

DESCENDANTS OF SLOVENE IMMIGRANTS IN ARGENTINA AND URUGUAY

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Introduction

It is only really possible to speak of a substantial Slovene presence in South America, or more precisely in Argentina and Uruguay, in the context of the last hundred years. This period witnessed momentous changes in these countries and in the western hemisphere in general, impacting both the number and types of Slovene immigrants to South America. New waves of various types arrived, and new, different generations have been born. For this reason, in order better to understand the current situation of Slovene immigration and organization in Argentina and Uruguay is necessary. This, largely descriptive section of the article, which dwells chiefly on interwar and postwar immigrants and their descendants, is followed by my observations on the problem of the transformation of ethnic identity, and then by a theoretical analysis, or an attempt to formulate a moving scale of forms or levels of preservation of ethnic identity. The aim of the latter is to propose a (possibly universal) model of the preservation of ethnic identity in the immigrant community.

By far the largest number of Slovenes in South America are to be found in Argentina.¹ Today's paper is a brief summary of the extensive research contained in my master's thesis and my forthcoming book. This study is based on eight years of continuous monitoring of the life of the Slovene communities in Argentina and Uruguay. My approaches have included collection of data on Slovene societies and Slovene immigration, compiling, from personal conversations and letters of immigrants' life stories, and daily journal entries which served

¹ I have spent over nine months among Slovenes in South America, for the most part among immigrants in Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, and Chile. By far the longest period was spent in Argentina and Uruguay, and for this reason I shall restrict myself to the topic of the state of the Slovene community in those two countries. See: Zvone Žigon, "Narodnostna identiteta potomcev slovenskih izseljencev v Južni Ameriki" M.A. thesis, FDV, Ljubljana, 1998.

as a primary documentation base as part of the method of observation via participation.²

Emigration

In the second half of the nineteenth century, following a series of natural disasters, the introduction of a strict tax policy, commercial difficulties, and great poverty, a mass of predominantly peasant immigrants emigrated to South America from Slovene territories. Estimates vary as to the exact number of ethnic Slovenes who emigrated to the U.S. and South America (mainly Brazil but also to Argentina and Uruguay) before the beginning of the First World War, but an approximate figure of 300,000 appears most frequently in the various sources.³ Most of these emigrants were from the coastal, Primorska region but there were also Venetian Slovenes and Slovenes from Gorenjska and Bela Krajina.

The wave of emigration between the wars, a time when the world was reeling under a new economic crisis and Primorska was suffering the effects of Fascism, was directed towards Canada, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil and Venezuela, and the developed countries of Western Europe (primarily France, Belgium, and the Netherlands). Once again this wave was mainly comprised of Primorska Slovenes, although the emigrants to Uruguay and to a certain extent Argentina were largely from Prekmurje. An additional factor for the emigration of this latter group were religious differences between Catholics and Protestants.⁴

² Ted C. Lewelen, *Political Anthropology - an Introduction* (London: Bergin & Garvey, 1992). See also: Bernard Russell, *Research Methods in Cultural Anthropology* (London: Sage, 1991).

³ Anton Gosar, "Obseg, vzročnost in karakteristika slovenskega izseljevanja v tujino," *Iseljeništvo naroda i narodnosti Jugoslavije* (Zagreb: Zavod za migracije i narodnosti, 1978) 144–58, 168–79. See also: Aleksej Kalc, "Nekateri vidiki primorskega izseljevanja v Južno Ameriko do 1. svetovne vojne," *Kulturno ustvarjanje Slovencev v Južni Ameriki*, Razprave (Ljubljana: Filozofska fakulteta, 1995) 33–56; Bogdan Kolar, "Cerkev in Slovenci po svetu," *Zgodovina Cerkve na Slovenskem* (Celje: Mohorjeva družba, 1991).

⁴ Žigon 1998, 45.

