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ZAPISNIKI "UNITED AMERICANS FOR SLOVENIA" DELOVANJE SLOVENSКИH IZSELJENCEV V ZDA ZA NEODVISNO SLOVENIJO

Z izjemo pripadnikov slovenske politične emigracije vse do sredine osemdesetih let ni skoraj nihče v Sloveniji niti zunaj nje razmišljal o možnostih slovenske neodvisnosti. Slovenski Američani ter ostali Jugoslovani v Ameriki so se v tem obdobju delili predvsem glede na svojo politično prepričanje in sicer na progresivne in na konservativce. Medtem ko so bili slovensko-ameriški progresivni krogi, ki so sodelovali tudi s srbskimi in hrvaškimi progresivnimi Američani, včasih celo bolj trdovratni podporniki jugoslovanske zunanje in notranje politike kot sami državljani Jugoslavije, so izseljenci iz vrst političnih emigrantov in konservativno usmerjenih krogov kritizirali tako jugoslovansko politiko kakor tudi politiko svoje lastne republike.

Do korenitejših sprememb v odnosu do stare domovine je med jugoslovanskimi priseljenci v ZDA prišlo šele po smrti Josipa Broza Tita leta 1980, oziroma sredi osemdesetih let ob političnih spremembah v tedanji Jugoslaviji, še posebej v Sloveniji. Jugoslovanski priseljenci v Združenih državah pa tudi drugod po svetu so se pričeli homogenizirati glede na pripadnost določenemu jugoslovanskemu narodu in v zvezi s tem tudi glede na svoje videnje političnih dogajanj v stari domovini.

V "obdobju homogenizacije" jugoslovanskih narodnostnih skupnosti so tudi progresivne organizacije pričele sodelovati z organizacijami konservativnih slovenskih Američanov, s ciljem podpirati procese demokratizacije v Sloveniji.¹ Tako se je skupina slovenskih političnih emigrantov različnih političnih usmeritev organizirala na novo in januarja leta 1990 v Clevelandu ustanovila Združenje slovenskih Američanov. Njegov namen je bila podpora slovenskemu

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¹ Matjaž Klemenčič: Izseljenci iz vrst jugoslovanskih narodov v ZDA in njihove reakcije na človekove pravice in narodnostna vprašanja v Jugoslaviji v osemdesetih letih. Pravo, Teorija, Praksa (ured. Silvo Devetak). Novi Sad, 1991, str. 205-209.

narodu v obdobju preobrazbe v svobodno demokratično republiko.

Na začetku leta 1990, ko v procesu osamosvajanja Slovenije še ni bilo prišlo do odločilnejših potez, se je Združenje slovenskih Američanov še vedno strinjalo z idejo Slovenije v okviru Jugoslavije in se zavzemalo za demokratične volitve ter proces demokratizacije v Sloveniji.² Želelo je tudi informirati slovenske Američane, kako lahko vplivajo na ameriško politiko do Jugoslavije, da bo ta ustrezala interesom slovenskega naroda. Ob koncu marca 1990 je Zveza odprla svoj sedež v Euclidu v zvezni državi Ohio³ in podpirala demokratizacijo Slovenije ne glede na politične stranke, ki so se v tem obdobju pojavljale v Sloveniji. Istočasno so nekateri, zlasti desno usmerjeni slovenski Američani organizirali tudi Ameriški-slovenski svet, ki ga je vodil dr. Mate Roesemann, čigar namen je bila podpora (zlasti finančna) dveh od petih političnih strank DEMOS-a (Demokratične opozicije Slovenije) in sicer Slovenske kmečke zveze in Slovenskih krščanskih demokratov. Tako so člani sveta zbrali v ta namen okrog 100.000 USD. Zveza slovenskih Američanov ni nasprotovala delu Ameriškega-slovenskega sveta, saj ji je bilo vseeno, katera od slovenskih demokratičnih strank bo dobila večino glasov na prvih demokratičnih večstrankarskih volitvah v Sloveniji aprila 1990.

Ob akcijah slovenske politike v poskusih za doseg neodvisnosti in pripravah na plebiscit o neodvisnosti republike Slovenije je večina vodilnih članov slovenske vlade leta 1991 obiskala skoraj vsa pomembnejša središča slovenske izseljenske skupnosti po vsem svetu, da bi izseljence pripravila na politične akcije, ki bodo sledile slovenski deklaraciji o neodvisnosti. Pri tem so, kot smo že omenili, sodelovali vsi vodilni politiki: od predsednika republike Slovenije, Milana Kučana in predsednika slovenske vlade Lojzeta Peterleta do predsednika slovenskega parlamenta dr. Franca Bučarja, zunanjega ministra dr. Dimitrija Rupla, predsednika družbenopolitičnega zbora skupščine republike Slovenije dr. Ludvika Toplaka in obrambnega ministra Janeza Janše.

Že pred plebiscitom so voditelji Slovencev iz Clevelanda in ostalih ameriških mest sodelovali v zaslišanjih (hearings) ameriškega Kongresa o Jugoslaviji. Tako je na zaslišanju v zunanjepolitičnem odboru ameriškega Kongresa, ki je potekalo 14. februarja leta 1990, urednik Ameriške domovine, dr. Rudolph M.

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² Matjaž Klemenčič: Reactions of Slovene and Croatian Immigrants - The American Press and Scientists about the Events in Slovenia and Croatia Prior to their Recognition. *Kleine Nationen und Ethnische Minderheiten im Umbruch Europas / Small Nations and Ethnic Minorities in an Emerging Europa* (ured. Silvo Deverak, Sergej Flere, Gerhard Seewann). München: Slavica, 1993, str. 333-344.

³ Prav tam, 335.

Susel izrazil upanje slovenskega naroda po samostojni slovenski državi, kakor tudi željo, da bo Slovenija postala država s svobodnim podjetniškim in večstrankarskim političnim sistemom.

Slovenski izseljenci so prizadevanja za neodvisnost Slovenije neomajno podpirali, kar kaže tudi več kot 6.000 pisnih izjav, ki so prispele na naslov slovenskega parlamenta. Kmalu po slovenskem plebiscitu, na katerem se je več kot 90 % volivcev opredelilo za Slovenijo kot svobodno in neodvisno državo, je takratni član slovenske vlade in minister brez listnice zadolžen za slovenske izseljence in narodne manjšine, dr. Janez Dular podal izjavo, v kateri je zaprosil slovenske izseljenske skupnosti po vsem svetu ter slovensko manjšinsko prebivalstvo v Avstriji, Italiji ter na Madžarskem za moralno podporo gibanju za slovensko neodvisnost.⁴

Na to izjavo so se že januarja 1991 odzvali Slovenci iz največje slovenske naselbine izven Slovenije, Clevelanda, in takratnemu predsedniku slovenske vlade, Lojzetu Peterletu poslali pismo s podporo slovenski neodvisnosti.⁵ Gibanje za neodvisnost so podpirali tudi s pričevanjem pred podkomitejem za evropske zadeve Odbora za zunanjo politiko Senata Združenih držav o državljanski vojni v Jugoslaviji. Tako je pred omenjenim komitejem nastopil tudi dr. Karl Bonutti, ki je zahteval vso podporo Združenih držav v prizadevanjih Slovenije za neodvisnost.⁶

