the state nor the school or anything else, but the home!" In a comment in *Naša žena* Nada Pantič Starič opposed to that with arguments of political consciousness of the Slovene woman, her vocational ambitions and inner satisfaction.<sup>56</sup> In one of the interviews (1972), Zora Tomič<sup>57</sup> exposed the status of women in emigration.<sup>58</sup> The interview was made during

<sup>52</sup> Tita Škerlj, Na obisku pri naših delavkah v Švici, *Naša žena*, April 1970, p. 14.

<sup>53</sup> For example in woman's family monthly magazine *Naša žena* (1941-).

<sup>54</sup> Boža Smagur, Kako je z otroki, katerih starši so na delu v tujini. *Naša žena*, No. 11 (1966), pages 373-374. She states the case of the community Maribor-Tezno in which in Spring 1966, 329 families or 482 children of school age have been affected because of going for work abroad, 35,5% were those nobody took notice of.

<sup>55</sup> Boža Smagur, Premalo ste storili. *Naša žena*, January 1972, page 5; the same, Smo za delavke v tujini storili dovolj? *Naša žena*, January 1972, pages 23-24.

<sup>56</sup> At home she was a teacher, mother and housewife, in Switzerland just mother and housewife. In: Še o poklicnem delu žensk. Pismo Marije. *Naša žena*, June 1970, pages 11-13.

<sup>57</sup> Zora Tomič (1929-), woman politician before 1990.

<sup>58</sup> Skupna skrb za naše delavke na tujem. *Naša žena*, September 1972, pages 21-22.



the visit of the representatives of the Co-ordination committee for questions of workers abroad, which was operating at the Federal Conference of the Socialist league. She pointed out the sensitivity of women in regard of upbringing, education, vocational skillfulness, obsolete patriarchal views upon their role, double morality, biological functions etc. Her findings were referring to Yugoslav women as such, where we find a statement that the women from the developed regions of Yugoslavia started with emigration, as they were more emancipated and mobile. After the occurrence of crisis (1973), more was being written on uniting of families and returning home and in connection with that, on tasks of local communities and working organisations in Slovenia to include the returnees in their working environments.

## CONCLUSION

In all discussed periods the place of the emigrant woman in the family and her role in preserving the mother tongue, national identity (consciousness) and religion, have been stressed.<sup>59</sup> Many perceived the woman's stronger sentiment, her splitedness between the homeland and the foreign world, her greater devotedness to religion and her greater activity in preserving Slovene identity abroad. Somehow, I cannot get rid of the impression that the role of the woman-emigrant has been much more connected to the family life than to the public one. Foreign country, different cultural and language space, all-day employment of men, and children consequently resulted in the woman's stronger presence and activity in private (family) environment than in the public sphere. That was demonstrate in external forms of activities of emigrants as well; for example, few are women's emigrant societies, magazines, female public events and similar. That does not mean women were prevented from such activities; we find them in the majority of the societies, newspapers editorial boards, as co-organisers of public events. It is presumably not a coincidence that we find the oldest forms of public affirmation of women precisely in the U.S.A., and less in European space in all periods. The significance of women-emigrants grew during war times in the field of collecting humanitarian aid; women also presented the majority in performing supplemental teaching of Slovene language abroad. The more we are approaching the most recent time, the more women are double employed, at work and at home, which undoubtedly presents a large burden, particularly abroad.

We can assert that dealing with women (and children!) as parts of Slovene emigra-

<sup>59</sup> The Catholic circles were stressing the significance of the family in emigration, particularly its function in transferring language, national awareness, and customs to the descendants (Merkač 1994). In families where both partners were Slovene there weren't problems; in mixed marriages the matter was not so simple. In many a place, for example in Germany, France and elsewhere in Europe, the obligatory visiting of school in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century strongly endangered the above mentioned endeavours of the parents, particularly of the mother-housewife who spent most of the time with children.

tion with its specificities is in Slovene historiography ignored. I am asking myself whether the previous irreconcilability of women emigrants and their lives in the shadows of men, if I may put it so, are also a consequence of the general fact that the period of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries was more the domain of men (wars, politics, economy, religion, and similar) than of women. Have that general (male) attitude towards women or their lower number in emigration streams influenced that? Presumably both did. By the way, where is yet the recognizability of children of both genders!<sup>60</sup> Is the nowadays, in the world for some time increased interest in the role of women-emigrants, a consequence of feminisation of migration processes in the world, which some anthropological and sociological studies point to? However, from the viewpoint of Slovene historiography there are many white patches, generalisations as well, stereotypic views, underestimations and praises (myths) when speaking about the role of Slovene women emigrants.

