

## ADAMIC AND YUGOSLAVIA DURING WORLD WAR II: THE SLOVENE CATHOLIC RESPONSE\*

Bogdan C. Novak

My paper is based on the archival materials (letters, minutes, pamphlets, announcements, newspaper clippings and the like) which are in private hands in Toledo and in Cleveland, Ohio. It should be taken into account that this paper is written by a historian who is not an expert on Louis Adamic, and who had less than three months to prepare for it. I limited my paper to the cooperation of the Slovene Catholic group in America, with other Slovene groups, and with Louis Adamic in particular during the years 1941-1945. I will step out of this self-imposed framework only when discussing the needed historical background. Moreover, the paper may represent a somewhat one-sided outlook which reflects the thinking of the writers whose correspondence is preserved in the above mentioned archives, as I did not have time to extend my research so as to include newspapers, memoirs and other available published and unpublished materials. I nevertheless consulted such Adamic's works which referees directly or indirectly to my topic, among them *The Native's Return* (1934), *Two-Way Passage* (1944), *Dinner at the White House* (1946), and *My Native Land* (1943).

As soon as the first Slovene settlements were established in America, Slovene priests joined the immigrants and together they organized Slovene parishes which became the centers of Catholic religious as well as secular activities.<sup>1</sup> Such a parish community was built with the money of Slovene immigrants and included a church building, a rectory, a parish hall and, in larger settlements such as in Cleveland, Chicago, and many others, a parish elementary school. Besides strictly religious organisations as for instance the Holy Name Society, The Rosary Society and others, the parish also included secular organizations for cultural, recreational and similar activities. Each Slovene priest was subordinated to the American bishop in whose diocese the parish was located. The bishop was also (and still is) the legal owner of all parish property from the church building to the recreational facilities. As the diocese represented the basic organization of the Catholic church, it was

---

\* A Paper Presented at the International Symposium on Louis Adamic sponsored by the Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota, May 30, 1981.

easier for a Slovene priest to establish contact with other Slovene priests of the same diocese or archdiocese, but much harder to organize a group on a wider, interdiocesan level. The latter would require permission from all the bishops involved.

With their heritage the Slovene immigrants also brought with them from the old country their ideological and political differences. But in America a significant change occurred in the ratio between different ideological-political groups. In the old country, the pro-catholic Slovene People's Party (SLS Slovenska ljudska stranka) was the strongest and usually easily obtained an absolute majority at elections over the other two parties, the laissez faire liberals and the socialists - the last being the weakest.<sup>2</sup> In the United States before World War I, both Catholics and Socialists represented the most numerous and best organized groups, and according to some reports the socialists were the best organized and the strongest, while the laissez faire liberals sank to the third position.

The declining number of Slovene Catholics became a great concern to some young priests who would like to bring these "lost souls" back into the Catholic Fold. Outstanding among them was the Franciscan father, Rev. Kazimir Zakrajšek. He brought Slovene Franciscan monks to America and organized an autonomous Slovene Franciscan community - the Commissariate of the Holy Cross - with its seat in Lemont, Illinois, south of Chicago - which was subordinated directly to the Franciscan province in Ljubljana. With the help of his Franciscan community, Zakrajšek commenced his religious missionary work. For the same purpose, he began publishing a religious periodical *Ave Maria*, and a secular newspaper *Sloga* in New York. In 1919 he transferred his publications and his press to Chicago and at that occasion renamed *Sloga* into *Edinost*. However, his activities and his writings led to harsh polemics between *Edinost* and the other freethinkers' newspapers such as *Prosveta*, *Proletarec*, *Glas naroda* and others. Many Slovene parish priests, including some Franciscan monks, condemned this "disturbance of peace" and Zakrajšek was ordered by his superiors in Rome to sell the printing press and his secular newspaper *Edinost*. The new editor, John Jerich, changed the newspaper's name in 1925 from *Edinost* to *Amerikanski Slovenec*, which was taken over from an older, discontinued newspaper once published in Joliet, Illinois. Zakrajšek himself returned to Ljubljana in 1927.<sup>3</sup>

The Franciscan monks played an important role in establishing communication links between the Slovene parishes dispersed among

numerous American dioceses. Similar unifying role was performed by the religious and secular press, and two nation-wide Catholic organizations. The first, the Grand Carniolian Slovenian Catholic Union (KSKJ - Kranjsko Slovenska Katoliška Jednota), was a fraternal insurance society organized in 1894, with its seat in Joliet, Illinois, south of Chicago and close to Lemont. The union also published its organ, *Glasiło KSKJ*. The other nation-wide organization was the Slovenian Women's Union (SZZ - Slovenska ženska zveza).<sup>4</sup>

In this connection let me introduce a few prominent American Slovene Catholic personalities which played more or less important roles during World War II. Joseph (Josip) Zalar was the powerful secretary of the KSKJ, Rev Math J. Butala its spiritual adviser and Marie Prisland was the president of SZZ. John Jerich was still the editor of the *Amerikanski Slovenec*, published in Chicago, James (Jaka) Debevec was publishing *Ameriška domovina*, the second Catholic daily, in Cleveland, Ohio, and Rev. Alexander Urankar, a Franciscan, was the editor of *Ave Maria*.