The first sizeable group of Slovenes had arrived in Argentina in 1878, after the Argentine government had asked Austria to send around 300 families to work the fertile but unexploited land. About fifty of these families were Slovene. For the most part they settled in the undeveloped regions of northeastern Argentina, near the border with Brazil and Paraguay. Aleksij Kalc states that in this period many of his countrymen emigrated to Brazil, particularly after 1888 and the abolition of slavery.⁵

The Slovenes in northeastern Argentina were Austrian or, to a lesser extent, Italian citizens (from Primorska or the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region). After a scattered resettlement, they did not establish organizations and there was little contact between them. The great majority never forged contacts with later arrivals from Slovenia, and their descendants were immediately enculturated. The second generation, in cases where both parents were Slovene, still had some command of the language and retained cultural characteristics, but by the third generation this heritage had disappeared. In Argentina I met two members of the fourth generation, in other words the great-grandchildren of the original immigrants, who even remembered the odd Slovene word which, as children, they had heard their grandparents use. They had, perhaps, a vague idea of Slovenia's location, but that was the limit of their Slovene identity. At any rate, it was interesting to see how, despite the demands on their time, they nonetheless readily spoke about their ethnic origin. The first wave of Slovenes was thus swiftly and completely assimilated into Argentinian society. The transformation of ethnic identity was absolute with the disappearance of the original identity.

Descendants of emigrants from between the wars

The second and third waves are completely different from each other both in terms of the reasons for emigration, the manner of resettlement, and the preservation of the primary ethnic identity. By the second wave, which might be considered a standard model of the transformation of ethnic identity in an immigrant situation, I mean the Slovenes from Primorska and Prekmurje who arrived in Argentina and Uruguay during the interwar period. At that time, Italian Fascism in

⁵ Kalc 33–56.

Primorska, particularly after 1922, was becoming repressive. When political difficulties were joined by economic ones in the period 1926 to 1929, the emigration rate further increased. Between 25,000 and 30,000 Slovenes are believed to have emigrated to Argentina and Uruguay in this period, the majority of them from Primorska, but also from Prekmurje, the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region, and elsewhere.⁶ Most of this group were likewise peasants with little education, who upon arrival in large cities took jobs as unskilled laborers. Most settled in Buenos Aires, although some moved to Rosario, Cordoba, Mendoza, and other towns. The majority were employed in large cold stores, on the railways and in brickworks.⁷

Despite the frequently difficult struggle for survival, a relatively large portion of this community continued to nurture the Slovene language and Slovene customs and to involve itself in politics.⁸

While struggling economically, the prewar immigrants continued to attend to their children's education. Most spoke Slovene at home, and language did not present problems for primary school enrolment. At that point, different conditions arose: if a child did not have sufficient mastery of Spanish, the head teacher would call the parents and ban them from speaking Slovene at home. Such tactics accelerated assimilation. Under the pressure of schooling, as in Primorska under Italian occupation, Slovene was supplanted in many families as the language used for talking to one's children and only survived as the language of conversation among adults. Slovene nuns who came to Argentina in 1933 founded a Slovene school, but it was soon closed. Nonetheless, efforts to preserve the mother tongue did not abate, and Slovene Saturday schools and courses were started.⁹

⁶ Veronika Rožanc Kremžar, "Naseljevanje Slovencev v Argentini," *Meddobje* 3–4 (Buenos Aires: SKA, 1990).

⁷ Žigon 1998, 52.

⁸ Irene Mislej, "Primorski odbor - politično delovanje Primorskih Slovencev med drugo svetovno vojno v Argentini," *Dve domovini/Two Homelands* 5 (Ljubljana: Inštitut za slovensko izseljenstvo ZRC SAZU, 1994): 85–113.

⁹ Avgust Horvat, "Prizadevanja za izobrazbo med slovenskimi izseljenci v Argentini," *Dve domovini/Two Homelands*, 8 (Ljubljana: Inštitut za slovensko izseljenstvo ZRC SAZU, 1997): 37–48. See also: Ciril Kren, "Argentina — Kulturno življenje Slovencev — staronaseljencev v Argentini,"

Political divisions in 1947 caused a large number of Slovenes in Buenos Aires to leave the leftist inclined Slovenski Ljudski Dom, which was closed by the Argentine authorities in 1949. Both of these factors were a serious blow for the preservation of Slovene identity. A great vacuum was created which was only filled, temporarily and some would say too late, in 1974 by the opening of a new club and the Triglav society. Here, too, the orientation was until recently explicitly leftist and Yugoslav. A considerable number of Slovenes were therefore still disinclined to associate with it. Things changed between 1990 and 1991, when the leadership was taken over by a Slovene and politically unaligned group. Since then the society has emphasised Slovene cultural heritage and some increase in interest is observable. The Triglav society in Rosario has had to contend with similar problems. The society's premises were built by Slovenes, but after the war the organization became a Yugoslav club and many of the original founders left.

