

STATE AND CHURCH ATTITUDES TOWARDS SLOVENE EMIGRATION BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS

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1. Historical background

The territory inhabited by the Slovenes has always been an integral part of Europe. In the past it had been more oriented towards the north and northwest (the Germanic world), the southwest (the Roman world), and, as late as the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the east (the Slavic world). Slovene emigration routes followed the same directions. Even in the periods preceding the modern migrations of the nineteenth century, Slovene contacts with other parts of Europe were more or less close; for example, from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries Slovenes worked in Italian ports and the hinterland of the western Adriatic coast, and Slovene peddlers were to be found in all parts of Europe from the fifteenth century on (Gestrin). Before the onset of modern migration, the elements which, amongst others, shaped the fate of the Slovenes were wars, epidemics, religious and political pressures, and the desire for knowledge and experience of the world. As a result, many people who had lived in the territory of today's Slovenia temporarily or permanently found new homes abroad.

In the nineteenth century, Slovenes joined the mass emigration wave from Europe to, in particular, North America. In the twentieth century they migrated in larger numbers to other continents as well, to South America and Australia, for example. Migrations of Slovenes assumed exodus proportions at the end of the nineteenth century, when large numbers of people left for the United States, the industrially developed parts of Austria ("internal migration"), and the German provinces of Westphalia and the Rhineland (Drnovšek 1994; Valenčič). After World War I, the "golden gate" of the United States closed and the wave of migration from Yugoslav Slovenia turned towards France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. In numerical terms, however, Slovene migration to these new destinations before 1940 by no means matched migration to the United States (Lipoglavšek-Rakovec 1–58). Restrictions on emigration to the U.S. was one reason that Slovenes went to Western Europe; the other was a shortage of male workers (owing to the number of war casualties), post-

war reconstruction and the accelerated pace of industrialization in these countries. Thus, France, Belgium, and the Netherlands in the mid-1920s opened their borders to workers from Central and Eastern Europe. The scarcity of jobs in domestic mines and factories compelled many Slovenes to accept more or less attractive jobs abroad. Moreover, the land at home could not support enough jobs (Drnovšek 1992, 1993.)

The emigration of Slovenes to Germany had its own specific features. Germany was the first European country towards which a larger wave of Slovene emigration was directed during the 1880s (Werner 1985). At the outbreak of World War I, many Westphalians (the term for Slovene immigrants in Germany) returned to Austria, where they were recruited into the army. Because of the post-war economic crisis in Germany, a number of Westphalians "emigrated" to the Netherlands, Belgium, and France, while others remained in Germany. During the decade preceding the outbreak of World War II, Germany was particularly keen to obtain seasonal farm workers. Women and men mainly from the eastern Slovene region of Prekmurje responded to the invitation. The Slovenes who remained in Westphalia took German, Austrian, or Yugoslav citizenship. We have no exact figures about the ratios between these types of citizenship, but it is our impression that Yugoslav authorities showed greater concern for this emigration. The element that contributed to such an attitude was a new exodus to Germany during the decade preceding the outbreak of World War II. Pro-Yugoslav propaganda among the Slovenes in Germany was spread by way of consulates (in Düsseldorf, Dresden, Essen, and Leipzig), newspapers, radio and various "emissaries," as it was in other European countries. Nazism, the pressure to assimilate, and, in particular, the pressure exerted by the authorities on Slovene believers constantly preoccupied the Roman Catholic Church in pre-war Slovenia. The pace at which integration and assimilation processes took place among the Slovenes in Germany was unusually fast due, among other things, to education and general state policy towards foreigners. In order to avoid trouble, the Slovenes also accepted German citizenship at a faster rate.

Particularly distressing was the emigration of the Slovenes from Italy. By the Rapallo treaty of November 1920, nearly one-third of ethnic Slovenes came under Italian rule. Assimilation pressures on the Slovenes in fascist Italy, coupled with worsening living conditions, brought about increased emigration to Argentina. As refugees, Slovenes

from Italy also found new places to live in Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav state and private organizations took steps towards solving basic refugee problems by providing, for example, support, accommodation and employment. As part of Italian economic emigration, the Slovenes from Italy also sought jobs in the mines, factories and rural regions of the western European countries. As foreign citizens, Slovenes living beyond the frontiers of Yugoslav Slovenia remained more or less outside the attention of the Yugoslav state and of the Church in Slovenia.

The great economic crises of the 1930s halted the permanent settling of immigrants in western European countries (Lazarevič). The consequences for Slovenes at home and in new environments were many:

- a) Emigration from Slovenia started to decline.
- b) Slovene immigrants were faced with a shortening of working hours and with unemployment, the causes of which were also traceable to their unregulated legal and social status as foreign citizens.
- c) Resistance to foreigners in the host countries was growing.
- d) Many immigrants were forced to return to their homelands; there were forced and voluntary repatriations.
- e) Savings were devalued and many were reduced to poverty.
- f) Remittances to the homeland were discontinued.