On April 16, 1941, ten days after Germany, Italy and their collaborators attacked Yugoslavia, the creation of Yugoslav Relief Committee of America - Slovene Section (JPO SS - Jugoslovanski pomožni odbor - Slovenska sekcija) was discussed, probably on the advice of Konstantin Fotić, the Yugoslav ambassador in the United States, to procure some help for the Yugoslav prisoners of war. On that day the representatives of the "Catholic" and "Freethinking" fraternal benefit (insurance) societies signed the Declaration (*Izjava*) that they would try to help their people in the old country financially through the American Red Cross. All the representatives further agreed that their cooperation for this humanitarian cause should remain on a non-partisan, neutral level, hence separated and above any political or religious disagreements.<sup>5</sup>

As the JPO SS later played an important role in the convocation of the Slovenian National Congress, which was a political rather than a relief action, a few critical remarks subsequently made by some Catholics about the JPO SS may be in place. They asserted that the "socialists" had the upper hand in the JPO SS. This was substantiated by the fact that the seat of the JPO SS was located at the same address, in South Lawndale Avenue in Chicago, as the headquarters of the "socialist" Slovene National Benefit Society (SNPJ - Slovenska narodna podporna jednota), and that Vincent Cankar, the president of the SNPJ, was at the same time also the president of the JPO SS. Moreover, the Catholic representative J. Zalar, the secretary of

the KSKJ, concluded the above agreement with the "socialists" on his own without a previous consultation, be it with the local branches of his organization or with the parish priests. The latter learned about this agreement only afterwards from the newspapers. Zalar became the secretary of the JPO SS and continued to support the cooperation with the "freethinkers" (svobodomisleci).<sup>6</sup>

The return of Kazimir Zakrajšek to the United States, on August 11, 1941, marked a new era for the Catholic group. He brought new ideas with him, and with his travel from coast to coast Zakrajšek reawakened the interest for the old country.<sup>7</sup>

When Zakrajšek left, Slovenia was partitioned into three parts by its victorious neighbours. The northern part was occupied by Germany, the north-eastern (Prekmurje) by Hungary, and the southern part (the province of Ljubljana) by Italy. Zakrajšek had some first-hand knowledge about the persecutions which were going on at that time in the German occupied part of Slovenia where priests, intellectuals and some other city-dwellers were rounded up and transported to Croatia and Serbia. They were permitted to take with them only ten pounds of necessities, and had to leave behind all the rest, including their valuables. On the other hand, the Italian occupied portion of Slovenia looked at that time as an oasis of peace where many Slovenes from the North could find refuge. A few days after his return Zakrajšek went to Washington, D.C., where he visited, among others, Cavendish W. Cannon in the State Department. He explained to Cannon the situation in Slovenia and Yugoslavia, and handed him a copy of the Memorandum describing the German persecutions. This memorandum had previously been given to the Pope and Benito Mussolini by Dr. Marko Natlačen, former ban (governor) of Slovenia.<sup>8</sup>

In Washington, as previously on his journey to the United States, Zakrajšek heard about different plans for a future political reorganization of Europe which concerned the Slovenes but were made without them. Prominent among them was the project to establish a Catholic Danubian federation, with or without Hungary and Croatia, but always including Slovenia. This plan had a substantial support among the American Catholic hierarchy. In addition, Zakrajšek learned that the re-establishment of Yugoslavia, at that time, was regarded by many as questionable. The dispute between the Serbs and Croats, the establishment of an independent Croatian state, and the bloodshed between the two nations, were given as the

main reasons. This in turn strengthened the Great Serbian tendencies among the Serbs, preferring a Great Serbia to Yugoslavia.

After he gained knowledge of all these projects, Zakrajšek came to the conclusion that Slovenes had to have their own program to prevent being pushed around by others. And he prepared a plan for United Slovenia which should include, not only the entire pre-war Slovenia, but also southern Carinthia and the Slovene Littoral, parts which were lost to Austria and Italy after World War I. In propaganda all priority must be given to the recognition of United Slovenia and to the acquisition of southern Carinthia and the Slovene Littoral. Yugoslavia should always remain the first choice for the United Slovenia to join. But Slovenia should enter it as an autonomous unit (state) and Yugoslavia should be reorganized into a democratic federation. If there should be no Yugoslavia then United Slovenia should become a protectorate of the United States or Great Britain. Slovenes should resist to the outmost being incorporated into any Danubian federation under Austrian or Magyar leadership. If no other solutions were possible, then Slovenes should demand that the entire United Slovenia enter such a federation but only as an autonomous state.<sup>9</sup>

The second Zakrajšek project provided for the financial assistance for Slovenia. He brought with him two letters from Dr. Gregorij Rožman, the bishop of Ljubljana; one was addressed to the Slovene priests in America, the other was for the American bishops. Both were appealing for the financial help which could reach Slovenia via Vatican. To provide for such assistance the Slovene priests in Cleveland and some Catholic laymen organized American Slovenian Parish Relief (PASŽ - Pomožna akcija slovenskih župnij). Rev. Milan Slaje became president and the Franciscan Fr. Bernard Ambrožič, secretary. To avoid friction between the PASŽ and the JPO SS Zakrajšek went to Chicago to talk it over with the president of JPO SS, V. Cainkar. However, Zakrajšek's proposal for a friendly cooperation was turned down, and on Sept. 12, 1941, *Prosveta* accused him of disturbing the peace and endangering the established cooperation between the Catholics and the freethinkers.<sup>10</sup> Hereafter the PASŽ became a branch of the Bishop's Relief which in turn belongs to the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC), with its seat in Washington, D.C. By the end of 1942 the PASŽ collected \$9,000 among American Slovenes, and the American bishops donated \$76,000 to be sent as relief to Slovenia.<sup>11</sup>

The establishment of the PASŽ was opposed not only by the "freethinkers", the socialists and liberals, but also by some Catholics,

especially the ones holding offices of the JPO SS. For instance, J. Zalar, The secretary of the Catholic KSKJ and the secretary of JPO SS, wrote in his letter of April 21, 1942, that it is, and it always was, his firm conviction that any cent sent to Yugoslavia is an indirect help to Hitler and his bandits.<sup>12</sup> So the Catholics will remain divided and the tension between the JPO SS and the PASŽ will continue.

To propagandize the realization of his political program Zakrajšek envisaged the formation of two separate political organizations, one for the Catholics, the other for all the others. The representatives of both organizations would form, at the top, a national council of all American Slovenes. The council should be elected by a national congress which would be prepared by both organizations. This would represent a united political leadership supported by two individual political organizations or a double-track political movement. The national council will work for the realization of a common program accepted by the congress and will be supported in its work by both political organizations. However, each political group will remain free to express its own political views on the matters which were not commonly agreed upon or accepted by the congress.