By dealing with women-emigrants, I do not wish to emphasize artificially the separation from the men-emigrants. Both were parts of the same process but each with particularities of their own, from gender to presence in society. To be able to understand their "emigrant" situation we must take into consideration their social status in the native environment as well as the one in the new immigrant environment. Many women brought with them part of the old homeland together with all hierarchal, patriarchal and discriminatory relations; very few of them left because of the mentioned relations, and not so few made good use of the social climate in the new environments, which at least on principal assured them to breathe easier and include in the public.

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<sup>60</sup> A publicist and journalist Alenka Puhar is a known fighter for representativeness of women in Slovene historical conscience. Let me remind of her article »Ko je na delu moškocentrična 'politika pozabe'« (Delo, October 24<sup>th</sup> 2001, supplement Znanost, and of her book (Puhar 1982).

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## POVZETEK

## IZSELJEVANJE SLOVENK IZ ZGODOVINSKEGA VIDIKA

Marjan Drnovšek

Tiho in nekako v ozadju moškega izseljenskega vala so se vzporedno izseljevale tudi Slovenke v 19. in 20. stoletju. V mislih imam poročene žene, ki so sledile svojim možem, nato dekleta, ki so kot sestre, hčerke ali zaročenke sledile bratom, očetom in zaročencem in tudi samostojne ženske, ki so odšle v svet z upom na boljše življenje. Najmočnejša kategorija so bile soproge, čeprav je to težko dokazati s statističnimi podatki. Toda v celoti je število izseljenk vedno zaostajalo za številom moških, vendar nikoli ni bilo zanemarljivo. V avstrijskem obdobju (do izbruha prve svetovne vojne) so v avstrijskem valu predstavljale 35% (1876-1910), iz upravnih dežel v Sloveniji, npr. Kranjske 21,4% (1892), samo iz Kočevskega področja omenjene dežele 31,3% (1892). V Egiptu so Slovenke sestavljale kar 96,3% v slovenskem valu (1897). Pri štetju prebivalstva v Nemčiji (1900) pa se je za slovenski jezik odločilo 29,8% Slovenk. Med obema vojnoma (1918-1941) so v izselitvenem valu iz Prekmurja predstavljale 29% (1929), 36% (1930) in 41% (1931). Med slovenskimi priseljenci v Nemčiji je bilo leta 1939 kar 45,7% žensk. V izseljenskem valu v povojnem času je bilo leta 1971 kar 40,1% žensk z območja cele Jugoslavije. Med zaposlenimi najdemo zlasti kuharice, služkinje, vzgojiteljice otrok, dojljice (Egipt), izseljenske učiteljice, delavke in le redke izobraženke. Stopnjevanje obsega zaposlenih priseljenk narašča v vsem obravnavanem obdobju. Redke so do 1914, z izjemo izdelovalk klobukov iz Domžal (New York, Cleveland, Chicago) in dojljice, varuške in guvernantke v Egiptu. Med obema vojnoma so kar množično odhajale v Francijo in Nemčijo kot agrarne sezone delavke. Večje število zaposlenih žensk najdemo tudi v povojnem ekonomskem izseljenskem valu v Nemčijo in skandinavske države.

Odnos katoliške cerkve do izseljevanja žensk je bil bolj odklonilen, hkrati pa razumevajoč s pogojem, da ostane družina skupaj tudi v tujini. Manj so to problematiko obravnavale države (Avstrija, prva in druga Jugoslavija). Med redkimi moškimi intelektualci najdemo njihove poglede do izseljevanja žensk in njihovega življenja v novih okoljih, več med izobraženimi ženskami. O ženskah-izseljenkah so pisale npr. pisateljica Zofka Kveder (1878-1926), Ana Župančič, političarka Alojzija Štebi, po letu 1945 političarke Vida Tomšič, Zora Tomič in druge. Kar nekaj jih zasledimo med izseljankami.

Razprava želi opozoriti na številna neraziskana področja glede vloge izseljenk v novih okoljih, njihovega izobraževanja in zaposlovanja in političnih pravic. Z vidika utrjevanja slovenske identitete v tujini je bila velika vloga mater pri vzgoji otrok, če sodimo po publicistični literaturi in tiskanih virih. Ženske zasledimo v izseljenskih organizacijah in kot sodelavke v časopisih, učiteljice izseljenskih otrok, misijonarke itd. Le redka pa so bila izseljenska društva, ki so bila samo ženska, kar velja tudi za časopise.

Skratka, glede raziskovanja ženskega dela migracijskega dogajanja pri Slovencih, da o otroškem sploh ne govorimo, smo šele na začetku, zlasti še, če imamo v mislih zgodovinski aspekt za čas modernih migracij v 19. in 20. stoletju.

Marjan Drnovšek je doktor zgodovine in arhivist na Inštitutu za slovensko izseljenstvo ZRC SAZU v Ljubljani in raziskuje različne vidike migracijskih gibanj pri Slovencih v 19. in 20. stoletju.