Major events at Triglav in Buenos Aires are today attended by hundreds of people of Slovene origin, while Triglav events in Rosario attracts as many as 200 attendees.¹⁰

Relatively little has been published about the Slovenes from Prekmurje and the region around Venice (the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region), particularly the latter.¹¹ A partial reason for this gap is that the community itself does not desire close association with other Slovene communities since its members do not consider themselves Slovenes, nor Italians for that matter, but "Venetian Slovenes." In 1980 the Federation of Slovene Emigrants from the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region was founded in Buenos Aires. This forms a part of the South American federation with centres in Buenos Aires, Rosario, and Sao Paulo (Mendoza and Mar del Plata). The federation has facilities in Buenos Aires, where twenty to forty people regularly meet, and up to eighty attend major events.¹²

Gradivo otvoritvenega zasedanja svetovnega slovenskega kongresa (Ljubljana: SSK, 1990).

¹⁰ Žigon 1998, 57.

¹¹ Miran Komac.

¹² Žigon 1998, 58.

The Slovenes in Uruguay were almost exclusively interwar emigrants from Prekmurje and Primorska. They arrived by ship in Montevideo and the majority then moved to Buenos Aires. The minority that stayed in Uruguay formed an immigrant community of around 500 Slovenes, who in 1935 founded the First Slovene-Prekmurian Society (Primera Sociedad Eslovena Transmurana). It still exists today and is the oldest, continuously existing Slovene immigrants' society in South America. The society was relatively successful in avoiding the Yugoslav association among the other immigrants in Montevideo, but nevertheless isolation from other Slovene societies may have led to the development of a rather blurred ethnic identity. The society still has somewhat over a hundred members, and some events are attended by as many as 300. These are members of the second and third generations who for the most part do not know a single word of Slovene or the Prekmurian language. I did, however, observe a fairly large sense of attachment to their past, mixed with a club identity, a sense of belonging to a society that sponsors quite lively sporting and cultural activities. The sense of Slovene ethnic belonging among members became more clarified when Slovenia became independent.

In comparison with Buenos Aires or Rosario traces of the Slovene language in Uruguay are very weak. Slovene Prekmurian is only spoken by the oldest members, those of the first generation, and only in conversation with visitors who do not speak Spanish. The causes appear to be similar to those that affected language use among the first settlers from Primorska in Argentina. Uruguay Prekmurians also expressed discomfort over their contacts with the Slovene societies in the nearby Argentine capital, which have better preserved the language. The Uruguay Prekmurians sensed a latent or even blatant air of superiority, and a stigmatisation of their dialect.

Today the Slovenes in Uruguay have a weekly half-hour radio program that includes news from Slovenia and Slovene music. Slovene theatre and music groups give regular guest performances. Most importantly, the Uruguay Prekmurians restarted a Slovene language and culture course. This and the fact that they have taken part in meetings of old emigrants suggests that Slovene ethnic identity in Uruguay is gaining a freshness and a new form.

The second wave of Slovene emigration

Slovene language use is more the exception than the rule among members of all generations of interwar Slovene immigrants in Argentina. The majority already consider themselves first and foremost Argentines and only to a lesser extent Slovenes. A few members of the first generation are still alive today. Because of their comparatively low social status, overwork and lack of connections they have over the years lost the ability to communicate effectively in Slovene. Conversation with survivors of this generation today is therefore mainly in Spanish. They tend to switch to their already fairly limited Slovene when talking to visitors from Slovenia, and, according to a Slovene priest, in unconscious states. This priest tells of having frequently encountered people on the verge of death who to the astonishment of those present had begun talking Slovene, a language they had not used for decades. The level of use of Slovene was certainly higher among those members of the first generation of immigrants who had preserved contact with their countrymen, either in organizations, by listening to Slovene radio, or through personal contacts.¹³ Assimilation thus had a powerful impact on Slovene identity, beginning with the first generation, and with it on the use of the Slovene language. The number of people who were still using Slovene at all was, in comparison with the total number of Slovene immigrants before the First World War, very small, perhaps only dozens.