2. The state, church, and Slovene emigrants

Individual intellectuals and politicians, organizations, institutions, and societies warned against the adverse consequences of mass Slovene emigration before World War I and, especially, during migrations to Western European countries between the two wars. In giving warnings before World War I, they referred to the small size of the nation and the fact that it was endangered by the presence of larger neighbors, in particular by Germans and Italians. Until 1918 the great majority of Slovenes lived in the Austrian half of Austria-Hungary (Vodopivec). According to the census of 1910, there were 1,253,148 Slovenes in this part of the empire. The threat of dangerous neighbors was used in the period between the two wars.

Until the fall of the Hapsburg Empire, the principle of free emigration, established by the law of 1867, applied to all citizens of the

Austrian part of the empire.¹ Men were bound to comply with military obligations, including reserve duty. That was the only restriction on free emigration from Austria. The state intervened in emigration only in the domain of the organization of the emigrant's voyage by restricting unfair competition and trying to prevent fraudulent practices by emigration agents representing various shipping companies. In the years before World War I, top military circles contemplated restricting emigration of young men to the U.S. because they thought it was weakening the Austrian army's preparedness. Comprehensive legislation reflecting this apprehension remained in draft and debate phase in the Austrian parliament. The outbreak of the war prevented the adoption of the law (Kalc 18).

In an amazingly efficient procedure the National Assembly in Belgrade adopted the Law on Emigration on 28 November 1921, and King Aleksandar I signed it on 30 December.² As that was the time of post-war emigration to the U.S., the law dealt only with emigration to overseas countries. With the restriction on emigration to the U.S. (1924), the law became irrelevant and remained so until the collapse of pre-war Yugoslavia.

At least three state ministries were engaged in emigration affairs. The principal tasks were the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Welfare Policy (Ministrstvo za socialno politiko in narodno zdravje); other tasks were carried out by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ministrstvo za zunanje zadeve) and the Ministry of Education (Ministrstvo prosvete). A Zagreb-based national Commissariat for Emigration (Izseljenski komisariat), 1922–39, was founded as a functional extension of the Ministry of Social Welfare Policy. Subordinated to the commissariat were the "emigration missions" (commissioners, delegates, and correspondents) in Paris, Metz, Lille, Brussels, Düsseldorf, New York, and Buenos Aires. Alojzij Kuhar,³ editor of the newspaper *Slovenec*, considered this bureaucratic apparatus

¹ The Austrian Constitutional Law, 21 December 1867.

² *The Official Gazette of the Provincial Administration for Slovenia (Uradni list pokrajinske uprave za Slovenijo)*, IV/21, 8 March 1922.

³ Alojzij Kuhar (1895–1958) was a journalist and politician. During the 1920s he was the officer in charge of the social affairs of emigrants at the Yugoslav embassy in Paris and a correspondent for *Slovenec*. During the 1930s he was the foreign policy editor of *Slovenec*.

questionable, as it had no "soul" and operated without a planned emigration policy (Kuhar 534). Pragmatism and personal connections in Belgrade were crucial in obtaining benefits or aid for emigrants. Belgrade's insensitivity to the problems of Slovene emigrants is understandable, for those conscious of them in the homeland did not only advocate a reduction in emigration (by planning to raise the standard of living in the country and, in particular, by opening up new jobs), but also the preservation of a moral, religious, and national consciousness among emigrants. The strengthening of the Catholic faith and Slovene national consciousness among emigrants was not to the liking of centralist Belgrade. Slovene emigrant teachers and priests were the champions of the Slovene language, culture and Catholic faith, and that, in spite of their emphasizing loyalty to Yugoslavia, was alien to top political circles in Belgrade.

The state and its agencies started to show concern for new emigrants to Western European countries only after 1927. This change of attitude coincided with the foundation of the St. Raphael Society in Ljubljana. The interests of Slovene emigrants were served by the Provincial Emigration Office (Oblastni izseljenski urad) in Ljubljana (May 1928–December 1929), which operated on behalf of the Ljubljana and Maribor regions (ljubljska in mariborska oblast). With the foundation of the Dravska *banovina* (province), the office was transformed into the Emigration Office of the Governor's Administration (Izseljenski referat dravske banovine) (December 1929–1941), which, with a few organizational modifications (e.g. the placing of immigration affairs under its charge in 1935), continued to operate until the collapse of Yugoslavia.