Za hitrejšo reševanje slovenskega in v zvezi s tem tudi celotnega jugoslovenskega vprašanja sta se zavzemala tudi člana ameriškega Kongresa slovenskega porekla (Dennis Eckart iz Clevelanda in James Oberstar s severa Minnesote), ki sta organizirala skupno resolucijo ameriškega Kongresa o položaju v Jugoslaviji. V tej resoluciji, ki jo je 20. maja 1991 podpisalo 12 članov ameriškega Kongresa in je bila v obliki pisma posredovana ameriškemu državnemu sekretarju Jamesu Bakerju, so kongresniki izrazili svojo zaskrbljenost zaradi položaja v Jugoslaviji in poudarili svojo podporo mirnim demokratičnim reformam in razvoju tržne ekonomije. V njej so med drugim zapisali:

“... 15. maja naj bi prišlo do letnega prenosa oblasti predsednika predsedstva, pri čemer naj bi prišlo do prenosa oblasti od Srbov na Hrvate, vendar pa se

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⁴ Ameriški Slovenci moralno podprli Slovenijo ob plebiscitu. Ameriška domovina, leto 93, št. 4. Cleveland, 24. januarja 1991, str. 9-10. ; Janez Dular: Zahvala za sodelovanje pri podpisni akciji ob slovenskem plebiscitu. Svobodna Slovenija, leto 44, št. 2. Buenos Aires, 10. januarja 1991, str. 1.

⁵ Dular, Zahvala za sodelovanje ..., 1.

⁶ Prof. Bonutti before Senate Committee. Ameriška domovina, leto 93, št. 8. Cleveland, 21. februarja 1991, str. 1.

to ni zgodilo. Ko je prišlo do podobnih poskusov zaustavitve demokratizacije v Latviji in baltičskih državah, se je svet dvignil, da bi protestiral zoper te poskuse. Nasprotja v Jugoslaviji so naraščala iz meseca v mesec. Zahteve po mirnem in demokratičnem prenosu oblasti so povzročile le nadaljnje napetosti in izbruh nasilja. Sedaj, ko ponovno gledamo sile demokracije, kako poskušajo preživeti, je naše upanje, da bodo ZDA storile vse, da bi pospešile mirno tranzicijo v Jugoslaviji in njeno preoblikovanje v bolj demokratično družbo ...”⁷

Ameriški državni sekretar ob tem pisinu ni storil ničesar in ob obisku Beograda junija 1991 celo zahteval ohranitev Jugoslavije, vendar kot demokratične države.⁸ Priseljensko časopisje v Združenih državah, še zlasti Ameriška domovina, je ostro reagiralo na Bakerjev obisk v Beogradu tik pred razglasitvijo slovenske neodvisnosti. S tem, ko je podprl “združeno in demokratično Jugoslavijo”, je Baker dal proste roke takratni Jugoslovanski ljudski armadi za napad na Slovenijo, ki mu je sledila nekajdnevna vojna. Bakerjev obisk v Jugoslaviji je ob Ameriški domovini obsodila tudi Prosveta, glasilo Slovenske narodne podporne jednote.⁹

Ob razglasitvi slovenske neodvisnosti 25. junija 1991 in napadu takratne Jugoslovanske ljudske armade na Slovenijo je Slovence v izseljeništvu in zamejstvu pozvalo na pomoč več slovenskih politikov. Tako je dr. Janez Dular v enem svojih pisem, potem ko se je zahvalil za številne brzojavke z vzpodbudami, zapisal:

“... Od Slovencev po svetu pa si ta trenutek želimo predvsem to, da bi se še bolj množično, dejavno in organizirano obračali na tamkajšnjo javnost, zlasti pa vplivali na tuje vlade in mednarodne organizacije, naj pomagajo Republiki Sloveniji in sicer tako:

a) da zahtevajo ustavitev napadov jugoslovanske armade na Slovenijo in vrnitev (kontrolirano) njenih enot v vojašnice (v ta namen je bila predvčerajšnjim dogovorjena ustanovitev mešane komisije, vendar Marković še zdaj ni imen-

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⁷ Letter of Dennis Eckart et. al. to James Baker III, May 20, 1990. Ameriška domovina, leto 93, št. 27. Cleveland, 1. julija 1991, str. 2.

⁸ Warren Zimmermann, The last Ambassador. A Memoir of the Collapse of Yugoslavia, Foreign Affairs, leto 74, št. 2, marec-april 1995, str. 2-20. - O stališču Združenih držav ob razpadu Jugoslavije je bilo napisanih že precej spominov. Med njimi velja omeniti zanimivo stališče poveljnika združenih štabov vsch rodov ameriške vojske, Collina Powella, ki je na 558 strani svoje knjige My American Journey (New York, 1995 - skupaj z: Joseph E. Persico) obsodil prezgodnje priznanje Slovenije, Hrvaške ter Bosne in Hercegovine. Prim. tudi Warren Zimmermann: The Origins of the Catastrophe. Yugoslavia and its Destroyers. America's Last Ambassador Talks What Happened and Why. New York (Random House) 1996.

⁹ Ob Bakerjevem obisku Jugoslavije. Ameriška domovina, leto 93, št. 25. Cleveland, 20. junija 1991, str. 1.

oval oziroma potrdil od jugoslovanske vlade pooblaščenih članov komisije);

- b) da takoj pošljejo svoje opazovalce (tudi vojaške) v Slovenije;
- c) da sprožijo ustrezne varovalne mehanizme KEVS, EGS;
- d) da priznajo Republiko Slovenijo kot neodvisno državo.

Pišite državnim, vladnim in strankarskim predsednikom in drugim funkcionarjem ter medijem, naj ne čakajo, kakor so (predolgo) čakali pri Kurdi!

Organizirajte odbore, zbirajte podpise, nastopajte v javnosti, zbirajte denarne prispevke! Posredujte to sporočilo drugim!

Za našo skupno domovino! ..."¹⁰

Takratni slovenski minister za informiranje Jelko Kacin je pozval urednike glasil v Sloveniji in vse Slovence v domovini, ki imajo stike s prijatelji in znanci v tujini, naj jih informirajo o dogajanjih v Sloveniji.¹¹ Temu pozivu sta se odzvala tudi Slovenska izseljenska matica in Svetovni slovenski kongres.

Pozive Slovencev po svetu za podporo prizadevanjem za ohranitev samostojne in neodvisne Republike Slovenije ter za njeno mednarodno priznanje so Sloencem po svetu pošiljali tudi predsednik Slovenske izseljenske matice, dr. Mirko Jurak,¹² predsednica Konference za Slovenijo Svetovnega slovenskega kongresa Spomenka Hribar ter predsednik Svetovnega slovenskega kongresa, Bojan Brezigar.