The use of Slovene even among those who still speak Slovene today is limited to Slovene-related activities, such as associating with other Slovenes and contacts with relatives in Slovenia. Their primary identity is Argentine, although particularly among the more active members of Slovene societies it is possible to observe a strong affinity to things Slovene, knowledge of the language notwithstanding. This type of awareness has increased with Slovene independence, since for many people only then was the complex situation in this region of Europe, a situation which their parents had not understood particularly well, to some extent explained. However, we are still talking about efforts to preserve ethnic heritage rather than efforts to for a form of identity,

¹³ Žigon, "Funkcionalni bilingvizem in Slovenci v Argentini in Urugvaju," *Dve domovini/Two Homelands 7* (Ljubljana: Inštitut za slovensko izseljenstvo ZRC SAZU, 1996).

which would be the logical consequence of the processes of socialization.

The third generation has scant practical understanding of Slovene, let alone speaking skills.¹⁴ There are other, different forms of preserving ethnic identity that apply in this situation. During my last stay in Buenos Aires, several older individuals from the second generation responded to my invitation, broadcast on the radio, to cooperate in my research. These were people who for decades had had no contact with the Slovene community and who were more or less already completely assimilated into Argentine society. Yet it seems that later life, at about retirement age, they were taken by a desire to learn about their ethnic heritage and to reconcile questions of personal identity. It is impossible to establish precisely the number of such individuals. The difficulty is that one can only locate those who already have at least minimal contact with the Slovene community. Without browsing the tens of millions of names in the phone book and attributing ethnic origin on the basis of surnames, it is practically impossible to make contact with those who do not listen to Slovene radio except by browsing through.

When talking about the descendants of Slovene immigrants from the period between the wars we have to separate different levels of Slovene ethnic identity. There are very few individuals among the most culturally active group, however, who may even visit their parents' homeland and perhaps even speak Slovene. These individuals are rare, in fact, even in the cultural societies in Buenos Aires, Rosario, and Montevideo. The great majority has remained at the level of the "identification identity," a mere awareness of their heritage, while some perhaps occasionally communicate either with relatives in Slovenia or with their countrymen in Argentina or Uruguay.

Predicting the future of Slovene immigrant communities of this type is hazardous. Yet, on the basis of my observations to date, I can predict that the work of societies as the main indicator of the level of presence of a Slovene ethnic identity will steadily decrease.¹⁵ A more

¹⁴ Žigon 1996, 82.

¹⁵ Today the following interwar immigrants' institutions are operating in Argentina and Uruguay:

Slovene Prekmurian Society in Bernal (Buenos Aires),

Federation of Venetian Slovenes in Villa Ballester (Buenos Aires),

optimistic view would predict maintenance at the current level. Even if the societies continue to exist, the role of the Slovene language will soon disappear completely, even where it is still at least minimally present today. Activities will instead be based on the preservation of Slovene culture and the associated development of an organizational identity. It is worth stressing the important role of Slovene radio, since for many this is the sole link with the Slovene community. Undoubtedly the most important of these is "Slovene Window on the World," which according to listener research was among the most popular Saturday afternoon programs in Buenos Aires in 1997.

Descendants of Slovene emigrants from the period after the Second World War: the first generation's arrival

Postwar emigrants, better known as "Slovene political emigrants," conceivably constitutes a special group in popular and scholarly accounts of emigration. From 1947 to 1950, with another smaller group in 1954, around 6,000 Slovenes came to Argentina. They left their homeland under the threat of violence. Together with their families they fled to Austria and Italy, where in refugee camps they organized their proper cultural, religious, political life, and education.

