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A. Kalc, M. Milharčič Hladnik, and J. Žitnik Serafin, *Daring Dreams of the Future: Slovenian Mass Migrations 1870–1945*

Thought, Society, Culture Series, Vol. 5. Berlin: Peter Lang, 2024, 460 pp.

The migratory processes during the 19th and 20th centuries were a characteristic feature of Slovenian social and political history, deeply affecting the daily lives of entire communities, families, and individuals. In this book, two different phases of Slovenian migration are addressed: the free movement within and across state borders and then the interwar period, when migration policies were subordinated to the tyranny of the nation, which resulted in more restrictive measures.

The authors of this complex volume are Aleksej Kalc, Mirjam Milharčič Hladnik, and Janja Žitnik Serafin, researchers at the Slovenian Migration Institute at the Scientific Research Centre at the Slovenian Academy of Science and Arts. Over the past decades, they have made a significant contribution to Slovenian social, cultural, and political history, reconstructing the migratory movements that have taken place in the Adriatic border area and helping to shed light on integration processes, gender inequalities, and the cultural elements in which those who left and those who remained identified.

The studies proposed in this volume offer a historical overview of migratory processes that, over almost a century, have involved a territory historically linked to different state entities, empires, and political spaces. The proposed research fills some gaps in an area only partially investigated by Slovenian historiography. The geographical area under analysis, as explained in the introductory note, is called the “Slovenian ethnic territory,” a definition adopted to indicate the region that has historically been inhabited by Slovenian men and women for language and culture and which extends beyond the borders of today’s Republic of Slovenia.

The administrative and political structure of this area, which was first part of the Habsburg Monarchy, then part of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (1918–1929), the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1929–1945), and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1945–1991), is one of the challenges that this volume faces, both from a technical and methodological point of view. In fact, the region under consideration does not correspond to the governmental fragmentation to which statistics and sources refer in different historical periods. In addition, the cultural differences between the spaces, already characterized by multiple and multifaceted linguistic and cultural identities, have been accentuated by the variations in power centers. Therefore, changes and hybridizations of these elements have also occurred within the same family and generational context.

The introduction frames the central theme: the individuals’ mobility and movement as the structural elements of social processes. In the historical period under consideration, migration became a constituent factor of the human social and economic strategies of entire households and communities, not only because of material needs and political pressures but also in the perspective of future planning

and in pursuing their aspirations. By highlighting the migratory forms that have crossed the Slovenian ethnic territory, the book looks at the impact that local, international, and socioeconomic political contexts have had on these processes and extends the cultural space of Slovenia beyond the defined historical boundaries, witnessing the displacement even of the same multiple national identifiers that have seen the appearance of many other "Slovenians" around the world.

These pages focus on the different migration patterns and give prominence to their multiplicity of forms: within the same regions or abroad, temporarily or permanently, short- or long-distance. Moreover, they outline the peculiar characteristics of specific regions, showing a continuation of existing practices or new ways of entering these regions to follow new possibilities and new opportunities in domestic and international job markets. The research aims to emphasize the differences in these short- or long-term, continental or transcontinental migration processes, both from the point of view of logistics, timing, and practices and to serve precise needs, plans, and socioeconomic strategies.

Covering nearly a century, this book approaches Slovenian migration through historiography, sociology, and literary studies, and it brings to the fore the moments of rupture and continuity of these processes in relation to multiple geopolitical disruptions and redefinitions of state boundaries. The volume is divided into three sections, in which the voices and individual experiences of the protagonists of migration flank analytical approaches.

The first part introduces a survey by Aleksej Kalc that explores the morphological, geographical, and demographic characteristics of the countries of origin and destination, focusing on how regional differences and social and economic diversity affect travel dynamics. This section is centered around mobilization heterogeneity, outlining the structural elements of the migratory phenomena, emphasizing the continuity and breaks in the historical context being studied due to the varied spectrum of factors that have influenced this shift. The author shows how these movements adapted, both in form and methods, to the changes that occurred in the context of the modernization of the 19th century, to which macro-structural changes individuals responded by adopting diversified migration strategies. Migration patterns emerge according to their desires and socio-organizational goals, which are partly based on previous social behavior but take on new structural connotations conditioned by organic aspects, legal frameworks, and gender distinctions.

The migration of men and women is presented as two complementary practices integrated into economic and social systems. The analysis of this process offers a useful observation point for their insertion according to the labor market logic and social roles, which have led to the creation of asymmetric and divergent routes. Linking with the identification community, cultural and linguistic affinities, and daily habits played a vital role in the migratory context, and the social network system was essential for support during both the pre-and-post-transfer phases, as the chapter illustrates.

One important aspect of the volume is the correlation between the increase in the phenomenon's size and the country's national construction. In this context, not only did migration become the subject of heated debates, but from the very beginning, the masses of young people were viewed as a painful wound and serious threat. World War I represents a watershed in the history of European migration, marking the beginning of the alignment of the "migration issue" with the economic, social, and national interests of the countries of origin and reception. The two wars saw Slovenian migration take on new forms, primarily due to geopolitical changes and international migration regimes, which redirected routes to new destinations regarding age and gender structures.