Ob razglasitvi neodvisnosti Republike Slovenije in kasnejšem napadu jugoslovanske armade na Slovenijo je v Ljubljani zasedal Svetovni slovenski kongres, katerega so se med drugimi udeležili tudi nekateri voditelji povojne politične emigracije, ki so po vrnitvi v svoje nove domovine aktivirali tamkajšnje slovenske skupnosti v boju za priznanje neodvisnosti Slovenije.

Slovinci po vsem svetu so na agresijo jugoslovanske armade reagirali s protesti vladam svojih držav in jih pozivali k obsodbi agresije na Slovenijo in priznanju slovenske neodvisnosti. Značilne so reakcije tako posameznih Slovencev kakor tudi reakcije organiziranih protestov ob manifestacijah v

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¹⁰ Stanka Gregorič (ured.): Naša bitka za Slovenijo - Avstralija, Melbourne, 1995, str. 34.

¹¹ Jelko Kacin glavnemu uredniku, fax, poslan 7. julija 1991. Arhiv Slovenske izseljenske matice - fascikel: Borba za priznanje neodvisnosti Slovenije (v nadaljevanju: Arhiv SIM).

¹² Mirko Jurak: Vsem Sloencem po svetu. Ljubljana, 30. junija 1991 in 3. julija 1991. Arhiv SIM.; Mirko Jurak: To all Slovenes. Ljubljana, 30. junija 1991. Arhiv SIM.

slovenskih naselbinah ter protesti slovenskih kulturnih, političnih ter bratskih podpornih organizacij.

Manifestacija solidarnosti med ameriškimi Slovenci v času agresije jugoslovanske armade na Slovenijo je bila popolna. Prizadetost in osebna nestrpnost do dogajanj v Sloveniji s strani ameriških Slovencev se je pokazala tudi v njihovih številnih telefonskih klicih prijateljem v Sloveniji. Nekatera ameriška mesta in njihovi mestni sveti so priznali neodvisnost Slovenije že v drugi polovici leta 1991.¹³ Tako je clevelandski župan, Michael E. White že 26. junija 1991 izdal naslednjo izjavo:

“Ljudem v Sloveniji je bilo omogočeno, da so imeli prve svobodne volitve aprila 1990, prvič po 45-ih letih. Slovenci so izvolili tedaj prvo nekomunistično vlado po 45-ih letih v maju 1990. Na teh volitvah je bil Lojze Peterle prvi izvoljeni ministrski predsednik Republike Slovenije. Bili smo zelo zadovoljni, ko nas je Lojze Peterle obiskal v Clevelandu pred letom dni.

26. junija 1991 bo slovenski parlament formalno razglasil neodvisnost od Jugoslavije v njihovem glavnem mestu, Ljubljani. Ta dogodek bo povzročil veselje ne le v Sloveniji, ampak tudi s strani Clevelandčanov slovenskega porekla, ki želijo svojim bratom in sestram v njihovi domovini vse najboljše, zlasti sedaj, ko so se uresničile njihove volitve. Kot mesto, ki je pobrateno z Ljubljano, Clevelandčani delimo veselje tega čudovitega dne.

Ponosni smo na slovensko skupnost, ki predstavlja eno glavnih etničnih skupnosti v Clevelandu, ki je največja koncentracija Slovencev zunaj države njihovega porekla ...”¹⁴

Že 27. junija 1991 je kongresnik slovenskega porekla Dennis Eckart opozoril Kongres Združenih držav na problem napada jugoslovanske armade na Slovenijo in od State Departmenta ter predsednika Združenih držav zahteval, naj podpreta demokracijo in gospodarske reforma v Sloveniji ter ukrepata zoper nasilje v tej republiki, ki “... je domovina njegovih staršev in dedov ...”¹⁵

Ameriški Slovenci so tudi tokrat reagirali podobno kot med prvo oziroma med drugo svetovno vojno in pričeli z akcijami, s pomočjo katerih so zbrali

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¹³ Cleveland Council backs Slovenia. Ameriška domovina, leto 93, št. 32. Cleveland, 8. avgusta 1991, str. 3.; Indianapolis supports Slovenian and Croatian Independence. Ameriška domovina, leto 93, št. 41. Cleveland, 10. oktobra 1991, str. 6.

¹⁴ Proclamation: Slovenian Independence Day. Ameriška domovina, leto 93, št. 26. Cleveland, 27. junija 1991, str. 6.

¹⁵ Dennis Eckart, Support democracy and market reform for all peoples. Congressional Record, leto 137, št. 101. Washington, 27. junija 1991.

finančna sredstva. Potekale so preko slovenskih bratskih podpornih organizacij, kakršni sta na primer Slovenska narodna podporna jednota¹⁶ ter Ameriška slovenska katoliška jednota. Finančna sredstva, ki so jih zbirali s prodajo slovenskih zastav, so namenili izdatkom za politične aktivnosti ter povračilu vojne škode, ki je nastala ob akcijah jugoslovanske armade v Sloveniji. Na ta način so v letih 1991 in 1992 zbrali preko 2 milijona ameriških dolarjev pomoči. Slovenko-ameriški časopisi so dogodkom v Sloveniji v času od 25. junija 1991 (od začetka desetdnevne vojne za Slovenijo) pa do tako imenovanega "Brionskega sporazuma", ki je bil podpisan 8. julija 1991, posvetili veliko pozornost.¹⁷ Po podpisu "Brionskega sporazuma" je bila vojaška akcija proti Sloveniji ustavljena, Slovenija pa je vsaj na zunaj za tri mesece zaustavila nadaljnje uresničevanje svoje neodvisnosti.¹⁸

Ker vsi omenjeni dogodki še vedno pripadajo najnovejši zgodovini, predstavlja celotna zgodovinska evaluacija dogajanja v zvezi z dogodki med ameriški Slovenci težavno nalogo. V celoti bo možna šele, ko bo zbrano vse gradivo; od tistega, ki se nanaša na Slovence v Clevelandu, do tistega, ki se nanaša na Slovence v New Yorku, Chicagu, San Franciscu in drugih naseljih Združenih držav. Podobno velja tudi za zgodovinsko evaluacijo dogajanj med slovensko izseljensko skupnostjo v ostalih delih sveta.

Nekatera dejstva pa so znana že danes. Še zlasti pomembno je, da tokrat v slovenski narodnostni skupnosti v ZDA pa tudi drugod po svetu ni prišlo do razkola, kot se je to zgodilo med prvo oziroma drugo svetovno vojno,¹⁹ ampak je akcija tokrat potekala enotno, vse dokler cilj, to je priznanje slovenske neodvisnosti, ni bil dosežen. Ameriški Slovenci so v tem primeru res hitro reagirali in od svojih državnih voditeljev ter voditeljev ostalega sveta v en glas zahtevali priznanje Slovenije kot suverene in demokratične države.