The Provincial Emigration Office in Ljubljana set itself the following tasks: advising future emigrants and returnees, keeping records of emigrants (a register), fostering cultural and commercial contacts between emigrants and their relatives at home, gathering information about economic and employment conditions abroad and disseminating that information to interested parties, organizing lectures about emigration, speeding up internal colonization, founding an emigrants' center in Ljubljana, and acting as intermediaries in probate, insurance, indemnification, and similar matters.⁴ Under a decree of the

⁴ Archives of the Republic of Slovenia (AS), fond 74, šk. 1, Ban. VI/Official Papers 1929-40, folder: Regular Work, 1929.

governor of the Dravska banovina (20 June 1931), the following were added to these tasks: maintaining contacts with eminent emigrants and their organizations, proposing measures for the cultural and popular education of emigrants, helping the unemployed abroad to find jobs (through "commissioners"), sending "patriotic and instructive books," lobbying for support to emigrants societies abroad and emigrants organizations at home, and maintaining, where necessary, contacts with all institutions and organizations at home dealing with emigrants as part of their responsibilities. These organizations were the Commissariat for Emigration in Zagreb, the Public Labor Exchange (Javna borza dela) in Ljubljana, the Chamber of Labor (Delavska zbornica) in Ljubljana, the District Labor Employment Office (Okrožni urad za zaposlovanje delavcev) in Ljubljana, and others.⁵ The *banovina* authorities later also insisted on observing emigrants from the aspect of "their attitude to the state and their moral behavior."⁶ During the return of emigrants after the outbreak of the Great Depression, the authorities laid emphasis on the importance of financial aid to those returning and concern for their employment in the homeland. To this end, a fund to help impoverished returnees and to speed up colonization in other parts of Yugoslavia was founded at the Dravska banovina Savings Bank (12 September 1932).

The activity of embassies and consulates was of great importance to emigrants. During the 1930s they employed special emissaries and correspondents in charge of closer contacts with emigrants. In Düsseldorf there was an emigration commissariat around which Yugoslav-oriented emigration societies rallied. The societies were committed to strengthening patriotism, loyalty to the regime, and the state's centralist views. Many representatives of the state abroad did not speak Slovene, which further alienated Slovene emigrants from their activity. (For Westphalian Slovenes, in particular, Serbian was a foreign language, as it was for all others who had lived within Yugoslavia for just a few years and did not do their military service there.)

⁵ AS, fond 74, šk 1, Ban. VI/Official Papers 1929-40, folder: Regular Work, 1933.

⁶ AS, fond 74, šk. 1, Ban. VI/Official Papers 1929-40, folder: Regular Work, 1936.

The state proved unsuccessful in concluding international protective agreements on the social status of its emigrants. Of the European countries in which Slovene emigrants were present in larger numbers, agreements were concluded only with Germany (1928) and Austria (1929). In 1932 such an agreement was concluded with France, but the senate did not ratify it until the spring of 1940. The International Labor Office in Geneva adopted a convention on reciprocal international disability, ailments, old age and life insurance arrangements in 1935; it had not yet been ratified by Yugoslavia by 1940. The consequences of the unregulated legal position of our workers abroad became evident during the great economic crisis. Many workers lost their jobs overnight and were forced to return home, or did so voluntarily. Some were not even able to buy the train ticket from Jesenice to their homes. The uncertain social position was instrumental in organizing emigrants' self-assistance societies for illness, accident, unemployment, and death as early as the 1920s. The societies greatly alleviated the hardships of Slovenes abroad, but could not make up for the lack of proper regulation of that problem between the countries of emigration and immigration. The causes of the slow (Balkan-style) solution to these problems were traceable to both sides. It may well be that Belgrade's half-hearted handling of the issue was also due to its lack of interest, for the bulk of Yugoslav emigrants to European countries consisted of Slovenes and Croats. Belgrade was much more interested in maintaining good political relations with France, with which it became close in the nineteenth century and even closer during World War I, and within the Serbian business and intellectual elites in that country. The pro-Yugoslav press in Paris is but one indication of this state of affairs (Drnovšek 1992, 268). Not even the numerous references to the fact that emigrants from all over the world were sending sizable savings to Yugoslavia encouraged Belgrade to show more flexibility in its approach to these problems. Broadly speaking, Yugoslavia as the "motherland" behaved in a stepmotherly fashion to its "children" who were scattered all over the world. This statement, which Hugo Bren made in the late 1920s, held more or less into the late 1930s (Bren 118). In concentrating chiefly on itself and its own affairs, the state forgot about those who had left it for want of bread. Kuhar remarked in 1939:

The results of our activity in connection with emigration, in as much as that activity is the responsibility of state policy, are

therefore deplorable. We have not only failed to do everything in our power to halt the exodus of emigrants, but have not achieved anything on their behalf abroad either" (525).