In his letter of Sept. 24, 1941, Zakrajšek informed the socialist patriarch, Etbín Kristan, about his political program and asked him for cooperation. A few days later, on September 27, Kristan answered. In general, he agreed with Zakrajšek that something should be done for United Slovenia, specifically for Slovene Carinthia and Littoral. He also favored the convocation of a Slovene national congress, but on the other side he was opposed to political organizations. Instead he preferred the fraternal benefit societies which were already represented in the JPO SS. To them the SŽZ and the Progressive Slovene Women of America (PSA, *Progresivne Slovenke Amerike*) could be added. Zakrajšek evidently agreed with Kristan's proposals. On October 2, 1941, he asked Kristan to contact V. Cainkar, the president of the SNPJ, and a day later Zakrajšek wrote to John Germ, the president of the KSKJ about preparation for a Slovene national congress.<sup>13</sup> However, everything changed with the coming of Franc Snoj to America, one of the two Slovene ministers in the Yugoslav government.

The Yugoslav government which finally settled down in London was constantly plagued with the Serbo-Croat dispute. Because of it the government was unable to accept needed reforms which would transform Yugoslavia into a democratic federalistic state. Without doubt, such a reformed Yugoslavia would have a much greater appeal to all her national

groups. Moreover, the Yugoslav cabinet was suspected to be in the hands of the Pan-Serbian centralists, and it was rumored that they worked for an enlarged Serbia rather than for the re-establishment of Yugoslavia. The same was reported about Konstantin Fotić, the Yugoslav ambassador in the United States.<sup>14</sup>

The two Slovene ministers in the Yugoslav government were, relatively speaking, newcomers and hence at least partly inexperienced. They both represented the Slovene majority party - the SLS - which had been since the 1930s a member of the Yugoslav Radical Union. The old seasoned SLS leader between the wars, Dr. Anton Korošec, died in 1940 and was replaced by Dr. France Kulovec, who was killed by a German bomb during the surprise air attack on Belgrade on April 6, 1941. Dr. Miha Krek replaced Kulovec while Snoj stepped in to take Krek's position.

In accordance with the rest of the Yugoslav cabinet, Slovene ministers did not demand the transformation of Yugoslavia into a federation though the SLS traditionally advocated an autonomous Slovenia. This was also the policy of Snoj when he came to the United States in the beginning of September 1941.

When Snoj arrived in America he was warmly greeted by all Slovene Catholics including Zakrajšek. They all recognized him as their leader. However, Snoj refused to accept some of Zakrajšek's ideas regarding the Slovene national goals and the form of organization needed to achieve them, and instead proposed his own program. He outlined it in his letter of October 25, 1941, which was sent to all fraternal benefit organizations and cultural unions.<sup>15</sup>

He observed that there were two major national goals all American Slovenes were in agreement with. The first is the demand that all Slovene lands should be united in a United Slovenia, and second that this United Slovenia forms a part of democratic Yugoslavia. This he found out when visiting the Slovene communities in America. To achieve these two goals, American Slovenes should organize special national organization which would represent all American Slovenes. This would be done in the following way: Each fraternal-benefit organization and each cultural union should send one delegate to form the action committee. This action committee would thereafter elect from their own members an executive board in which both ideological groups should have an equal number of representatives. On the same principle local action committees should be organized in all Slovene communities wherever they are in America.

It is evident that Snoj basically accepted Kristan's proposal for one united political organization which was to lean, similarly as the JPO SS, on the fraternal-benefit organizations with the addition of the two women's cultural unions. But Snoj didn't say anything about a Yugoslav federation.

In time Zakrajšek any many Catholics became dissatisfied with Snoj. Catholics disliked that he was spending more time in Chicago with the socialists than in Cleveland with his own Catholic group. Zakrajšek and others warned him that the socialists would work with him only as long as they would need him. Thereafter they would simply drop him. Of course, this all may reflect some of the old rivalry between the Catholic Cleveland and the socialist Chicago.<sup>16</sup>

Next, let me shed, in a few words, some light on the early relationship of Adamic toward Snoj and Zakrajšek. Both met Adamic soon after they arrived in America in 1941. In November Zakrajšek explained to Adamic his plan of a United Slovenia and the various alternatives connected with its realization. The United States protectorate was specifically sympathetic to Adamic, and he would like to know who supported this idea in Slovenia. However, otherwise Adamic refused to comment on the project. In his letter of November 15, 1941, he stressed that for new he will *"try to avoid involvement in the immediate polemics, lest I reduce the effectiveness of whatever I might write later"* in the *"little book about Slovenia"*. (Was this already a reference to *My Native Land?*)

Furthermore, Adamic made an excellent impression on both. In his letter of November 22, 1941, addressed to Adamic, Zakrajšek compared him in importance to bishop Baraga. Similarly, as bishop Baraga is the outstanding man among Slovene priests in America, so is Adamic among Slovene laymen. We may conclude that Adamic was, at that time, very kindly and warmly disposed toward both of them and assisted them whenever he was asked for any kind of help. But Adamic was also greatly interested in obtaining all possible information from them, especially the news Snoj and Zakrajšek were receiving from Slovenia.<sup>17</sup>

As already indicated, minister Snoj tried to realize his program through the JPO SS. So, in the early Spring of 1942, its board, in the presence of some invited guests, decided to extend the JPO SS activities from relief work also to politics and a special political committee would deal with these matters. Probably an outshoot of this decision was the creation of the American Slovene National Alliance (ASNZ - Ameriška slovenska narodna zveza), a section of the JPO SS, with its headquarters in Cleveland. The



president became Dr. James W. Mally, the honorary consul in Cleveland and a dentist by profession. Though Mally was a staunch representative of the Catholic group of Cleveland, the ASNZ was unable to attract the support of parish priests. The invitation to join the new organization sent out to the Slovene priests in June of 1942 remained unanswered except in one case. Mally in his report to Krek, described well the sentiments of Cleveland Catholics: "The socialist quarters in Chicago, the Catholics are saying, had all these years insulted whatever was Catholic and Yugoslav, and yet, now they are leaders of all the activities and are enjoying the blessings of our minister Mr. Snoj." Evidently the Catholics mistrusted anything that was connected with the Chicago socialists and the JPO SS, including the newly organized ASNZ. The sole exemptions of this Catholic attitude were J. Zalar and M. Prislant. Both Zalar and Prislant, according to Mally's report, represented the Catholic organizations but not their ideology in the JPO SS. Neither of them was an ideal Catholic, according to the opinion of many outstanding Catholic laymen and priests. In reality they were two opportunists. It was wrong to entrust the Catholic representation in JPO SS to such people who were solely paid officials of their Catholic organizations and had only one ambition, namely, to prevent other able individuals of obtaining leading positions and thus becoming their competitors. This is how Mally described the two Catholic representatives in the JPO SS.<sup>18</sup>