Members of this emigration arrived in Argentina as a tightly-knit group and settled as such, mainly in Buenos Aires but also in Bariloche, Mendoza, Cordoba, Mar del Plata, and other towns. They were welcome, since the country needed to supplement its trained work force. The Slovene work ethic, ingenuity, and self-reliance enabled these people to establish themselves quickly. Their condensed settlement and the prominence of intellectuals—around seventy priests and 150 other intellectuals¹⁶—meant that they soon began organizing themselves. At first they attended religious gatherings together but soon began a program of primary education. Nine centers were built in

Slovene Triglav Society in Rosario,
First Slovene-Prekmurian Society in Montevideo,
Slovene Triglav Support Society in Buenos Aires.

¹⁶ Emil Heršak, "Druga generacija migranata i utjecaj sociolingvističkih procesa na materinski jezik migranata," *Migracijske teme 2* (Zagreb: Centar za istraživanje migracija i narodnosti, 1985).

various parts of Buenos Aires and in Bariloche and Mendoza.¹⁷ Special attention was devoted to education. They founded Saturday primary schools and a secondary school. In 1996, 550 children attended Saturday instruction. There were 94 teachers, 83 of whom were born in Argentina. In the same year, more than 100 children enrolled in the secondary school, which employed fifteen teachers. It is also worth noting Slovene religious life, the periodical press (the weekly *Svobodna Slovenija*), the strong cultural life (choral singing, drama), and high quality literary institution, the Slovene Cultural Campaign (Slovenska kulturna akcija). The latter has already published more than 150 separate titles and produced a series of distinguished writers, among them the Prešeren Prize winner Zorko Simčič.¹⁸

During my stay in Argentina I was able to ascertain that almost without exception the members of the first generation of political emigrants have maintained a complete knowledge of Slovene. They speak fluently and use Slovene everywhere except at work, although even in this case many of them have their own companies or work in companies where many of the employees are Slovene.

Members of this generation are emotionally and ideologically involved with the concept of their Slovene identity, often on a professional basis. To the majority of them it appears more important than their occupation. When Slovene political emigrants came to Argentina they hoped that the hostile and dangerous regime they had lived under would soon fall and that they would be able to return home. The expectation has been in concrete and symbolic meaning termed "the myth of return."¹⁹ For this reason they never seriously tried to integrate themselves into Argentine society. They considered Argentina a land of exile, a staging post on the road back home, although over years and the decades this hope faded. The post-war community remained closed to external (including linguistic) influences so as to show, by preserving the Slovene language and Slovene culture, their attachment to Sloveneness, and thus to refute

¹⁷ Martin Jevnikar, "Slovenski domovi v Južni Ameriki," *Dve domovini/Two Homelands 7* (Ljubljana: Inštitut za slovensko izseljenstvo ZRC SAZU, 1996).

¹⁸ Žigon, "Slovenski politični izseljenci v Argentini," *Teorija in praksa 2* (Ljubljana: FDV, 1996) 219–20.

¹⁹ Žigon 1996, 226.

communist charges of betraying the nation during the war. At the same time they retained a strong affiliation with the Catholic church. All of this, from language to religion, was also subject to a relatively strong moral evaluation. Anyone who did not attend Slovene religious services, did not send their children to Slovene school, take part in cultural events, or was not interested in events in Slovenia, could expect to suffer tacit or explicit disapproval. This community formed an enclave, a mini-state, a society within a society. It developed, as any close social group, informal and formal rules of behaviour.

The members of the first generation of this group of immigrants quickly re-socialised in Argentine society, which was (and still is) relatively open and well-disposed to immigrant communities and their cultural needs. Unlike many immigrants in the U.S. and Western Europe, the Slovenes in South America were perceived as representatives of an educated, industrious, and capable Central European nation, and therefore their self-confidence remained intact, while the temporary language barrier meant that they were not subject to social stratification or social or ethnic segregation. Quite the opposite, a sense of superiority in respect of the descendants of the original inhabitants, who are less advanced both intellectually and in terms of employment, can still be felt today.

Language in this community, in contrast to the already largely assimilated Slovene communities of interwar immigrants, especially among the first generation, is for now one of the most important pillars of Slovene ethnic identity.