Disappointment in Belgrade and the creation of the Croatian banovina (1939), when the Commissariat for Emigration in Zagreb thus ceased to exist, prompted a number of concerned Slovenes to contemplate organizing an independent emigration service for Slovenes. Kuhar envisaged the organization of an emigration service:

Emigration policy ... must be conducted by the state ... As there is little hope of the state starting by itself, in the foreseeable future and with a well thought-out plan in its hands, to deal with the problem of our emigration in an appropriate manner from the standpoint of national defense, Slovenia will have to use its own limited resources within state policy in order to obtain the emigration policy needed by the Slovenes (535–36).

His ideas were in harmony with the efforts of Father Kazimir Zakrajšek during the 1930s. Some of them can, perhaps, be described as more radical. Thus, Kuhar categorically insisted on opening public works in the areas from which emigration was greatest, on stopping the issuance of passports for countries of immigration with which protective social agreements had not been concluded, on a ban on changing citizenship—common among immigrants in Western European countries during the 1930s—and on the establishment of advising centers for emigrants, mandatory stops before receiving passports. He considered care for children to be one of the most important tasks related to work with emigrants. He advised mothers to bear their children in Slovenia to avoid having them automatically become citizens of the destination country.

In addition to state institutions for the protection of emigrants there were private institutions in Slovenia, the most eminent of which was the Ljubljana-based St. Raphael Society for the Protection of Emigrants (*Družba sv. Rafaela za zaščito izseljencev*). There was also the National Emigration Committee (*Narodni izseljeniški odbor*) and the Emigration League (*Izseljeniška liga*), which were active for a short period of time. The National Emigration Committee started operating during the 1920s and attended, in particular, to contacts with the Westphalian Slovenes. The president of the committee was Dr. Josip Bohinjec, the head of the Ljubljana district office (*Okrožni urad v*

Ljubljani), and the secretary was Vladimir Kravos. With the institution of JRZ regime in Yugoslavia (1935), the committee temporarily discontinued its activities. It played a more active role in the late 1930s during the debate on the distribution of the assets (money) of the State Emigration Fund. After the death of Minister Anton Kristan (1930) the Emigration League "was laid to rest, receiving no more subsidy."⁷

From the start of Slovene emigration in the nineteenth century, the Roman Catholic Church in Slovenia had been present at the departure of emigrants from the homeland, among Slovenes in new environments, and in efforts to maintain links between the old and new homelands (Kolar). Its principal commitment was the fostering of morality, faith, the Slovene language, nationality and the loyalty of immigrants to the countries in which they had settled. This worked in the same way among Slovene immigrants in Western European countries. The church carried out its mission in more than one way. The activity of Slovene priests at the time of the departure of emigrants to foreign countries and their contribution to the maintenance of contacts between scattered family members were very important. Also deserving of mention are the contacts with Catholic immigrants which the church maintained through missionaries visiting them for shorter periods of time. Janez Evangelist Krek, for example, was among the first to visit Westphalian Slovenes and write about them (on the pages of *Slovenec*). Between the two wars, Slovene Franciscans would visit Slovene immigrants at Easter and Christmas, for example in Germany (Bren 142). Church dignitaries also visited Slovenes several times (the Ljubljana bishop Anton Bonaventura Jeglič went to Germany in 1921; the bishop of Maribor Ivan Jožef Tomažič to Germany and the Netherlands in 1934). In 1933 the Ljubljana and Maribor bishoprics founded the Diocesan Emigration Fund, which accepted donations to aid emigrant priests.⁸ There were also many individual benefactors from among the ranks of clergymen, such as Dr. Anton Korošec, who often contributed larger sums of money to the St. Raphael Society and its individual activities—for example, the organization of holidays for emigrants' children.

⁷ AS, fond 74, šk. 1, Ban./VI, Official Papers 1929–40, folder: Regular Work, 1936.

⁸ NŠAL, DsvR, 3rd committee session, 6 March 1933.

The most active private institution of the Catholic Church was the St. Raphael Society, which resumed its activities in 1927. The fact that the Ljubljana bishop, Gregorij Rožman was its president for a period of time (1937–41) testifies to the importance of the society to the church. The society's committee included, among others, prominent representatives of Catholic life in Slovenia.