Then a bombshell exploded. At its meeting in the beginning of September 1942, the JPO SS accepted three important decisions. They sent a telegram to the Yugoslav government in London asking for a replacement of Snoj by Dr. Marija J. Čok, a leader of the Littoral Slovenes of Italy, who came to America to work for a unification of Slovene Littoral with Yugoslavia. It was also decided to disband the ASNZ and to call a Slovene National Congress for December 5 and 6, 1942. Moreover, Slovene parishes and many outstanding Catholic individuals were not invited. Among the latter was the editor of *Ameriška domovina*, James Debevec.

It should surprise no one that the Catholic reaction was negative. It furthermore confirmed the Catholics that they should not trust the socialist. Both Catholic dailies, the *Ameriška domovina* in Cleveland and the *Amerikanski Slovenec* in Chicago, published articles against the participation at the congress. A similar position was taken by the Cleveland's clergy, which pointed out that the congress was decided upon by the socialists alone without any previous consultation with the Catholic group. Hence, they had a good reason to mistrust the socialist intentions and refused to participate. Similar reports were coming to Cleveland from other parts.

Then Zakrajšek came out in support of the congress. His main arguments should inspire the Catholics to participate at the congress. Only if they came to the congress, argued Zakrajšek, could they challenge the socialist leadership, which they resented so much, and obtain a majority for themselves. In addition, the congress will be an efficient forum through which they could ask the American government for the re-establishment of a free and united Slovenia, and for the correction of the pre-war boundary. Furthermore, because more time was needed for the preparation, and because winter was not the best season for a congress, the December congress should be made into a provisional one, which would prepare resolutions and all the other necessities for the true congress to be held in the late spring of 1943.<sup>19</sup>

Consequently, when the Slovenian National Congress was held, as scheduled, on December 5 and 6, 1942 in Cleveland, the Catholics participated, though without any enthusiasm. The Congress accepted the program of a United Slovenia "*which shall become an autonomous part of a new democratic federative Yugoslavia,*" and furthermore stresses that "*the Slovenian American National Council does not meddle in one's political or religious affiliations, nor is anyone asked to renounce his own political conviction.*" The Congress also elected the Slovenian American National Council (SANS - Slovenski ameriški narodni svet) and its Executive Committee with Etbin Kristan as president, Kazimir Zakrajšek as secretary, Marie Priland as first vice-president, Janko N. Rogelj as second vice-president, Joseph Zalar as treasurer, Vincent Cainkar as first of five directors, and Louis Adamic as honorary president. Among other directors was also a Cleveland priest, the Rev. John J. Oman.<sup>20</sup>

The cooperation between the Catholics and Socialists was of short duration. During 1943 it became more and more apparent that both groups would part. The bone of contention were the Partisans.

The first disagreement about the situation in Slovenia occurred between Zakrajšek and Adamic in January 1943. The argument concerned a recently received news from Slovenia, according to which thirteen priests were killed by the Partisans and Village Guards were formed to resist the Partisans. During their preparation for a meeting with Sumner Welles, The Under Secretary of State, in Washington on January 15, 1943, Adamic, Zakrajšek and Cainkar discussed this recent news from Slovenia.

Three days later, Adamic wrote to Zakrajšek that from the last conversation with him he got the impression that Zakrajšek was in sympathy with the Village Guards which had been armed by the Italian to fight against

the Partisans. If his impression was true, continued Adamic, then "*you and I do not belong in the same organization which is interested in the future Slovenia.*" He asked Zakrajšek to clarify his position by January 25, 1943, or he would withdraw as honorary president from SANS. Zakrajšek was astonished when he received the letter from Adamic. He just couldn't believe it to be true. First he thought that Adamic didn't like to work with him because he was a priest. In a long letter dated January 21, 1943, Zakrajšek explained to Adamic that he was against any killing going on in Slovenia, be it done by the Village Guards or by Partisans. The letter evidently satisfied Adamic and the dispute was patched over.<sup>21</sup>

A month later, Zakrajšek became convinced that he would be unable to work successfully with the socialist group and he resigned on February 27, 1943. For the reason of his resignation he listed the board's refusal of his suggestions. The most important among them were his realization that there would be no new congress in spring, that only one of his alternatives for United Slovenia was accepted, namely, the Yugoslav one, and that SANS became in reality controlled by the socialists as he couldn't rely on Zalar and Prisland which supported rather socialist than his proposals. Zakrajšek informed Rev. Oman about his resignation, urging him to do the same. But at that time the latter was not convicted that Zakrajšek's arguments were strong enough for him to resign also.<sup>22</sup>

Zakrajšek's resignation was the first crack in this uneasy cooperation. From then on the gap between the Catholics and the socialists began to widen, and the Catholic opposition to SANS, and hence to the Catholic cooperation with it, became stronger and more numerous as time passed by. In a sketchy way, let us review this alienation between both groups from February 1943 to October 1944.