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¹⁶ Podporni sklad SNP v pomoč Sloveniji. Prosveta, leto 83, št. 44. Chicago, 30. oktobra 1991, str. 4.; Podpiramo neodvisnost naše Slovenije. Prosveta, leto 83, št. 40. Chicago, 2. oktobra 1991, str. 4.; Thousands petition Bush. Prosveta, leto 83, št. 40. Chicago, 2. oktobra 1991, str. 1.; Slovenia Relief Found grows to \$ 27,941. Prosveta, leto 83, št. 41. Chicago, 9. oktobra 1991, str. 1.; SNP's Slovenia Relief Found. Prosveta, leto 83, št. 36. Chicago, 4. septembra 1991, str. 4.; Support to Slovenia continues. Prosveta, leto 83, št. 37. Chicago, 11. septembra 1991, str. 3.
¹⁷ United American for Slovenia make a difference. Ameriška domovina, leto 94, posebna izdaja. Cleveland, jesen 1992, str. 2

¹⁸ Matjaž Klemenčič: Slovenia at the crossroad of the nineties - From the first multiparty elections and the declaration of Independence to membership in the Council of Europe. Slovene Studies, leto 14, št. 1. Edmonton, 1992, str. 9-25.; Jože Pirjevec: Jugoslavija 1918-1992. Koper, 1995.

¹⁹ Matjaž Klemenčič: Ameriški Slovenci in NOB v Jugoslaviji. Naseljevanje, zemljepisna razprostranjenost in odnos ameriških Slovencev do stare domovine od sredine 19. stoletja do konca druge svetovne vojne. Maribor. Založba Obzorja, 1987, str. 85-285.

V ponedeljek 1. julija 1991, ko je bila agresija jugoslovanske armade proti Sloveniji na vrhuncu, so se predstavniki voditeljev slovenskih bratskih podpornih organizacij, slovenskih župnij in slovenskih kulturnih organizacij na pobudo Charlesa Ipavca, predsednika Federacije Slovenskih narodnih domov in Matjaža Jančarja (le-ta je bil do začetka desetdnevne vojne za Slovenijo jugoslovanski generalni konzul v Clevelandu, nato pa odstopil s tega položaja in že čez nekaj dni postal slovenski predstavnik v Clevelandu in med drugim poslal vsem organizacijam poziv ameriških Slovencev, naj podpro Slovenijo v njenem boju za neodvisnost in mednarodno priznanje²⁰) srečali v Slovenskem narodnem domu v Clevelandu, podobno kot so se srečali predstavniki istih organizacij na Slovensko-ameriškem narodnem kongresu 5. in 6. decembra leta 1942. Tako, kot so med prvo in drugo svetovno vojno ustanovili Slovensko-Ameriški narodni svet, so predstavniki vseh omenjenih organizacij tokrat ustanovili organizacijo United Americans for Slovenia (Združeni Američani za Slovenijo). Organizacija je intenzivno delovala devet mesecev, njen odbor pa se je sestajal skorajda vsak teden. Edini namen te organizacije je bil izvajanje pritiskov na vlado Združenih držav, da bi le-ta vendarle priznala slovensko neodvisnost. Kakršnakoli "politika" ali tradicionalni spori med levico in desnico med ameriški Slovenci so bili v tem obdobju nezaželeni.

Za predsednika Združenih Američanov za Slovenijo je bil izbran nekdanji predsednik clevelandskega mestnega sveta in nekdanji okrajni sodnik, odvetnik s sedežem v Slovenskem narodnem domu na St. Clair Avenue, Edmund J. Turk. Do konca leta 1991 se je v omenjeno organizacijo vključilo že 659 najrazličnejših društev ter organizacij ameriških Slovencev. Pomembno je, da so njihovi predstavniki uspeli vzbuditi zanimanje za Slovenijo tudi pri neslovenskih organizacijah, kot na primer pri zastopnikih sredstev javnega obveščanja ter ameriškem Rdečem križu. Organizacije, kot so Slovenska narodna podporna jednota, Ameriška slovenska katoliška jednota, Ameriška dobrodelna zveza, Progresivne slovenske žene Amerike in Slovenska ženska zveza so podprle dejavnost Združenih Američanov za Slovenijo z objavljanjem številnih zapisov o njihovi aktivnosti v svojih glasilih; v Prosveti (glasilu Slovenske narodne podporne jednote), Glasu (glasilu Slovenske dobrodelne zveze), Amerikanskem Slovencu (glasilu Kranjsko-slovenske katoliške jednote) in Zarji (glasilu Slovenske ženske zveze).

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²⁰ Poziv Matjaža Jančarja vsem Slovenskim ameriškim organizacijam in vsem Američanom slovenskega porekla. Fax, poslan dne 5. julija 1991. Arhiv SIM. ; Tažo Jančar: dediščina iz stare domovine (v treh nadaljevanjih). Delo, leto 53, št. 193-195. Ljubljana, 19.-21. avgusta 1991, str. 5, 9, 11.

Iz vseh slovenskih naselbin širom Združenih držav pa tudi od mnogih posameznikov iz vseh ameriških zveznih držav, od Maine na skrajnem vzhodu do Havajskega otočja na zahodu, so Američani slovenskega porekla ter številni njihovi neslovenski prijatelji vzpodbujeni od akcij Združenih Američanov za Slovenijo, pošiljali na tisoče peticij in zahtev po priznanju slovenske neodvisnosti. Uporabili so tudi posebno telefonsko zvezo, preko katere so zlasti 8. oktobra 1991 zasuli Belo hišo s tisoči klicev, tako da so imeli tam tega dne na programu poleg mnenj Američanov o zaslišanju tedanjega kandidata za Vrhovno sodišče ZDA, Clarenca Thomasa, samo še zahtevo po priznanju neodvisnosti Slovenije.²¹

Že 4. julija 1991 so se v prostorih Ameriške dobrodelne zveze zbrali mnogi prostovoljci, ki so organizirano napisali na stotine pisem ameriškim zveznim senatorjem, članom ameriškega Kongresa in predsedniku Združenih držav. Seveda je bila v vsebino vseh pisem vključena zahteva po neodvisnosti in priznanju Republike Slovenije.²² Temu je sledilo prepričevanje visokih uradnikov ameriškega Kongresa in ameriške administracije, v svojih zahtevah pa so slovenski Američani izkoristili tudi zveze tedanjih članov ameriškega Kongresa slovenskega porekla, Dennisa Eckarta iz Clevelanda in Jamesa Oberstarja iz severne Minnesote. Tako sta senator John H. Glenn iz Ohia in kongresnik Dennis Eckart iz Clevelanda poslala skupno resolucijo z zahtevo po priznanju Slovenije tudi predsedniku Georgu Bushu. John H. Glenn je ob tej priložnosti izdajatelju in založniku časopisa Ameriška domovina, Jimu Debevcu izjavil, da je globoko razočaran nad dejstvom, da ZDA nadaljujejo z zavajajočo politiko nepriznavanja Slovenije kot samostojne države. Tudi guverner zvezne države Ohio, George Voinovich je v svojem pismu že 28. junija 1991 zaprosil predsednika Georga Busha za posredovanje v zvezi z dejavnostjo jugoslovanske armade v Sloveniji, v pismu z dne 3. julija pa ga je opozoril, da je leta 1988 ob predsedniški kampanji govoril o problemu zatiranih narodov na primeru Litavcev in da se ljudje sprašujejo, zakaj ni njegova reakcija v jugoslovanskem primeru podobna, kot je bila reakcija proti Iraku.²³ Predstavniki bratskih podpornih organizacij so

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²¹ 'Call President' Is Big Success. Ameriška domovina, leto 93, št. 44. Cleveland, 31. oktobra 1991, str. 1.