The Slovene chapter of the St. Raphael Society operated in Ljubljana before World War I (from 1907, in fact). Its activities petered out during the war, and in 1924 the chapter was disbanded under a decision of the grand mayor of the Ljubljana district.⁹ It was revived at the general meeting of 15 November 1927. Members of its first committee included Dr. Lambert Ehrlich, Dr. Juro Adlešič, Vinko Zor, Franc Erjavec, Dr. Hugo Bren, Franc Zabret, Valentin Tomc, France Miklavčič, and Leopoldina Dolenc. The goals of the rejuvenated St. Raphael Society were similar to its pre-war goals. The society's commitments included the protection of emigrants and their relatives at home and abroad, the strengthening of national, religious and state consciousness, and the sustaining of the "economic prosperity" of emigrants and their families. To achieve these goals it protected emigrants on their departure, warned them of the dangers present in foreign countries, interceded with the authorities in connection with immigration affairs, encouraged contacts between Slovenes abroad and the homeland, strove to assign priests and teachers to work among immigrants and to publish newspapers, books and brochures, extended help to returnees, and endeavored to raise the domestic public's awareness of the emigration question.¹⁰ The headquarters of the society were in Ljubljana and in 1938 its chapters started to operate in Maribor (for the Maribor diocese) and in Murska Sobota or Črenšovci (for the territory of the Lavant diocese). The society's care for Catholic emigrants was comprehensive, focusing chiefly on emigration in Europe up until World War II.

3. The effectiveness of emigrant aid

Soon after the foundation of the St. Raphael Society, Kazimir Zakrajšek became its most prominent member. At the general meeting

⁹ The decision by the Grand Mayor of the Ljubljana district, No. 29754, 3 December 1924.

¹⁰ NŠAL, DsvR, general meeting, 15 November 1927.

of 24 October 1929 he explained his views on the society's activities, which remained essentially the same throughout the period between the two wars.¹¹ He emphasized the significance of the emigration question in its national, economic, religious, and social aspects. In his opinion, the St. Raphael Society was to work towards raising the awareness of this question at the level of the state and among the general public, and towards boosting its own activities. He noticed that emigrants were critical of the activity of the society.¹²

Zakrajšek was a man of ideas and, as such, often came into conflict with those around him. The impression is that he tried to expand society's sphere of activity and to have a wider circle of individuals and organizations, including state agencies, engaged in the debate on, and the solving of the emigration question. Frequent "short circuits" and the indifference of the state to his projects caused ups and downs in the activity of the society. One cannot but have the impression that the society often concentrated on itself and on its own organization more than on emigrants. Nonetheless, it did record a few successes: the publication of *Izseljenski Vestnik* (1929–40), *Izseljenski Koledar* (1937) and *Izseljenski Zbornik* (1938), the organization of two emigrants' congresses (1935 and 1937), the organization of trips to the homeland for emigrants and their children, assistance for emigrant priests and teachers, and the greater presence of emigration problems in the media.

An especially acute problem for the church was the shortage of Slovene priests among emigrants. Their visits to emigrants depended on state support. Before the foundation of the St. Raphael Society the state viewed the sending of Slovene priests as "the promotion of clericalism and Catholic missionary propaganda." It took great efforts on the part of the society to persuade the state of the usefulness of their activity for the fostering of loyalty to the state. At the national emigrants' congress in Sarajevo on 15 October 1933, Dr. Pegan emphasized in his report that the state should extend stronger support to the sending of priests to work among emigrants and, at the same time, entrust them with specific "state functions" to alleviate their financial situation.¹³ Some priests were actually appointed as "emigration correspondents" with regular

¹¹ NŠAL, DsvR, general meeting, 24 October 1929.

¹² NŠAL, DsvR, general meeting, 15 November 1927. "Homeland, do not forget your sons scattered all over Europe ..." were Zakrajšek's words.

¹³ NŠAL, DsvR, general meeting, 24 October 1933.

monthly earnings of 2,000 dinars. But priests sent on such state assignments were few. The surprising phenomenon ensuing from such an attitude by the state was the fact that, owing to the shortage of domestic priests, many foreign priests had learned Slovene in order to be better understood and to establish genuine contact with Slovene believers. Such was the situation during the 1920s in Westphalia and the Rhineland, where Dr. Peters, Viljem Koester (the priest of the Westphalian Slovenes), Ivan Jenster, Avgust Hegenkoetter, Bernard Huelsmann, Viljem Sondermann, H. Baaken, Fischer, and Teodor (Božidar) Tensundern all gained a good command of Slovene (Bren 1928, 142). Foreign bishoprics and foreign employers helped Slovene priests in their work with emigrants, as did teachers, especially those engaged publicly in the preservation of faith among emigrants.