During 1943, Adamic began with his public propaganda for the Partisans. In August of the same year, he came out in favor of legal recognition of Tito by the Allies, and began attacking the members of the Yugoslav government in London, especially Snoj and Krek. The same month Adamic's article "*Death in Front of the Church*", appeared in the September issue of *Harper's Magazine*. The article was taken from his book *My native land* which was published in the later part of the year.<sup>23</sup>

In his propaganda for the Partisans, Adamic was supported more and more by the JPO SS and the SANS. In August 1943, JPO SS decided to give material help for the Partisan cause, and thereafter SANS pronounced itself in favor of the same policy.<sup>24</sup>

To counteract these developments some priests and laymen, mostly from Cleveland, decided in February 1943 that the PASŽ should extend its relief oriented activities to include also politics. For that purpose, they organized - or better extended and renamed - the old PASŽ into the Union of Slovenian Parishes of America (ZSŽ(A) - Zveza slovenskih župnij v Ameriki). The president remained Rev. Milan Slaje, secretary became Fr. Bernard Ambrožič, and the treasurer Anton Grdina, a layman. The ZSŽ remained affiliated with the Bishops' Relief Committee of the NCWC.<sup>25</sup>

In September 1943 the ZSŽ launched a counter-attack by pointing out that Adamic is not speaking in the name of all the American Slovenes, and still less in the name of the Slovenes in Slovenia, as the majority of the latter always supported the Catholic cause. In protest to SANS support for Partisans, the priests Rev. Oman and Fr. Alexander Urankar resigned from SANS on October 21, 1943. In the next more ZSŽ put pressure on Zalar and Prisland urging them to also resign from SANS. Then in January 1944, ZSŽ published the pamphlet *Shall Slovenia be Sovietized*, prepared by its secretary Ambrožič. It was the Catholic response to Adamic's "falsehoods" and "half-truths" perpetrated in his book *My Native Land*. Furthermore, the pamphlet condemned the Partisans and the communist regime for which they fought in Slovenia, and which was propagandized by Adamic and by SANS in America. It reasserted that Adamic had no authority to speak in the name of all the Slovenes. The same viewpoint was expressed to the United States government when the representatives of the ZSŽ visited Washington in the first days of September 1944. But at that time, in the views of many, any intervention directed against Partisans was already too late.<sup>26</sup>

In summer of 1944, following the Tito-Šubašić agreement, Tito was formally recognized as the only guerrilla leader, what sealed the fate of all other resistance movements around Mihailović. In October 1944, when the Soviet and Partisan forces occupied Belgrade, Tito established his new *de facto* government there. The struggle of anti-communists was over and lost.<sup>27</sup>

Of such opinion was Leo Zakrajšek and many others. Consequently in his letter of October 14, 1944, he expressed his opinion that only one aim was left for the ZSŽ to be fulfilled in the future, namely, to present the massacre of anti-communists and other opponents of communism in Slovenia. One of the first acts in this direction should be letters addressed to President Roosevelt, and to the Soviet and British Ambassadors by the ZSŽ, urging them to intervene. As the supporters and the followers of SANS did like in

the past to cover up all the Partisan misdeeds, Leo Zakrajšek recommended that similar appeals be sent to all members of SANS and specifically to all those Catholics which were still giving their support to SANS.<sup>28</sup>

During the Struggle around the Partisans an important shift occurred in the agreed upon of SANS. When SANS has been formed in December 1942, all the participants agreed about its principal goals. These were the liberation and unification of Slovenia, including the Austrian part of Slovene Carinthia and the Italian part of Slovene Littoral with Trieste. By the summer of 1942 the re-establishment of Slovenia and Yugoslavia was in general lines assured by the Allies. From then on all the priority should be given to the twin problems of Carinthia and Littoral. However, Adamic's struggle for Tito's recognition relegated Carinthia and the Slovene Littoral to a secondary position, and this in a time when the Austrians were working ardently for a *status quo*, and when Italian Count Sforza tried to achieve the same about the Italian prewar boundaries. How much did this attitude of American Slovenes including Adamic contribute to Yugoslavia's - in reality, Slovenia's - loss of Carinthia, Trieste and Gorizia is still a question which demanded future research before it could be satisfactorily answered.<sup>29</sup>

By analyzing the Slovene Catholic activities in America during World War II, it became immediately apparent that the Catholics did not represent a well organized or cohesive unity but could be, instead, divided into three amorphous groupings. The first represents the hardliners which from the beginning remained suspicious about the real aims of the socialists. According to them, Catholics should not collaborate with communists, and they suspected communists to be behind the Partisans. Therefore they mistrusted anything connected with the Partisans as well as with Adamic. The hardliners were not too happy with Snoj and the Yugoslav government but were prepared to work with both. The center of this group was in Cleveland. Mally, Slaje and maybe Ambrožič were its outstanding representatives. They were ardently supported by *Ameriška domovina* and its editor Debevec, which was surely a forerunner of this group. Also the Chicago based *Amerikanski Slovenec* supported their issued but not with such enthusiasm as Debevec's newspaper. This group first organized the ŠASŽ and later the ZSŽ though not all of the members of the latter belonged to the hardliners.

The group on the other end of the spectrum - let us call them temporizers - faithfully cooperated with the socialists and the SANS until the end of the war. But they did so for different reasons. Rev. Vital Vodušek and Rev.

George (Jurij) Trunk are two typical examples of this sub-divisions. Vodušek had no scruples to collaborate with the socialists, SANS and Adamic probably because of his previous Christian Socialist leanings. And Christian Socialists, at least a part of them, were working together with the communists in the Liberation Front and the Partisans. Moreover, he detested the old centralistic Yugoslav government and expected that the Partisans would bring a new and better social and political order to Slovenia and Yugoslavia. Trunk, on the other hand, supported SANS and Adamic for quite a different reason. To him as a native of Carinthia the Slovene national aims were the most outstanding ones. "*Better under the Soviet than under the German rule*" was his known statement. Hence he saw, or at least wished to see, in the Partisan movement a political coalition fighting in the first place for liberation of entire Slovenia including his beloved Carinthia. All the other problems did not matter to him.