Second generation

While in the case of the first generation we are at most dealing with a re-socialisation, in the sense of an adaptation, to the new, Argentine culture, in the case of the following generations a marked duality of the whole process of socialisation can be observed. The primary socialisation was in all cases Slovene, since in almost all cases both parents were Slovene and there is thus no trace of diglossia. A large proportion of the members of the second generation of postwar political immigrants from Slovenia born in Argentina spent their childhood in a domestic Slovene environment, and even among Slovene-speaking contemporaries. Many heard Spanish for the first time only when they entered Argentine educational institutions.

The secondary socialisation can be described as dual or parallel, and here diglossia and bicultural secondary socialisation begin.²⁰ Contact with new authorities, the method of learning, and cultural values did not take place merely in the spirit of the Argentine environment or the Spanish language but again on two levels. As well as attending an Argentine school, a member of this generation would also attend a Saturday Slovene school and religious instruction, go to Slovene services, continue to associate with Slovene contemporaries, and attend Slovene cultural, entertainment, and even sporting events. Leisure time was devoted almost exclusively to Slovene-related activities.²¹

This duality caused surprise and sometimes even non-acceptance among their Argentine contemporaries. For them, the Slovenes were different, since instead of going to the (Argentine) cinema they went to Slovene clubs, instead of Argentine parties they went to festivities at the Slovene society. For some, despite their (linguistic) equality with their countrymen in Slovenia, this was the first time they felt a split, a duality of identity, since they did not only claim not to be "real" Argentines, they also felt it. The majority of them claim that they are "Slovenes born in Argentina" and not "Argentine-Slovenes" or even "Slovene-Argentines."

In any case, the imaginary picture of Slovenia which was conveyed to them by their elders in class and at every possible social opportunity was for them rather intangible.

²⁰ Vesna Godina Vuk, "Skrite tendence in nenamerni vplivi v delovanju agentov (politične) socializacije," *Teorija in praksa* 5, Ljubljana: FSPN, 1990). See also: Stane Južnič, *Lingvistična antropologija* (Ljubljana: FSPN, 1983).

²¹ At school the indirect socialisation effect of contemporaries plays an important part, although here institutionalised, programmed socialisation which includes both learning and upbringing is of primary importance. At school the individual encounters new models (teachers), an institutionalised type of learning (grades) and new types of relationships (competition, work, discipline, etc.). School is the first explicitly political institution which the individual encounters. It transfers the system and represents the ideological apparatus of the state (Žigon 1993, 36). The mass media have a complementary role although especially in the modern age their latent effect is very powerful and important throughout the life of the individual.

After 1991, the community of Slovene political immigrants became more open and large numbers made journeys to Slovenia. On their visits to their (parents') homeland, the members of the second generation discovered that their national identity was to a certain extent also Argentine, not least because of language.

When we talk about language as a bearer of culture from generation to generation we have in mind a further series of other socialisation factors; in the case of the Argentine Slovenes, there is no basic tangible and genuine social environment in which (linguistic) knowledge would have the opportunity of showing and proving itself, or justifying itself. Their mother tongue, or language of primary socialisation, has no basis, does not acquire a sense in the wider social environment, and is limited to the micro-society of the Slovene community, which itself is without a tangible basis since the homeland of their parents is physically very far away.

With the second and now third generations of postwar immigrants we can talk for the first time about a special kind of code switch. This is something we usually talk about in relation to various situations in various environments and the related societal role enacted by the individual with the help of an appropriate vocabulary within one language; when associating with the representatives of the different levels of this (relatively clearly socially but mainly ideologically and politically structured) Slovene community, Slovenes born in Argentina use a somewhat simplified Slovene dialect that remains unchanged in all its characteristics in all situations. There is therefore no code switch²² within Slovene. What is typical is the use of Slovene and Spanish at home, among friends, and also at work. Here behavior is more relaxed and there is less latent or open informal moral supervision; a large number of Spanish words are used, particularly in the case of conversation about Argentine society or events in Argentina, or with jargon and technical terms relating to a particular area of work. Similarly in situations which are emotionally more intense, Spanish tends to dominate (swearwords, exclamations in sport, and jesting). In such informal groups greater consistency in the use of

²² Thomas Luckmann, "Jezik in osebna identiteta," *Teorija in praksa* 7 (Ljubljana: FDV, 1991). See also: Nada Šabec, *Half pa pu* (Ljubljana: Studia Humanitatis - Apes, 1995).