In order to have the emigration question discussed within a wider circle, Zakrajšek devised the National Advisory Council for Emigration Affairs (*narodni izseljeniški sosvet*) in 1930. It was envisaged as a way of bringing together “ecclesiastical, national, provincial and cultural workers to study the emigration problem.”¹⁴ The founding meeting was held on 17 March 1931. Another two sessions followed, after which the idea “fell away.”¹⁵

Zakrajšek was also responsible for the idea of founding a Slovene Emigration Institute (*Slovenski izseljenski institut*) in Ljubljana. In 1936 he drew up a detailed work plan.¹⁶ The information office of the institute was to be used for both public and private business by all those who dealt with Slovene emigrants. The funds for the institute were to be supplied by the state. It was to be headed by a priest who would, at the same time, be the president of the St. Raphael Society; this was meant to ensure the independence of the institute from the political regime in the country. In all its essential elements the program of the institute complemented the St. Raphael Society and the National Advisory Council for Emigration Affairs’ programs. The organizational structure of the institute was to be expanded by the

¹⁴ Zakrajšek’s letter to Bishop Rožman, 29 December 1930. See: Friš 46–7.

¹⁵ AS, fond 74, šk. 1, Ban. /VI, Official Papers 1929–40, folder: Regular Work, 1936.

¹⁶ “The plan of the Slovene Emigration Institute in Ljubljana”, dated 7 May 1936. (AS, fond 74, šk. 1, Ban. /VI, Official Papers 1929–40, folder: Regular Work, 1936).

creation of departments and the employment of a larger number (nine) of officials. The plan also provided for the expansion of activities to include minority problems, the collection of archive materials (the creation of an emigration museum or archive), books, newspapers, and so on. Zakrajšek would have to obtain the funds for the distribution of aid according to his own system and through his "clergyman-representative" at the Ministry of Social Welfare Policy in Belgrade. His idea for the institute gained some support, in spite of fears about the reaction from Belgrade.¹⁷ But the idea of the institute was never completely translated into practice, as relations between it, the *banovina* emigration service, and the St. Raphael Society were not clearly defined. The question of the financing of the work of the institute was not adequately resolved either. Disagreements within the St. Raphael Society complicated matters, with some incumbent members of the committee opposing the "truncating" of the scope of the society's commitments. Zakrajšek tried to resuscitate his idea by establishing the Chamber of Emigrants (*Izseljenska zbornica*) in 1938; neither did it prove viable.

A specific situation was created in the autumn of 1939 with the formation of the Croatian *banovina*, to which Belgrade transferred a number of emigration affairs as part of social welfare. The national Commissariat for Emigration in Zagreb was increasingly a solely Croatian institution. In May 1940 Belgrade cut support to the St. Raphael Society. It was an alarm that triggered debates on the foundation in Yugoslavia of an official (state) emigration service and a private emigration service. Hopes for the formation of a Slovene *banovina*, which would assume the responsibility for emigration affairs, soon proved to be premature and impractical.

The problem of the transfer of responsibilities and funds prompted the convening of the first consultation on a Slovene emigration service. The consultation was held on 2 April 1940 in Ljubljana and was attended by representatives of the St. Raphael Society, the *banovina* administration, the Farmers' Alliance (*Kmečka zveza*), the Chamber of Farmers (*Kmetijska zbornica*), and other participants. Bishop Rožman did not attend. The participants once again discussed a scheme which would provide for the existence of a

¹⁷ NŠAL, DsvR, 6th session of the committee, 19 October 1936. "As for the opinion in Belgrade, it is another matter."

state or *banovina* emigration service, and for the St. Raphael Society as a private institution. The Emigration Chamber was envisaged as a “semi-official” institution linking the *banovina* and private entities. In a regular session of the St. Raphael Society held on 12 April 1940, the incumbent members of the committee decided not to found a new emigration service but to insist on the old St. Raphael Society.

Organizational problems and an unclear situation regarding the responsibilities of the parties concerned weakened the main purpose of the emigration service at all levels—that is, care for emigrants. This was taking place just as the war in Western Europe was raging, when many Slovene emigrants became refugees, and it was up to the state to take steps to protect their lives and their rights. All this was discussed in the general meeting of the St. Raphael Society held on 28 October 1940 in Ljubljana. Zakrajšek, the secretary of the society, submitted an exhaustive report to the meeting in which he analyzed the work of the society from the resumption of its activities in 1927.

4. Organizational outcomes

Zakrajšek had always considered the emigration question to be part of the Slovene national question. In the second part of 1920s the attitude of the homeland to emigrants and contacts with them were unsatisfactory. Nobody knew how they lived, what they were doing, and what they thought about a return to the homeland. Neither the Slovenes nor the state were aware of the fact that emigrants were “... the lost part of the Slovene people.” For this reason, the St. Raphael Society set itself the following tasks:

- a) To enlist the support of the public and state for the “emigration idea” by raising awareness of, and placing emphasis on, the ties connecting Slovenes at home and Slovene emigrants throughout the world. The St. Raphael Society was to maintain these links and commit itself to enhancing the “state and national consciousness.”
- b) The society should carry out its activity on the basis of a “clear national and state emigration program.”