The third group standing in the middle between the "*hardliners*" and the "*temporizers*" included Catholics who could not make up their mind. On the one side they were for the support of the Slovene national goals as agreed by SANS, on the other they could not decide about the Partisans. Because of the Partisans and their communist leadership they will withdraw their support from SANS before the end of the war. A typical representative of this group was Rev. Math Butala, the spiritual leader of the KSKJ, to a lesser degree Rev. Oman and Rev. Urankar. With some reservation one may include into this group also Mr. Zalar and Mrs. Prislant.<sup>30</sup>

In addition one has also to admit that SANS with its propaganda tried to retain as much of Catholic support as possible for as long as necessary. For that purpose the SANS propaganda described the Partisans as an alliance of the Slovene political parties in which they were just one of these parties. Moreover, the Partisans were described as fighting primarily for the liberation and unification of Slovenia. Any reports about the partisans atrocities were played down as unfriendly propaganda of the Pro-Serbian centralistic Yugoslav government, or as coming from the hated white guardist's sources.

About Adamic there is a great variety of Catholic opinions expressed in the archival material. To indicate the wide spectrum of individual judgements from positive to negative I have chosen two extremes, George Trunk and Leo Zakrajšek.

The first opinion was written by a priest, Rev. George Trunk, who described Adamic and his mission in the most glaring words. It was written

at the height of the Catholic attack on Adamic after his article had appeared in *Harper's Magazine*. Trunk's letter was circulated by Adamic and the SANS, according to Leo Zakrajšek, to provide that Catholics still supported SANS. The letter of November 4, 1943 was written in English. Here are its most characteristic parts:

*You may err (errare humanum est), may be mistaken, but you are making efforts in the right trend, that is - a new life was born in the revolution, better evolution, and now it is up to the world to bring this new life (not Hitler's new order) to the world. Your outlook upon the role of Russia, then England, America - and especially Yugoslavia (South Slavic People) seems to me true, right, correct, and I am of the opinion that just you are playing with your extremely brilliant gift to write, to observe, to express, to characterize and to put before the broader public - an extraordinary role....*

*I am ashamed about attacks upon you from circles near to me. Sheer class blindness and political foolishness. Don't mind, once again, I dare to tell you, go ahead! If you succeed, God's blessing will be upon you, (for you are striving for a better world and for millions of people).<sup>31</sup>*

The second, negative, opinion is taken from three letters written by Leo Zakrajšek to his brother Kazimir. They involved the same period and were written by a recent lay newcomer to the hard line position. Similar negative evaluation of Adamic was made by James Debevec, James Mally, Milan Slaje and other hardliners much earlier. But the negative judgements of Adamic were not limited to the Catholics. Similar evaluations were also made outside of the Catholic group, as for instance by Ivan Molek, the editor of *Prosveta*, or by Andrej Kobal in his memoirs.<sup>32</sup> This is what Leo Zakrajšek thought of Adamic in his letter of November 23, 1943:

*Adamic, according to my opinion is a commercialist in the first place. He wants his books to sell, the more, the better. He must write in such a way to attract and to arouse public interest and sensation.*

*His second weak point is his want of a Slovene national sentiment which would enable him to be permeated with love for his nation. He was too young when he left his home and for a long time he remained without any contacts with his people. His present role is serving him well for practical purposes, because, as I am hearing, his books are no more "best sellers". Such was only the "Native's Return". For that reason he is now looking for his customers among our people and among the radical elements.*

*His bad advisers are his third evil. Kristan never was and never will be a Slovene patriot, instead he is a German oriented internationalist.*<sup>33</sup>

On December 4, 1943, Leo Zakrajšek made a short remark about Adamic's most recent book, *My Native Land*, when writing to his brother: "And then, what can you expect from internationalist Adamic and Kristan? He does not feel with his Slovene nation, and what a man doesn't have, he cannot give."<sup>34</sup>

In the letter of January 6, 1944, he wrote:

*Regarding the struggle against Adamic I have the following opinion: Adamic is not such a cosmopolite as our people imagine, or at least some of them. He squandered away his greatness when he became a hireling of communism. In the eyes of the majority he is stigmatized as a "radical" and "Co-traveler of Communists" according to the official characterization made of him by Congressman Dies.*<sup>35</sup>

So, two images of Adamic emerge. True they both are still very sketchy. On the one side he is depicted as a man with a brilliant gift to write, to observe, to express, to characterize, to discover complex and potential problems and to make the public aware of them.

On the other he is painted in dark colors as being a publicist concerned primarily with money. A man lacking Slovene national sentiment and without love for his Slovene nation, a man who is using Slovenes and other Southern Slavs, as well as their countries, solely as a case study for his books and for his success, and finally a man who sold himself to the international communism.

The historians who will try to write an objective history of Louis Adamic will have to take into consideration the positive as well as the negative opinions of his contemporaries. The same is true, of course, for all other facts. Then, and only then, a true picture - instead of a hagiographical one - will come into being. I hope that this paper will serve, in a small way at least, as a contribution toward this direction.



## NOTES

- 1 For the history of the American Slovenes see: J. M. Trunk, *Amerika in Amerikanci* (America and the Americans) (Celovec, 1912), pp. 371-606; and Jože Zavertnik, *Ameriški Slovenci: Pregled splošne zgodovine Združenih držav, slovenskega naseljevanja in naselbin in Slovenske narodne podporne jednote* (American Slovenes: A General Survey of the History of the United States, of Slovene Immigration and its Settlements and of Slovene National Benefit Society) (Chicago, 1925), pp. 245-549, 553-623. There exist, of course, other works but they were inaccessible to me.
- 2 For the results of the only democratic elections held during the twenties see: Melita Pivec, "Programi političnih strank in statistika volitev," *Slovenci v desetletju 1918-1928* (The Programs of the Political Parties and the Statistical Data of Elections, Slovenes in the Decennium 1918-1928), ed. by Josip Mal (Ljubljana, 1928), pp. 357-373. For statistical survey see table on p. 372.
- 3 Kazimir Zakrajšek, "Boj za verski prepород, Kronologija" (The Struggle for Religious Renewal, Chronology); "Časnikarstvo, Kronologija" (Journalism, Chronology); "Komisariat sv. Križa, Kronologija" (Commissariat of the Holy Cross, Chronology); "Lemont, Kronologija" (Lemont, Chronology); and "Tiskarna, Kronologija" (The Printing Press, Chronology); all data were typed. Data given here were taken as such without any verification.
- 4 The names of Slovene organizations have always two official forms, the Slovene and the English. In the text the English name is given first being followed in parenthesis by the initials of the Slovene name and then comes the Slovene name. In the next references the initials of the Slovene name has been used only. The Slovene form was chosen because it was mostly used in the materials checked by me.
- 5 *Prosveta* (Chicago), [Sept. 12, 1941]. This information was taken from a clipping of *Prosveta* but it was without a date. About the above date I have learned from Different letters. Whenever no date is given or if I discovered it by indirect information I have put it in a bracket.
- 6 See Letter from Kazimir Zakrajšek to Franc Snoj, Sept. 20, 1942; Letter from Rev. Milan Slaje to Fr. Bernard Ambrožič, Sept. 3, 1943; A Report