²² Drago Ocvirk: Mobilizacija ameriških Slovencev. Slovenec, leto 75, št. 24. Ljubljana, 24. julija 1991, str. 4.; Joseph C. Evanish: Ways to support Slovenia. Prosveta, leto 83, št. 30. Chicago, 24. julija 1991, str. 1.; Do osamosvojitve moramo delati usklajeno, samo skupno jo lahko dosežemo. Ameriška domovina, leto 93, št. 32. Cleveland, 8. avgusta 1991, str. 2.; Joseph C. Evanish: Podprimo neodvisnost naše Slovenije. Prosveta, leto 83, št. 40. Chicago, 2. oktobra 1991, str. 4.; United Americans for Slovenia. Prosveta, leto 83, št. 30. Chicago, 24. julija 1991, str. 14.;

²³ Pismo Georga V. Voinovicha predsedniku Združenih držav Georgu Bushu z dne 28. junija 1991. Arhiv SIM; Pismo Georga V. Voinovicha predsedniku Združenih držav z dne 3. julija 1991. Arhiv SIM.

predsedniku Bushu in senatorjem zveznih držav, v katerih so te organizacije imele svoje sedeže, poslali številna protestna pisma z zahtevami po priznanju slovenske neodvisnosti.²⁴

Med junijsko vojno v Sloveniji, posebej pa še, ko je divjala vojna na Hrvaškem, so ameriški Slovenci in ameriški Hrvati ter njihove organizacije priredile številne demonstracije v podporo slovenski ter hrvaški neodvisnosti. Demonstracije so potekale v mnogih mestih od atlantske do tihomske obale ter pred zgradbama ameriškega Kongresa in Združenih narodov. Skupne slovensko-hrvaške demonstracije so se odvijale tudi v Clevelandu.²⁵ Zanimivo je, da so Slovenci organizirali tudi poseben odbor za priznanje Slovenije kot samostojne države tudi na tihomorski obali. Vodila sta ga Mark Ryavec in Frank Vidergar (takratni podpredsednik Slovenske narodne podporne jednote). Med drugim so meseca julija 1991 skupaj s Hrvati pripravili uspele demonstracije pred mestno hišo v Los Angelesu.²⁶ Mestni sveti tistih ameriških mest, v katerih so slovenski ter hrvaški priseljenci in njihovi potomci imeli oziroma še imajo določen vpliv, so neodvisnost Slovenije in Hrvaške priznali z resolucijami.²⁷

Zapisniki, ki jih objavljamo v nadaljevanju v angleškem izvorniku in s komentarji v slovenskem jeziku obsegajo obdobje od 1. julija 1991 do priznanja Slovenije kot samostojne in neodvisne države s strani ZDA v aprilu 1992. Dodani so tudi zapisniki v zvezi s praznovanji obletnic priznanja Slovenije s strani ZDA.

dr. Matjaž Klemenčič

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²⁴ Pismo American Mutual Life Association senatorju Johnu H. Glennu z dne 28. junija 1991. Arhiv SIM.

²⁵ Thousands to call White House for U.S. recognition of Slovenia, Monday, October 7, 1991. Ameriška domovina, leto 93, št. 41. Cleveland, 10. oktobra 1991, str. 1.

²⁶ Klemenčič, Reactions of Slovene and Croatian Immigrants ..., 335. O tem so mi pripovedovali tudi slovenski izseljenci, ko sem novembra 1991 predaval o spremembah v Sloveniji 200 poslušalcem slovenskega porekla v Slovenskem narodnem domu v Fontani, Kalifornija, ki predstavlja naselbinsko jedro Slovencev na področju velikega Los Angelesa.

²⁷ Klemenčič, Reactions of Slovene and Croatian Immigrants ..., 224-335.

THE ACTIVITY OF SLOVENE IMMIGRANTS TO THE USA FOR INDEPENDENT SLOVENIA

With the exception of some Slovene political émigrés groups no one in Slovenia or abroad thought about the possibilities of Slovene independence until the mid-1980s. After Tito's death in 1980, the relationship between immigrants from Yugoslavia and the old homeland changed. Before that time, Slovene Americans and the other Yugoslavs in America were divided according to their political orientations into "progressive" (political left) ¹ and "conservative" circles (political right). Slovene - American progressives cooperated with Serbian and Croatian progressive Americans and were sometimes even stronger supporters of Yugoslav internal and external policies than the citizens of that country. The circles from each émigré community criticized Yugoslav politics as well as the policy of its "own" republic.

The situation shifted at the end of the 1980s with the changes in the Yugoslav political scene. The homogenization among immigrants went so far that progressive Slovene organizations began to cooperate with conservative political émigrés of the Slovene communities in order to support the democratization process in Slovenia.²

At the beginning of 1990, before there were no serious attempts made to achieve independence for Slovenia, most of the Slovene Americans still agreed with the idea of Slovenia within Yugoslavia and supported the democratic elections and the process of democratization in Slovenia.³ They formed the Alliance of Slovene Americans to inform their countrymen of how they could influence American policy on Yugoslavia so that it would be in accordance with the interests of the Slovene nation. At the end of March, 1990, the Alliance established its headquarters in Euclid, Ohio⁴, and supported the democratization of

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¹ Successors of the traditions of the "political left" among Slovene Americans. Only small part of them were members of the Socialist Party. I described the political left among Slovene Americans in "American Slovenes and the Leftist Movements in the United States in the First Half of the Twentieth Century." *Journal of American Ethnic History* 15 (3) Spring 1996, pp.22 - 43.

² Klemenčič Matjaž, "Izseljenci iz vrst jugoslovanskih narodov v ZDA in njihove reakcije na človekove pravice in narodnostna vprašanja v Jugoslaviji v osemdesetih letih." *Pravo, Teorija, Praksa*. Silvo Devetak, Ed. (Novi Sad: Društvo pravnika Vojvodine, 1991), pp. 205-209.

³ Klemenčič, "Reactions of Slovene and Croatian immigrants", 337; Klemenčič, "Izseljenci iz vrst jugoslovanskih narodov v ZDA", 205-209.

⁴ Klemenčič, "Reactions of Slovene and Croatian immigrants", 333.

Slovenia irrespective of political parties that appeared at that time.