St. Raphael Society realized these goals by

- a) organizing and participating in emigrants’ congresses;

- b) founding the Chamber of Emigrants, an “all-nations institution” (1938). Zakrajšek said, “It is only with this chamber that our emigrants abroad have been given proof that here, at home, we take the care of emigrants seriously”;
- c) publishing *Izseljenski Vestnik*;
- d) founding an emigration museum;
- e) planning the construction of an emigrant center (*Izseljenski dom*) in Ljubljana;

In the autumn of 1940 Zakrajšek expressed great disappointment at the share of the state. It turned out that Slovene emigration organizations (at home and abroad) were not treated equally and had received less government support. Furthermore, the two million dinar loan for the emigrant center in Ljubljana was canceled. *Izseljenski Vestnik* had to cease publication, and the Chamber of Emigrants was discontinued. Zakrajšek concluded: “We must first secure in this state complete equality for Slovene emigration and then see to all other matters.” The main problem facing the St. Raphael Society was the constant shortage of funds. Zakrajšek was also critical of the the state’s attitude towards emigrants in those Western European countries in the midst of war. He noted in his report: “Our government representatives were the first to flee and they have left the emigrants to themselves. After Germany and France concluded a truce, their situation began to calm down. Still, it is as if they are in the eye of the storm.”¹⁸ And just when help for these unfortunate people was urgently needed, the St. Raphael Society was left without funds. Zakrajšek was also critical of the *banovina* emigration service.

In 1940 he thus proposed:

- a) streamlining of the *banovina* emigration service—that is, the establishment of a Slovene Banovina Emigration Council (*Slovenski banovinski izseljenski svet*), which would be directly subordinated to the *ban* (governor);
- b) organization of a “private emigration service” along the lines of a professional chamber;
- c) concentration of all efforts to obtain funds from the former emigration fund in Belgrade;

¹⁸ NŠAL, DsvR, general meeting, 28 October 1940.

- d) pending the formation of the *Slovene banovina*, the transfer of part of the responsibilities to Ljubljana, as proposed by Dr. Fedor Aranicki, the head of the emigration department in the Ministry of Social Welfare Policy in Belgrade. Under his plan, the *banovina* administration would assume responsibility for national, educational and religious work, whereas responsibility for social welfare and political work would be left to Belgrade.
- e) establishing a Slovene Emigration Alliance (*Slovenska izseljenska zveza*), following the abolition of Alliance of Emigrants' Organizations of Yugoslavia (*Savez iseljeniških organizacija Jugoslavije*) in the spring of 1940 and the formation of the Croatian and Serbian alliances.

After this extensive report, in which he assessed the work of all those responsible for work with emigrants, Zakrajšek resigned as secretary and said in conclusion: "With this I conclude my report and my life's work on emigration affairs!"¹⁹ At the request of Rožman, he remained on the committee of the St. Raphael Society. But after the attack on Yugoslavia on 6 April 1941, Zakrajšek first withdrew to Zagreb, and in June left for New York via Trieste, Rome, and Lisbon.

On 30 March 1941 the Slovene Emigration Alliance (*Slovenska izseljenska zveza*) was founded, its members including four societies: the St. Raphael societies of Ljubljana, Maribor and Črenšovci, and the National Emigration Committee of Ljubljana. The new alliance was to make contact with the Croatian and Serbian alliances in order to establish a state emigration council. The war cut short these "organizational" efforts. A rump St. Raphael Society continued its activities. In a session held on 2 October 1941, Reverend Volc asked: "What if we do not receive the support we have been receiving so far?" to which Rožman replied: "Then we shall discontinue our activities and the society will only exist as an ecclesiastical brotherhood that prays for emigrants."²⁰ That in fact happened.

5. Conclusion

Ever since he had joined the *St. Raphael Society*, Zakrajšek had worked towards uniting all competent forces (including experts) into an

¹⁹ NŠAL, DsvR, general meeting, 28 October 1940.

²⁰ NŠAL, DsvR, 3rd session of the committee, 2 October 1941.

advisory and decision-making body. But his efforts failed. A lack of interest, a measure of half-heartedness, an overlapping of competencies and a shortage of funds all contributed to the failure of that idea, although individual members proved successful and worked hard for the realization of the project (Dr. Ivan Tomšič was one). Thus, as early as July 1933 Zakrajšek declared his intention to resign as president of the St. Raphael Society.²¹