Slovene can be observed among the more educated, but this is also connected to the social position within the Slovene community.

The majority of members of the second generation have visited Slovenia in recent years, although this, I was persuaded, has not had a significant influence on their understanding of the (Slovene) language, except, perhaps, the minor identity crisis described earlier. A considerable number have decided to make longer visits to Slovenia or even to study or work there.²³

Third generation

The majority of these findings also apply to members of the third generation, although changes are already apparent. Their parents are still for the most part married within the community. Endogamy is, however, increasingly rare despite the latent negative attitude towards marriage outside the community on the part of the ideological leaders. This means that the number of those from the third generation who are exposed to the same type of primary socialisation as their parents were is significantly lower than among the second generation. The increased presence of public media (especially television) in the primary socialisation environment has increased the influence of the dominant culture, which also shows outwardly, in the use of the Slovene language. Although nearly all still have fluent command of Slovene, for the most part they speak among themselves in Spanish, even in the Slovene society centres, particularly during sporting activities or at parties. A switch to Slovene can be observed at the approach of a Slovene teacher or priest, or in conversation with older Slovenes. Their Slovene vocabulary is already impoverished, although much depends on their parents' attention to socialisation in Slovene. If this went without saying in the previous generation, such an upbringing from parents who were themselves born in Argentina requires considerably more effort.²⁴ We can perhaps already say of this generation that it is beginning to succumb to standard acculturation influences. The use of Slovene is steadily decreasing, and the third generation will have great difficulty in transferring its linguistic knowledge to its descendants. Reduced Slovene language use implies a reduction in the stake in Slovene

²³ Over a hundred people of Slovene origin born in Argentina are currently living in Slovenia.

²⁴ Žigon 1998, 89.

identity. In this sense the understanding of the preservation of ethnic identity is already changing, since insistence on knowledge of Slovene as a basis for membership in the community is becoming an untenable position.

The reasons for such successful preservation of Slovene ethnic identity lie in the explicitly political and religious causes of the emigration itself, the compactness of the settlement in the new environment, the presence of numerous intellectuals, the rapid organization of a "para-state" community, the preservation of a powerful ideological charge that energized the community for self-preservation, and the favorable atmosphere in the dominant society, which accepted the immigrant community as equals.

The arrival of democracy and Slovene independence to a large extent deprived the community of the sense that it was a political immigrant community in all but origin. In everything else it was similar to other immigrant communities. Reevaluating its reason for being in this way, the community is faced with the question of its development and future, especially as regards the preservation of language. The most serious dilemma is the following: whether to cultivate the community's life on the basis of Slovene and in this way close the door to Argentine partners and those of Slovene birth who only speak Spanish, or to reorientate activities to other cultural values, to preserve numbers and in this way consent to "linguistic suicide" and likely faster assimilation.

Conclusions

1. Enculturation is identification with a specific ethnic community. But in Argentina and Uruguay the descendants of Slovene immigrants experience a duality of secondary and in part even primary socialisation, where the designations "primary" and "secondary" apply to parents. They are exposed to the influence of the minority primary culture and the majority secondary culture. The individual cannot "surrender" to just one culture and so suffers a split. There is typically a separation into territorial belonging, to the physical environment, and belonging to the imagined culture that the individual connects with in the family and in immigrants' societies. This culture is intangible, physically distant, and therefore subject to disappearance. The duality of ethnic identity is accepted by the majority as a positive fact but one which frequently causes personality crises, tension, and in extreme

cases even a decision to leave, to return to the homeland of their parents or, alternatively, consciously to sever contacts with the Slovene or minority culture. This applies to the descendants of both waves of emigration to Argentina and Uruguay, except that with the descendants of the Slovene political immigrants the duality is stronger, and present in a much greater number of individuals, because of the more powerful presence of a Slovene identity.

