

SLOVENE EMIGRANT LITERATURE, PERIODICALS AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS AND THE READING PUBLIC IN SLOVENIA

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In this discussion I shall concentrate on the issue of Slovene emigrant literary writing and its accessibility to the reading public in Slovenia, and also briefly draw attention to the problem of the accessibility of, and familiarity (or lack of it) with the emigrant periodical press and other publications, if we wish to talk about the general level of informedness of the reading public in Slovenia.

More Slovenes emigrated from the Slovene ethnic territory before the Second World War than after 1945, and yet post-war emigrants, probably mainly because of their different educational structure, wrote and published more literary works than pre-war emigrants did. Before Slovenia gained independence, post-war emigrants, most of whom were political emigrants, and among whom there was a relatively high number of fairly productive writers, for the most part published their work via the main emigrant publishing houses and Slovene publishing houses in cities over the border such as Klagenfurt, Gorizia and Trieste. In recent years a series of publishers in Slovenia itself have opened their doors to new literary works by emigrants or have reprinted some of the more successful older books which until now have barely been accessible to Slovenes in the homeland. During the period of the harshest political totalitarianism it was the case, in particular with the publications of Slovene post-war political emigrants, that importing these works into Slovenia – even individual copies, i.e. for personal use – was a criminal action.

Among centres of Slovene emigration, the capital of Argentina is undoubtedly the place which most stands out in the area of publishing. In terms of number of published literary works by emigrants **Slovenska kulturna akcija** (SKA, founded 1954) is most active, and with its extensive list of titles of this type decisively outstrips not only all the other Slovene publishing houses in Buenos

Aires but also those elsewhere in the world, including those in the countries bordering Slovenia and in Slovenia itself. To date, SKA has published 169 titles, of which almost a third are literary works by Slovene emigrant authors (slightly less than 50). Conditionally we could also add to this group all the volumes of the reviews *Meddobje* and *Vrednote*, which together represent half of all the publications of the SKA and in which literary contributions have a visible place in terms of both quantity and quality. Of those emigrant authors who have published their literary works through SKA, most are writers from Argentina – these have contributed slightly more than half of the literary publications of this publisher. The remaining publications are literary works by individual Slovene authors from, for the most part, the USA, Italy, Japan and Austria.

Other Slovene institutions in Buenos Aires which occasionally also publish literary works by emigrant writers are **Svobodna Slovenija**, **Tabor**, **Vestnik**, **Katoliški misijoni**, **Baragovo misijonišče** (or **Editorial Baraga**), **Slovensko dušno pastirstvo**, **Slovensko gledališče**, **Sij slovenske svobode**, **Mladinska vez**, and **Duhovno življenje**.

Slovene writers from other parts of the world also periodically publish via their own (usually local) emigrant publishing houses, organizations and societies in the USA and Australia, and in Vienna and London. Pre-war Slovene emigrants to the USA published their literary works for the most part in Chicago via the **Prosvetna matica** and the **Slovenska narodna podporna jednota** (Slovene National Benefit Society – SNPJ), especially as part of its **Prosvetna knjižnica** (Educational Library – also in Chicago). The second publishing centre in the USA is in Ohio, where the well-known private research institution The Slovenian Research Center of America operates in the Cleveland suburb of Willoughby Hills, while Cleveland itself is (or was) home to four institutions taking the role of publisher of individual literary works. These are **Ameriška domovina**, **Slovenska pisarna**, **Triglav** and **Lilija**. In Australia this role was taken as necessary by **Slovensko društvo Melbourne** (Slovene Society in Melbourne) and **Društvo jugoslovanskih pisateljev v Avstraliji in Novi Zelandiji** (The Society of Yugoslav Writers in Australia and New Zealand). In Vienna the LOG publishing house is still active; in London, Lev Detela and Milena Merlak have published some works via their own **Sodobna knjiga**, while one Slovene emigrant work has been published by **Pika Print** in London, and by **The Lapwing Private Press** in Canberra, Australia.

Most literary works by Slovene emigrant authors (over 80) have been **self-published**. Slovene emigrants began self-publishing their literary works while

still in refugee camps, especially those at Spittal on the Drava and at Eboli. Following emigration, most self-published works in the USA appeared in Cleveland, while some also appeared in New York, Chicago, Dover (Delaware) and Sitka (Alaska). Toronto was the centre of this activity in Canada, while in Australia self-published works appeared in all major cities. Centres of activity in South America were Buenos Aires, Perquenco (Chile) and Sucre (Ecuador), and in Europe, Gorizia, Trieste, Klagenfurt, Rome, Louvain and Brussels. The centres of this activity in Slovenia were Ljubljana, Maribor and Ravne na Koroškem.