Among emigrants in Europe, religious "disorientation" (the term often used to denote alienation from the faith) was not negligible. This was particularly true of Protestant environments and large workers' centers, where socialist and communist ideas were taking hold among Slovene workers, too. The activity of Yugoslav communists among emigrants during the entire period between the two wars must not be underestimated (Drnovšek 1990). It is not surprising, then, that, according to a statement given in 1938, as many as two-thirds of emigrants were lost to religion.²² The mottoes of Catholic emigration were: unity, love, peace, faith, and family life. Still, the Europe of the 1930s was wrecked with economic and political crises. Hitler's appetites were growing and civil war was being waged in Spain. In the mid-1930s the leftist Popular Front won in France. Ideas were advanced about the association of the forces of the left and those of a Catholic persuasion. Such ideas were rejected by many:

Our workers abroad are being cheated and robbed, our women workers raped, our workers driven to communism and assimilated. Faced with such dangers our Christian-thinking workers are kindly asking us to help them and do all to preclude the uniting of the Christian-thinking and communist workers from Yugoslavia in France.²³

Reports in the autumn of 1939 were even more pessimistic. Seasonal workers in Germany and France, and Slovenes in the diaspora were said to be living in inadequate religious conditions which could cause them to become indifferent to religion and alienated from the church.

At the general meeting of the St. Raphael Society in October 1940, academician Drenovec mentioned the political polarization of

²¹ NŠAL, DsvR, 4th session of the committee, 4 July 1933.

²² *Izseljenski Vestnik*, March 1938.

²³ *Izseljenski Vestnik*, March 1938.

Slovene emigrants into the Catholic and progressive fronts. He described it as a sad fact: "True, we are poisoned with political fights at home, but why should we infect our emigrants with that poison too? I saw abroad that political influence from homeland has filled our emigrants with so much hate that they do not even greet one another."²⁴ He used this argument to oppose Zakrajšek's efforts to found a Slovene emigrants' alliance, which he described as an unnecessary organization that had no prospects of success. He adhered to that current in the St. Raphael Society which opposed the widening of the society and links with other bodies, and insisted that it should remain a purely Catholic society.

Compared with the pre-World War I years, the period between the two wars saw many more state and private initiatives and activities in support of emigrants, especially those in western Europe. Unfortunately, many initiatives remained in an initial phase, or only on paper. In 1939 Kuhar still showed a measure of optimism about solving the emigration question, even at noon:

At noon in the history of the Slovene people, and at noon in the development of our national feeling, which is turning into recklessness, the true herald of national death. Then let all those who cherish the survival and well-being of the Slovene people wake up and unite forces in order to be able to cope with the emigration question, the solution of which must become our national program (536).

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²⁴ NŠAL, DsvR, general meeting, 28 October 1940.

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POVZETEK

ODNOS DRŽAVE IN CERKVE DO IZSELJEVANJA SLOVENCEV
MED OBEMA SVETOVNIMA VOJNAMA

Po omejitvi priseljevanja v ZDA (1924) se je tok slovenskega izseljevanja iz Jugoslavije usmeril v zahodnoevropske države, zlasti v Francijo Belgijo in na Nizozemsko. Zaradi fašističnega pritiska in slabega ekonomskega položaja so se primorski Slovenci pod Italijo (Rapallo 1920) izseljevali v Argentino, del pa se jih je usmeril tudi v Jugoslavijo. Avtor v svojem prispevku oriše odnos katoliške Cerkve in države (Beograda in Ljubljane) do izseljevanja iz jugoslovanskega dela Slovenije. Kljub velikim organizacijskim in drugim naporom, npr. Družbe sv. Rafaela in patra Kazimirja Zakrajška, in kljub naklonjenosti mnogih posameznikov za reševanje t. i. izseljenskega vprašanja, npr. dr. Antona Korošca, se je na državni ravni le malo spremenilo v korist izseljencem. Z redkimi državami so bile sklenjene meddržavne socialne pogodbe, ki bi zaščitile pravni in socialni položaj jugoslovanskih državljanov na delu v tujini. Tudi posluh države glede pomoči izseljencem, npr. s pošiljanjem izseljenskih učiteljev, duhovnikov in konzularnih predstavnikov, ki bi znali slovenski jezik itd., se je izkazal kot simboličen. Zlasti beograjski državni vrh ni bil naklonjen problemom izseljencev, ki so v velikem številu odhajali iz slovenskih in hrvaških delov države. V dvajsetletnem medvojnem obdobju je sredi obdobja izbruhnila še velika gospodarska kriza, ki je povzročila vračanje izseljencev v domovino in s tem povečevanje brezposelnih in pomoči potrebnih. Gospodarska kriza sredi 30. let je upočasnila izseljevanje in deloma spremenila značaj (več je sezonskih delavcev) in smer. (Nemčija postane konec 30. let zanimiva destinacija za sezonske delavce in delavke, zlasti iz Prekmurja.) Izbruh druge svetovne vojne je zaustavil prostovoljno izseljevanje Slovencev v tujino.