from Dr. James W. Mally to Dr. Miha Krek, n.d. [after Oct. 5 and before Dec. 5, 1942].

- <sup>7</sup> O.K. [Kazimir] Zakrajšek, *Ko smo šli v morje bridkosti* (When we Entered the Ocean of Sorrows) (Washington, D.C., 1942); pp. 154-155.
- <sup>8</sup> Letter from Cavendish W. Cannon to Kazimir Zakrajšek, Aug. 28, 1941.
- <sup>9</sup> Letter from Kazimir Zakrajšek to Miha Krek, Oct. 1, 1941, and Oct. 20, 1941; see also K. Zakrajšek, *Ko smo šli v morje bridkosti*, pp. 170-72.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 174-76; *Ameriška domovina* (Cleveland), Sept. 6, 1941: *Prosveta*, [Sept. 12, 1941].
- <sup>11</sup> K. Zakrajšek, *Ko smo šli v morje bridkosti*, pp. 176-77; Letter from Slovenian Relief Executive Committee to the National Catholic Welfare Conference, Sept. 24, 1941. The letter enumerates the composition of the executive committee and asks for a membership in the NCWC.
- <sup>12</sup> Cited in the report about the work of the PASŽ prepared by its secretary Bernard Ambrožič, and dated Sept. 12, 1942, p. 5.
- <sup>13</sup> Letter from Kazimir Zakrajšek to Etbin Kristan, Sept. 24, 1941; Letter from Etbin Kristan to Kazimir Zakrajšek, Sept. 27, 1941; Letter from Kazimir Zakrajšek to John Germ, Oct. 3, 1941; Letter from John Germ to Kazimir Zakrajšek, Oct. 12, 1941; Kazimir Zakrajšek, "Zgodovina slovenskega kongresa" (The History of Slovene Congress), 12 typed pages, [written after World War II].
- <sup>14</sup> Charles Zalar, *Yugoslav Communism: A Critical Study*, prepared for the United States Senate, 87th Congress, first session, Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and Other Internal Security Laws, October 18, 1961, no. 68505 (Washington, 1961), pp. 76-87, 101-116.
- <sup>15</sup> Letter from Franc Snoj to the Union of Slovenian Parishes, Oct. 25, 1941. Note that in 1941 for a while there existed also a Union of Slovene Parishes (*Zveza slovenskih župnij*) but later fell dormant and its activities were taken over by the PASŽ which in turn was also not very active.
- <sup>16</sup> K. Zakrajšek, "Zgodovina slovenskega kongresa", pp. 2-4.

- <sup>17</sup> Letter from Leo Zakrajšek to Kazimir Zakrajšek, Sept. 13, 1941; Letter from Kazimir Zakrajšek to Louis Adamic, Nov. 13, 1941; Letter from Louis Adamic to Kazimir Zakrajšek, Nov. 15, 1941; Letter from Kazimir Zakrajšek to Leo Zakrajšek, Nov. 15, 1941; Letter from Leo Zakrajšek to Kazimir Zakrajšek, Nov. 19, 1941; Letter from Kazimir Zakrajšek to Louis Adamic, Nov. 22, and Dec. 17, 1941. Snoj for instance said that a Louis Adamic could do more for the Slovenes and Slovenia than 300,000 American Slovenes. For it see Letter from Leo Zakrajšek to Kazimir Zakrajšek, March 12, 1942.
- <sup>18</sup> Report from J. W. Mally to M. Krek, [after Oct. 5 and before Dec. 5, 1942], pp. 4, 5, 6; Letter from Bernard Ambrožič to James Mally, May 4, 1942; Invitation from the Ameriška slovenska narodna zveza to Kazimir Zakrajšek, June 20, 1942.
- <sup>19</sup> Report J. W. Mally to M. Krek [after Oct. 5 and before Dec. 5, 1942]; Zakrajšek, "Zgodovina slovenskega kongresa," pp. 5-8; Letter from Kazimir Zakrajšek to Franc Snoj, Nov. 16, 1942.
- <sup>20</sup> *Slovenian American National Council*, a printed pamphlet 2 pp., reporting on the Congress of Dec. 5 and 6, 1942, and published sometime after January 15, 1953. As there must be a lot of materials related to the Congress accessible in other archives I have limited myself to this source from which I quote in the text.
- <sup>21</sup> Letter from Louis Adamic to Kazimir Zakrajšek, Jan 18, 1943; Letter from Kazimir Zakrajšek to Louis Adamic, Jan. 21, 1943; Letter from Louis Adamic to Kazimir Zakrajšek, Jan. 23, 1943; Letter from Vincent Cainkar to Kazimir Zakrajšek, Jan. 28, 1943; Zakrajšek, "Zgodovina slovenskega kongresa," p. 9.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9; "Poročilo tajnika Rev. K. Zakrajška o njegovem delu od 6. dec. 1942 do 27. februarja 1943" (Report of the Secretary Rev. K. Zakrajšek about his Work from Dec. 6, 1942, to February 27, 1943) sent to Mirko Kuhel, Administrative Secretary of SANS. About Zakrajšek's reasons for resignation see: Letter from Kazimir Zakrajšek to Slavko Trošt, March 5, 1943; Letter from Leo Zakrajšek to Kazimir Zakrajšek, March 5 and March 9, 1943; Letter Kazimir Zakrajšek to D. I. M. [Dr. Ivan Marija] Čok, April 21, 1943.