At the same time, some right-wing Slovene - Americans organized the American-Slovene Council, which was led by Dr. Mate Roesemann. Its aim was to support (especially financially) two out of five political parties composing DEMOS (Democratic Opposition of Slovenia), namely the Slovene Peasants' Party and the Slovene Christian Democratic Party. The members of the Council raised about \$ 100,000 USD for this purpose. On the initiative of dr. Jože Bernik, a lawyer from Chicago and later president of the Slovene World Congress, and James Debevec, publisher and owner of *Ameriška domovina* (American Home) in Cleveland, the American-Slovene Council gave financial support to the Slovene Democratic Association, which represented a liberal part of DEMOS.⁵ The Union of the Slovene Americans did not oppose the activities of the American-Slovene Council, as it did not consider it important which of the Slovene democratic parties would get the majority of votes in the first democratic multiparty elections in Slovenia in April 1990. When Slovene politicians in 1990 and 1991 attempted to achieve independence through a plebiscite, the majority of leading members of the Slovene government visited almost all important centers of the Slovene immigrant community. Their aim was to prepare the immigrants for political actions which would follow the Slovene Declaration of Independence. All leading politicians took part in these activities, from Milan Kučan, the president of the Republic of Slovenia, to Lojze Peterle, the Prime Minister, Dr. France Bučar, the President of the Slovene Parliament, Dr. Dimitrij Rupel, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Ludvik Toplak, the President of the Socio-Political Chamber of the Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia and Janez Janša, the Defense Minister. Prior to the plebiscite, the leaders of Slovenes from Cleveland and from other American towns took part in Congressional hearings concerning Yugoslavia. At a hearing on February 14, 1990, the editor of *Ameriška domovina*, Dr. Rudolph M. Susel, emphasized the wish of the Slovene people for a separate State as well as their desire to live in a free enterprise and multiparty system. The Slovene emigrants strongly supported the independence efforts of Slovenia, which is also evident from more than 6,000 written statements of support sent to the Slovene Parliament. Soon after the Slovene plebiscite, on December 23, 1990, when more than 90% of the voters voted for a free and independent State, the then member of the Slovene Government and Minister responsible for Slovene Emigrants and

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⁵ Dimitrij Rupel, *Skrivnosti države - spomini na domače in zunanje zadeve 1989 - 1992*. (Ljubljana: Založba Delo-Novice, 1992), p.43.

national minorities, Janez Dular, asked the Slovene immigrant communities throughout the world and the Slovene minorities in Austria, Italy and Hungary to morally support the movement for Slovene independence.⁶

As early as January, 1991 Slovenes from Cleveland, reacted to this statement. In a letter they expressed their support for Slovene independence to the then president of the Slovene Government, Lojze Peterle.⁷ The movement for independence was also supported by statements before the European subcommittee of the Committee for foreign affairs of the US Senate concerning the civil war in Yugoslavia. Dr. Karl Bonutti, a Professor at Cleveland State University also appeared before the Committee, demanding complete support of the USA for the efforts of Slovenia to gain independence.⁸

Two Congressmen of Slovene descent (Dennis Eckart from Cleveland and James Oberstar from Minnesota) did their best in the interest of Slovenes and their "old country". Congressmen of Slovene descent organized a joint resolution in the U.S. Congress on the situation in Yugoslavia that twelve of them signed on May 20, 1991. The resolution, in the form of a letter, was sent to James Baker, the Secretary of State. The Congressmen expressed their concern about the situation in Yugoslavia and emphasized their support for peaceful democratic reforms and a market economy in Yugoslavia. On May 15, 1991, the annual transfer of the presidency in Yugoslavia was expected to occur, rotating from the Serbs to the Croats. However, this transfer was prevented by the Serbs. Tensions had been building in Yugoslavia for months. As one American Slovene said, "The impediment to a peaceful and democratic government transition caused further anxiety and several outbreaks of violence. As we again witness the forces of democracy struggling to survive, it is our hope that the United States will do everything possible to encourage a peaceful transition in Yugoslavia in its transformation to a more democratic society."⁹

The United States Secretary of State did not agree. When he visited Yugoslavia in June 1991, he pleaded for a united and democratic Yugoslavia. Immigrant newspapers (specially *Ameriška domovina*) reacted sharply to Baker's visit to Belgrade just prior to Slovenia's declaration of independence. By

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⁶ "Ameriški Slovenci moralno podprli Slovenijo ob plebiscitu," *Ameriška domovina*, 93 (4), (January 24, 1991), pp. 9-10; Janez Dular, "Zahvala za sodelovanje pri podpisni akciji ob slovenskem plebiscitu," *Svobodna Slovenija*, 44 (2), (Buenos Aires, January 10, 1991), p. 1.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁸ "Prof. Bonutti before Senate committee," *Ameriška domovina*, 93 (8), (February 21, 1991), p.1.

⁹ Letter of Dennis Eckart et al. to James Baker III, May 20, 1991, *Ameriška domovina*, 93 (27), (July 1, 1991), p. 2.

supporting a united and democratic Yugoslavia, Baker offered a free hand to the Serb - dominated Yugoslav People's Army to attack Slovenia. Baker's visit was condemned in *Ameriška domovina* and in *Prosveta*, the organ of the largest Slovene fraternal organization in the United States, the Slovene National Benefit Society.¹⁰

When Slovene independence was declared on June 25, 1991 and when the Yugoslav People's Army attacked Slovenia, several Slovene politicians asked Slovenes living abroad for help. In one of his letters, Dr. Janez Dular expressed gratitude for numerous cablegrams of support and wrote:

"At this moment we would primarily like that the Slovenes living throughout the world would turn to the public in huge numbers, actively and in an organized way. They should particularly influence foreign governments and international organizations so that they would help Slovenia in the following ways:

They should demand the cessation of the attacks of the Yugoslav army on Slovenia and the return (a controlled one) of their units to the barracks (for this purpose we agreed the day before yesterday to establish a mixed Committee but Yugoslav prime minister Ante Markovič has not yet named or confirmed the members authorized by the Yugoslav government)

They should immediately send their monitors (military as well) to Slovenia

They should activate suitable protective mechanisms of the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Economic Community

They should recognize the Republic of Slovenia as an independent State.

Write to the presidents, prime ministers and party leaders as well as other officials and media not to wait as they waited (for too long) in the case of the Kurds.

Organize committees, collect signatures, appear in public, raise financial contributions.

Mediate this message to others.

For our common homeland! ¹¹

The Slovene Minister of Information Jelko Kacin called upon the editors of the newspapers in Slovenia and all the Slovenes in the homeland who had con-

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¹⁰ "Ob Bakerjevem obisku Jugoslavije," *Ameriška domovina*, 93 (25), (June 20, 1991), p. 1.

¹¹ Stanka Gregorič (Ed.): *Naša bitka za Slovenijo - Avstralija*. (Melbourne: Avstralska konferenca Svetovnega slovenskega kongresa, 1995), p. 34.

tacts with friends and acquaintances abroad to inform them about the events in Slovenia.¹² Slovenska izseljenska matica (The Slovene Emigrant Society) and Svetovni slovenski kongres (The Slovene World Congress) reacted to this plea.

Dr. Mirko Jurak,¹³ president of the Slovene Emigrant Society, Spomenka Hribar, the president of the Conference for Slovenia of the Slovene World Congress, and Bojan Brezigar, the president of the Slovene World Congress, also called upon Slovenes throughout the world to support the efforts for preserving the independent Republic of Slovenia and to gain its international recognition.