2. A model of preservation of ethnic identity among immigrants²⁵: The preservation of (Slovene) ethnic identity or the identity of one's ancestors is influenced by the possible motives for preservation, which in turn are the consequence of:

- the various reasons for emigration (political, economic, personal)
- distance from the homeland (distance increases the self-defence instinct)
- the difference of the new culture (the greater the difference the more difficult it is to assimilate)
- positive attitude to socio-political conditions in the homeland (Slovene independence).

Among the individual factors, we could add endogamy, since in mixed marriages the possibility of assimilation among descendants is significantly higher.

Ethnic identity is preserved via characteristic (political) socializing factors, in the societal institutions of the family, immigrants' societies and their institutions, and ethnic religious institutions by means of:

- preserving customs, including food preparation
- music and dance traditions
- cultivation of a political tradition
- cultural activities
- preservation and nurturing of typical symbols
- preservation and nurturing of historical memory
- contact with the primary homeland.

3. Qualitative levels of feeling of ethnic identity:²⁶ I shall now present a moving scale of qualitative levels of feeling of ethnic identity among the

²⁵ Žigon 1998, 132.

²⁶ Žigon 1998, 138.

members of the various generations of descendants of Slovene immigrants. The levels rise in intensity although typically they interweave with each other and merely represent the most typical forms of expression of ethnic identity, without any moral evaluation from the part of the researcher, and with the assumption that each level represents the maximum an individual is capable of and wants in his own social context.

1. Identification identity (minimal knowledge about ethnic origin)
2. Openness (to information, activities connected with the original culture)
3. Folkloric and symbolic identity (occasional participation in events)
4. Club identity (identification with immigrants' club)
5. Desire to obtain (Slovene) citizenship and learn Slovene
6. Mobilization identity (active work in the societies)
7. Visits, regular contacts with Slovenia
8. Speaking and cultivating the mother tongue
9. Deciding to move to Slovenia

I would further speculate that for the descendants of Slovene immigrants it is no longer a case of Slovenia the mother, Argentina the bride," as is often heard, but "Argentina the mother, Slovenia the grandmother." Slovenia represents a semi-imaginary world, associated with fairy tales, with the intangible, the distant in time and space, although it is connected with the beautiful, with roots.

The Slovene immigrant community (or its Slovene ethnic identity) will survive more easily if it is able to bring about a transformation in the sense of abandoning the absolute of importance of preserving the Slovene language (failure to do this would mean that before long Slovene societies will be attended only by a few tens of people who speak Slovene, while the others will be assimilated even more quickly) and in the sense of internal depolitization; politization has for decades separated immigrant from immigrant (in fact the reasons for this also exist in the mother country, but that is a question for other research and other, national institutions).

Inštitut za slovensko izseljenstvo

POVZETEK**POTOMCI SLOVENSКИH IZSELJENCEV
V ARGENTINI IN URUGVAJU**

Besedilo v prvem delu na kratko oriše zgodovino priseljevanja Slovencev v Južno Ameriko s posebnim poudarkom na Argentini in Urugvaju, kjer sta tudi danes najštevilnejši slovenski skupnosti. V opisu značilnosti Slovencev v eni in drugi državi avtor razločuje prvi val iz konca 19. stoletja, ki je tako rekoč v celoti in popolnoma asimiliran, drugi, najštevilnejši val iz obdobja med svetovnima vojnama ter povojno politično emigracijo. Iz različnih vzrokov (visoka izobrazba priseljencev, organiziranost, verska oziroma politično-ideološka motivacija, visoka stopnja endogamije,...) je zadnja v 50 letih najbolje ohranila svojo primarno etnično identiteto, vključno z jezikom.

Besedilo opozarja na dvojnost socializacije v novem okolju rojenih otrok izseljencev, oblike »slovenskosti« narodne identitete pa razvrsti v opisno drsno kvalitativno lestvico z devetimi ravni, od zgolj védenja o tem, kje leži domovina starih staršev pa do resne neadaptiranosti v večinski kulturi, ki v skrajnih primerih pripelje celo do preselitve v domovino staršev.