- <sup>23</sup> Letter from Franc Gabrovšek to James Debevec, Aug. 26, 1943; Letter from Franc Gabrovšek to Slovenian American National Council, Sept. 13, 1943. Both 4 page letters are similar but not identical. They deal point by point with Adamic's errors, halftruths, and misrepresentations in his article in *Harper's Magazine*. Later Gabrovšek's letter to Debevec was used as a blue print by Ambrožič for his booklet *Shall Slovenia be Sovietized* because Gabrovšek himself preferred to remain in the background.
- <sup>24</sup> Letter from J. Debevec to Bernard Ambrožič, Aug. 14, Aug. 16, Aug. 18, Aug. 31; Letter From Leo Zakrajšek to Kazimir Zakrajšek, Dec. 24, 1943. Leo Zakrajšek pointed out that SANS gave "until now" (Dec. 24, 1942) \$ 10.000 to Adamic for his pro-communist propaganda.
- <sup>25</sup> Printed invitation to join the Union addressed to *Častiti in dragi sobrat* (Reverend and Dear brother), signed by Rt. Rev. Msgr. Vitus Hribar, Rt. Rev. Msgr. B. J. Ponikvar and Rt. Rev. J. J. Oman, dated March 1943; Letter James Mally to Kazimir Zakrajšek, Feb. 3, 1943; "Zapisnik seje Zveze slovenskih župnij v Ameriki, 3. februarja 1943 v slovenskem župnišču ob 2:30 P.M., Lorain, Ohio" (Minutes of the Meeting of the Union of Slovenian Parishes of America [held] Feb. 3, 1943, in the Rectory of the Slovene Parish at 2:30 P.M. in Lorain, Ohio), signed by Julij Slapšak, temporary secretary (3 typed pages); Poročilo predsednika [Milana Slajeta] na seji ZSŽA v šolski dvorani sv. Vida, Cleveland, Ohio, dne 7. maja 1943 (Report of the President [Milan Slaje] at the Meeting of ZSŽA in the School Auditorium of St. Vitus [Parish], Cleveland, Ohio, May 7, 1943) (3 typed pages).
- <sup>26</sup> "Zapisnik seje Zveze slovenskih župnij v Clevelandu dne 8. septembra 1943," zapisnikar Bernard Ambrožič (The Minutes of the Meeting of the ZSŽ in Cleveland on Sept. 8, 1943 by Bernard Ambrožič, Secretary) (4 taped pages).

On Zalar and Prislant see: Letter from M. Slaje to Bernard Ambrožič, Aug. 8, 1943; Aug. 10, 1943, Aug. 7, 1943, and Sept. 3, 1943; Letter from Bernard Ambrožič to Milan Slaje, Aug. 29, 1943.

*Shall Slovenia be Sovietized: A Rebuttal to Louis Adamic*, Gathered and translated from the pages of the Slovenian daily "Ameriška domovina", published by the Union of Slovenian Parishes of America (Cleveland,

n.d. [a. Jan. 1944]); *Ameriška domovina*, Sept. 12, 1943; *Ave Maria*, Oct. 1944, p. 30; Letter from Leo Zakrajšek to Kazimir Zakrajšek, Sept. 6, 1944.

- <sup>27</sup> C. Zalar, *Yugoslav Communism*, pp. 107-111.
- <sup>28</sup> Letter from Leo Zakrajšek to Kazimir Zakrajšek, Oct. 14, 1944; see also: Letter from Leo Zakrajšek to Kazimir Zakrajšek, Sept. 6, 1944, and Nov. 6, 1944.
- <sup>29</sup> The opinion "that we may lose the Slovenian Littoral and Trieste because if a Partisan victory" was also expressed in the above letter from Leo to his brother Kazimir Zakrajšek on Oct. 14, 1944.
- <sup>30</sup> For Butala's characterization as a man who was unable to make up his mind see: Letter from M. Slaje to B. Ambrožič, Sept. 3, 1943; Letter from Math Butala to Kazimir Zakrajšek, Nov. 26, 1943; and Letter from Kazimir Zakrajšek to Math Butala, Dec. 14, 1943.
- <sup>31</sup> Letter from George Trunk to Louis Adamic, Nov 11, 1943. Letter in English was retyped by Leo Zakrajšek and sent to his brother Kazimir.
- <sup>32</sup> For Molek's opinion on Adamic see: Letter from Ivan Molek to Bernard Ambrožič, Sept. 7, 1943; and Ivan Molek, *Slovene Immigrant History 1900-1950: Autobiographical Sketches*, trans. and annotated by Mary Molek.
- On Kobal's opinion see: Andrej Kobal, *Svetovni popotnik pripoveduje* (The World Traveller Narrates), vol. 1 (Gorica, 1975), pp. 265-271.
- <sup>33</sup> Letter from Leo Zakrajšek to Kazimir Zakrajšek, Nov. 23, 1943. The Letter is written in Slovene, the quote was translated into English by me.
- <sup>34</sup> Letter from Leo Zakrajšek to Kazimir Zakrajšek, Dec. 4, 1943. Quote translated by me.
- <sup>35</sup> Letter from Leo Zakrajšek to Kazimir Zakrajšek, Jan 6, 1944. Quote translated by me.

## POVZETEK

**ADAMIČ IN JUGOSLAVIJA MED DRUGO SVETOVNO VOJNO:  
SLOVENSKI KATOLIŠKI ODGOVOR**

Bogdan C. Novak

Članek je avtorjev referat na mednarodnem simpoziju o Adamiču na Minnessotski univerzi maja 1981, in doslej še ni bil objavljen. Na podlagi arhivskega gradiva prikazuje tudi "temne" strani njegovega delovanja med drugo svetovno vojno.