As I have said, until recently Slovene publishing houses across the border greatly surpassed publishers in Slovenia in terms of the publishing of emigrant literature. The largest number of works of this type (over 40) have appeared via the **Mohorjeva družba** in Klagenfurt, while individual titles have been published by **Setev** in Klagenfurt and **Dom prosvete v Tinjah**. The Gorizia **Mohorjeva družba** boasts nearly the same number of books by emigrant authors as the Celje branch of the same society does (see below). In Trieste a whole range of Slovene publishing houses and institutions have published and in some cases are still publishing works by emigrants. Foremost among these are **Mladika** and **Tabor**. For some years Lev Detela's private publishing house **Sodobna knjiga** was quite active in Trieste, while individual literary works have been contributed by **Setev**, **Slovenska prosvetna matica**, and **Založništvo tržaškega tiska** in the same city.

I have already stressed that until a few years ago only a few publishing houses in Slovenia itself published works by emigrants. At present **Slovenska izseljenska matica** and **Mladinska knjiga** lead the field in terms of the number of works of literature by Slovene emigrant authors published. These are followed by **DZS**, **Prešernova družba**, **Družina**, **Ilex-Impex**, **Slovenska matica**, **Mihelač**, **Cankarjeva založba** and **Slomškova založba** in Ljubljana, while individual titles have also been published by **Aleph**, **Art agencija**, **Delo**, **Horvat Mg-M**, **M&M**, **Modrijan**, **Znanstveni inštitut Filozofske fakultete** and in 1990–91 **Novo Jutro** and **Založništvo Slovenske knjige**.

In Maribor the largest number of books by emigrants have been published by **Obzorja**, followed by the Maribor **Slomškova družba**. In Novo Mesto **Dolenjska založba** occasionally publishes works by emigrant authors, as do **Ognjišče** and **Lipa** in Koper and **Pomurska založba** in Murska Sobota. These publishers usually decide to publish books by emigrant writers from their own region. The Celje **Mohorjeva družba** far outstrips all other publishers in Slovenia in this field, and has published more than twice as many works by emigrants than

even **Slovenska izseljenska matica**, **Mladinska knjiga** and the Maribor-based **Obzorja**.

Just as with their books, until recently Slovene emigrant writers also published their shorter literary writings for the most part in the emigrant periodical press (mainly in the USA, Argentina and Australia) and in Slovene journals and reviews in Klagenfurt, Gorizia and Trieste. More recently their literary and semi-literary writings, particularly poetry, short prose and essays have begun to appear increasingly in newspapers and literary reviews published in Slovenia. A comprehensive review of the titles of emigrant, cross-border and domestic periodical publications in which most emigrant literary contributions can be found will be prepared upon some other occasion. It is in any case clear that nowadays the general reading public in Slovenia is not familiar either with the emigrant periodical press or with emigrant non-literary publications, despite the fact that their importance in preserving national consciousness among emigrants (and hence their general national importance) should merit more attention from the domestic public.

Slovene emigrant literature has been presented in relatively complete form to readers in Slovenia in the monograph on the subject entitled *Slovenska izseljenska književnost* (Slovene Emigrant Literature) published in three volumes this year by the Institute for Slovene Emigration Studies in Ljubljana. Other areas of artistic creation by Slovene emigrants which to date have not been systematically researched and presented to the Slovene public include painting, sculpture, traditional arts and crafts (carving, ceramics, etc.) and many other areas, in particular the theatre, which is extremely well-developed. As regards the emigrant press, the recent publication of a review of Slovene emigrant literature has thrust into the foreground the need for a similar monographic presentation of informative, cultural, political, religious and educational journalism which in all periods has played a leading role in preserving the mother language and national consciousness in emigrant communities and which even today is still quite active. Emigrant editors, correspondents, priests and teachers now have the increasingly painful feeling that they have been overlooked by the country of their birth. A considerable part of the periodical press of Slovene emigrants was in fact presented in Maribor in 1991, at the international symposium 'Immigrant Press in Countries of Immigration', while papers from the symposium were published the following year in the Maribor-based *Znanstvena revija* and in part in *Dve domovini/Two Homelands* 2-3. The information contained in the papers from this symposium which deal with the Slovene emigrant press (quite a number of

papers deal with the emigrant press of other European nations) is complemented by publications such as *Kulturno ustvarjanje Slovencev v Južni Ameriki* (Ljubljana, 1995), similar publications prepared by emigrants themselves – usually on major anniversaries – in which they also present their own journalistic activities in a given country of immigration, and presentations of individual emigrant newspapers which, especially in the 1970s, were regularly published by Martin Jevnikar in the Trieste-based *Mladika*, the exhibition *Slovenski tisk v zdomstvu po letu 1945* held at the National and University Library in Ljubljana in 1991, and so on. There is thus enough material to begin systematic research into this area, and since we still do not have a complete and comprehensive presentation of our emigrant journalism, we shall shortly have to decide who will be able to tackle this demanding task in a sufficiently organized way.