After the independence of the Republic of Slovenia was declared and, when the Yugoslav army attacked Slovenia, the Slovene World Congress held its meeting in Ljubljana. It was attended by, among others, some leaders of the post-war political emigration who on their return to their new homelands activated the Slovene communities in the struggle for the recognition of the independence of Slovenia.

Slovenes throughout the world reacted to the aggression of the Yugoslav army by means of protests addressed to the governments of their states. The manifestation of the solidarity among the American Slovenes during the aggression of the Yugoslav army against Slovenia was complete. The dismay and personal impatience towards the events in Slovenia on the part of the American Slovenes was also shown in their numerous phone calls to their friends in Slovenia.

Some American cities and their councils recognized the independence of Slovenia as early as June 1991. Cleveland's mayor, Michael E. White, issued the following proclamation on June 26, 1991, designating Slovene Independence Day:

"The people of Slovenia were able to go to the ballot box in a free election in April, 1990, for the first time in 45 years. Slovenes were able to participate in democratic elections and the first non-Communist government in 45 years was formed in May, 1990. At that election, Professor Lojze Peterle was elected Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia. We were delighted to have the new Prime Minister visit Cleveland in July of last year.

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¹² Jelko Kacin glavnemu uredniku. Fax which was sent July 7, 1991. Archive of Slovenska izseljenska matica - file: Borba za priznanje neodvisnosti Slovenije - (from now on Arhiv SIM).

¹³ Letter from Mirko Jurak "Vsem Slovencem po svetu", June 30, 1991 and July 10, 1991; Mirko Jurak, "To all Slovenes", June 30, 1991. Arhiv SIM.

On June 20, 1991, the Slovene parliament will declare the formal independence from Yugoslavia in its capital city of Ljubljana, Republic of Slovenia. The historic event will be a cause for great rejoicing not only in Slovenia, but by Clevelanders of Slovene heritage, who wish their brothers and sisters in their homeland have at long last had their prayers answered. As a Sister City of Ljubljana, the people of Cleveland share in the joy of this magnificent day.

We are proud of the Slovene community, which is one of the major ethnic communities of Cleveland, representing the largest concentration of Slovenes outside of their country of origin.¹⁴

As early as June 27, 1991, Denis Eckart, Congressman of Slovene descent, drew the attention of the US Congress to the problem of the attack of the Yugoslav army on Slovenia. He demanded the support of the State Department, and the US President to support democracy and economic reforms in Slovenia. He also called for action to prevent violence in this republic which is "the homeland of his parents and grandfathers".¹⁵

American Slovenes reacted as during the two World Wars and undertook to raise funds. Their activities were carried out by Slovene fraternal benefit organizations, such as the Slovene National Benefit Society¹⁶ and the Grand American Slovenian Catholic Union. Money raised by selling Slovene flags was intended to cover the costs of political activities and to repay the damage caused by the actions of the Yugoslav army in Slovenia. In this way more than \$ 2,000,000 was raised in 1991 and 1992. The Slovene-American newspapers paid a great deal of attention to the events in Slovenia in the period between June 25, 1991 (the beginning of the ten-day war for Slovenia) and the so-called "Brioni Agreement", which was signed on July 8, 1991.¹⁷ After the Brioni Agreement the military actions against Slovenia were stopped and at least outwardly "Slovenia ceased further realization of its independence" for three months.¹⁸

Since the above-mentioned events took place less than five years ago the entire historical evaluation of the events in connection with the events among

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¹⁴ "Proclamation: Slovenian Independence Day," *Ameriška domovina*, 93 (26), (June 27, 1991), p.6.

¹⁵ Dennis Eckart, "Support democracy and market reform for all peoples". *Congressional Record*, 137 (101). (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Congress, June 27, 1991).

¹⁶ "Podporni sklad SNPJ v pomoč Sloveniji," *Prosveta*, 83 (44), (Chicago, October 30, 1991), p. 4.; "Podpiramo neodvisnost naše Slovenije," *Prosveta*, 83 (40), (October 2, 1991), p. 4.; "Thousands petition Bush," *Prosveta*, 83 (40), (October 2, 1991), p. 1.; "Slovenia Relief Found grows to \$ 27,941," *Prosveta*, 83 (41), (October 9, 1991), p. 1.; "SNPJ's Slovenia Relief Found," *Prosveta*, 83 (36), (September 4, 1991), p. 4.; "Support for Slovenia continues," *Prosveta*, 83 (37), (September 11, 1991), p. 3.

¹⁷ "United Americans for Slovenia make a difference," *Ameriška domovina*, 94 - Special edition. (Autumn 1992), p.1.

the American Slovenes is a difficult task. It will not be possible before the complete material has been collected; this applies to the material referring to the Slovenes in Cleveland as well as to Slovenes in New York, Chicago, San Francisco and other settlements in the USA. The same is also true of the historical evaluation of the events among the Slovene immigrant communities in other parts of the world.

Some facts, however, are already known. It is particularly important that this time no split took place in the Slovene community in the USA or anywhere else in the world. This time they acted unanimously until the recognition of Slovene independence was achieved. In this case the American Slovenes really reacted quickly and demanded from the US government the recognition of Slovenia as a sovereign and democratic state.

On Monday, July 1, 1991, when the aggression of the Yugoslav army against the Slovenes reached its peak, representatives of the leaders of the Slovene fraternal organizations, Slovene parishes and Slovene cultural organizations of the USA met in the Slovene National Home in Cleveland. This can be compared with the meeting of the representatives of the same organizations of the Slovene-American National Congress on December 5 and 6, 1942.¹⁸ During World War II they founded the Slovene-American National Council, whereas in 1991 the representatives of the above-mentioned organizations established the organization called United Americans for Slovenia. The activities of this organization were intensive for nine months and its Committee held a meeting almost every week. Its only aim was to exert pressure on the government of the USA so that the USA would recognize Slovene independence.

Edmund J. Turk, the former president of the Cleveland City Council and a former district judge, was elected president of the United Americans for Slovenia. As many as 659 different societies and organizations of American Slovenes joined this organization by the end of the year. An important achievement of the representatives of the American Slovenes was that non-Slovene organizations, i.e. the media and the American Red Cross, began to be interested in Slovenia. Organizations, such as the Slovene National Benefit Society, the

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¹⁸ Matjaž Klemenčič, "Slovenia at the crossroad of the nineties - From the first multiparty elections and the declaration of independence to membership in the Council of Europe", *Slovene Studies*, 14 (1), (Edmonton: Society for Slovene Studies, 1992 - published March 1994), pp. 9-25.; Jože Pirjevec: *Jugoslavija 1918 - 1992*. (Koper: Založba Lipa, 1995), pp. 419-433.

¹⁹ Matjaž Klemenčič, *Ameriški Slovenci in NOB v Jugoslaviji: naseljevanje, zemljepisna razprostranjenost in odnos ameriških Slovencev do stare domovine od sredine 19. Stoletja do konca druge svetovne vojne* (Maribor: Založba Obzorja, 1987). P. 103

American-Slovene Catholic Union, the American Mutual Life Association, the Progressive Slovene Women of America and the Slovene Women's Union supported the activities of the United Americans for Slovenia by publishing numerous articles about their activities in their newspapers: Prosveta (the organ of the Slovene National Benefit Society), Glas (the organ of the American-Slovene Mutual Life Association), Amerikanski Slovenec (the organ of the American Slovenian Catholic Union) and Zarja (the organ of the Slovene Women's Union).

From all Slovene settlements in the USA, as well as from individuals from all US states, Americans of Slovene descent and their numerous non-Slovene friends sent thousands of petitions and demands for the recognition of Slovene independence. They also used a special telephone line and on October 8, 1991 they made thousands of phone calls to the White House. Besides the opinions of Americans regarding the hearings of Clarence Thomas, the then candidate for the USA Supreme Court, the agenda of the phone calls to the White House consisted only of the demand for the recognition of the independence of Slovenia on that day.²⁰

As early as July 4, 1991 numerous volunteers gathered in the rooms of the American Mutual Life Association to plan sending hundreds of letters to American State Senators, members of the US Congress and to the President of the United States. All these letters included demands for the recognition of the Republic of Slovenia.²¹ This was followed by attempts to persuade high officials of the US Congress and the US Administration. To satisfy their demands the Slovene Americans also used the connections of Dennis Eckart from Cleveland and James Oberstar from north Minnesota, then members of the US Congress, who were of Slovene descent. Senator John Glenn from Ohio and Congressman Dennis Eckart from Cleveland sent a joint resolution to President George Bush expressing their request that Slovenia be recognized. On that occasion John Glenn said to Jim Debevec, the editor and publisher of *Ameriška domovina*, that he was deeply disappointed by the fact that the USA carried on its misleading policy of non-recognition of Slovenia as an independent state. As early as June 28, 1991 George Voinovich, the Governor of Ohio, whose mother was a Slovene American, asked President George Bush in his letter to intercede

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²⁰ "Call President Is Big Success," *Ameriška domovina*, 93 (44), (October 31, 1991), p. 1.

²¹ Drago Ocvirk, "Mobilizacija ameriških Slovencev," *Slovenec*, 75 (24), (Ljubljana, July 24, 1991), p. 4; Joseph C. Evanish, "Ways to support Slovenia," *Prosveta*, 83 (30).

(July 24, 1991), p. 1.; "Do osamosvojitve moramo delati usklajeno, samo skupno jo lahko dosežemo," *Ameriška domovina*, 93 (32), (August 8, 1991), p. 2; Joseph C. Evanish, "Podprimo neodvisnost naše Slovenije," *Prosveta*, 83 (30), (July 24, 1991), p. 14.

in connection with the activity of the Yugoslav army in Slovenia; in his letter of July 3, Voinovich reminded the President that during his presidential campaign in 1988 Bush had talked about the problem of the oppressed nations, of the Lithuanians in particular, and that people asked themselves why he did not react in the case of Yugoslavia in the same way as he had in Iraq. Representatives of the fraternal benefit organizations sent numerous protest letters with the demand for the recognition of Slovene independence to President Bush and to Senators of those US states where these organizations were headquartered.²²

During the June, 1991 war for Slovenia and especially during the war in Croatia, American Slovenes and the American Croats and their organizations organized numerous demonstrations in order to support Slovene and Croatian independence. Demonstrations took place in many cities from the Atlantic to the Pacific, as well as in front of the buildings of the US Congress and the United Nations. The demonstrations of the Slovenes and Croats were organized in Cleveland, as well.²³

Interestingly, Slovenes on the West coast of the USA also organized a special Committee for the recognition of Slovenia as an independent State. It was led by Mark Ryavec and Frank Vidergar, the vice-president of the Slovene National Benefit Society. Together with the Croats, they organized highly successful demonstrations in front of the Los Angeles City Hall in July, 1991. The City councils of those American cities where the Slovene and Croatian emigrants and their children had some influence issued resolutions in which they recognized the independence of Slovenia and Croatia.²⁴

Matjaž Jančar, who used to be the Yugoslav Consul General in Cleveland until the beginning of the ten-day war for Slovenia, and who then resigned his post and became a representative of the Republic of Slovenia in Cleveland a few days later, made an appeal to all organizations of American Slovenes to support Slovenia in its fight for independence and international recognition.²⁵

Therefore, it should be clear that Slovene emigrants demonstrated a strong interest in events in their old homeland during World War I as well as in the 1990' s. When different crises (political, economic, war) broke out in their old

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²² Letter from George V. Voinovich to U.S. President George Bush, June 28, 1991.; Letter from George V. Voinovich to U.S. President George Bush, July 3, 1991. (Arhiv SIM).

²³ American Mutual Life Association to U.S. senator John H. Glenn, June 28, 1991. (Arhiv SIM).

²⁴ Klemenčič, Reactions of Slovene and Croatian Immigrants, 335.; Interview with Frank Vidergar in November 1992.

homelands, the Slovenes, as other European nations, proved that these were the moments of the renaissance of their national consciousness and that these events moved them, which was also shown in the Slovene emigrant community throughout the world when the decisive historical moments took place in Slovenia.

Interestingly enough, Slovene emigrants throughout the world reacted to the events in Slovenia between 1990 and 1992; this even holds true of the countries where they lived in relatively small numbers, such as the Republic of South Africa or New Zealand. The reactions of the Slovene emigrants in the countries where there were relatively many groups which had been politically highly differentiated in relation to their old homeland up to the mid-1980s, showed a high level of unity in the propaganda campaigns for the recognition of Slovene independence on the part of their new homelands (the USA, Canada, Australia, etc.) Particularly in the overseas countries mentioned before, a large number of Slovenes were involved either in demonstrations organized by the Slovene emigrant community together with the Croatian one, or in phone calls or the mass signing and sending off of petitions with the demands for an independent Slovenia. This all confirms the statement of the American historian John Higham "... that whenever the old homelands are in crisis, the cohesiveness and unity in the immigrant communities reaches the highest level."²⁶ This fact, however, will help these communities to survive slightly longer in America's melting-pot.

The minute book of United Americans for Slovenia covers the period from June 30 1991 until May 1992. Added are also some minutes beyond this time frame, which covered preparations for celebrations of the anniversaries of the Slovene independence and its recognition by the United States.

Dr. Matjaž Klemenčič

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²⁵ Poziv Matjaža Jančarja vsem slovenskim ameriškim organizacijam in vsem Američanom slovenskega porekla, fax sent, July 5, 1991, (Arhiv SIM); "Tažo Jančar", Dediščina iz stare domovine (in three parts), Delo, 33 (193-195), (Ljubljana, August 19-21, 1991), pp. 5, 9, 11.

²⁶ John Higham, Introduction: The Forms of Ethnic Leadership. *Ethnic Leadership in America*. (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 4.