In the book's second section, Janja Žitnik Serafin sheds light on the general history intersection with the Slovenian community life's constituent elements, revealing the organization process, the cultural productions, and the creative engagements in the host countries. Here, the emphasis is on the associative effort in local and regional communities and the many functions they have fulfilled at the political, economic, and social levels and, above all, at the cultural, religious, and educational stages. New social and mutual aid structures emerged in the new relocation contexts, followed by the creation of political, economic, humanitarian, and sports organizations – some still active today – and the construction of churches, schools, and recreation centers.

The proposed reflection looks at such structures' functions both as a bridge between the immigrant community and the host country and as a means of preserving social, cultural, and political ties with the place of origin.

In introducing the great variety and nature of organizations, the author illustrates the heterogeneity of cultural positions taken by migrants and the multiple worldviews that have evolved in different generational contexts and space-time. The author pays considerable attention to the ethnic and identity criteria on which this self-organization system was based, showing how the mission of preserving the Slovenian linguistic and cultural heritage was carried out. A decisive role was played by some prominent figures in schools and religious assistance, as well as the commitment of societies to transmit this heritage to younger generations through daily activities, acting clubs and theater, and children's choirs.

Re-examining the history of Slovenian migrant organizations means observing the geographical expansion of the Slovenian world and its adaptation to host contexts. It also offers a useful insight into the strategies individuals adopt in integrating into new environments while maintaining a close connection with the place of origin. This part of the volume highlights the ideological and political heterogeneity inherent in the characteristics of the Slovenian diaspora. It shows the cultural transformations and hybridizations that occurred in the process of identity preservation.

The need to preserve identity reflects the crucial role played by the literary production of Slovenian migrants: the works emerged for the vast majority within the organizational structures and give us the perception of lived experience, the

periods of adaptation in the new homeland, the complex identity issues, dilemmas, trauma, and social challenges. They also look at the old home with nostalgic tones and idealized representations. The diaspora's political, ideological, and cultural dynamics are evinced in the Slovenian press, which is still a decisive tool for understanding events, attitudes, and relations established in the context of Slovenian communities abroad and in their country of origin.

The tail end of the volume offers an in-depth study by Mirjam Milharčič Hladnik, where she illustrates the different migratory trajectories and patterns through the words and interpretations of the diaspora's main characters. This section, called "Migration Stories," suggests six points of view, perceptions, and migratory experiences, invaluable sources of Slovenian mobility in different historical contexts. Furthermore, the multiplicity of perceptions reflects the diverse migration routes and demonstrates various stimulatory factors and levels of involvement in the transfer countries. As the author explains, by giving voice to the diaspora leading characters, we can observe the complexity of human interactions, practices, and experiences in the social, cultural, political, and religious contexts that surround them. Personal human narrations emphasize the multidimensionality of such movements and each individual's extremely subjective experience of these events has resulted in a series of faceted representations of the world.

Stories come from multiple contexts, as part of biographies, memoirs, autobiographies, and diaries, or even publications in magazines, newspapers, and books. Sometimes, these sources are preserved in archives or accompanied by the protagonists' personal memories, letters, photos, and postcards. The criteria for selecting stories make a point of the disparate experiences accentuating diversity of gender, class, religion, origins, and destination contexts, all factors that influenced personal decisions, dynamics, and daily negotiations.

This subjectivity reveals the broad spectrum of interpersonal connections, transnational ties, family contexts, political and moral norms, gender roles, religion, ethnicity, and nationality. This last part of the volume perceives the subjective dynamics as a valuable tool for shedding light on the elements of continuity and rupture between those who left and those who remained and on the perceptions of identity, heritage, traditions, and political sentiments that developed within migrant communities.

From the intimate letters of a young couple emerge the feelings of hope, concern, and doubt that define the lives of those who must leave the country and those who stay; the diary of a young mother is an expression of the painful and dramatic condition of refugees in the context of war; the experiences of collective exile are testimony to the involuntariness of mass displacements operated during conflicts; the stories of two women, different for extractions and contexts, they give us the anguish and the feeling of loss for having abandoned their home, but it also represents a demonstration of tenacity and realization. Through memories, letters, direct testimonies, and diaries of participants in the migration process, the

author wants to show the most intimate and emotional perceptions of these experiences, revealing a wealth of reflections, decisions, and transformations of identity that have marked the lives of all individuals involved in these multidimensional mobility circuits.

The volume offers an overview of population movements between the middle of the 19th century and World War II in the Slovenian ethnic territory, elucidating the evolution, the prevailing mobility patterns, and the changing and continuing aspects of these migratory dynamics in the wider European and global framework. The analysis proposed in these pages does not reduce the migration process to the men and the women who moved into a different social context. Instead, it insists on the heterogeneity of these movements and on how they were affected by the variation of socioeconomic circumstances, the geopolitical framework, and administrative structures.

The emergence of (new) differentiated migratory regimes caused the diaspora characters to adapt to the policies of the countries of origin and settlement, alternating encouraging and indulgent attitudes with selective and restrictive policies dictated by the market logic.

The book focuses on the diverse spectrum of causes that have led entire families and individuals to emigrate, whose decision to leave or return to their native country depended on the political circumstances, the economic conditions of the labor market, their community ties and networks, personal ambitions, or the intent to achieve their "daring dreams."

An interesting aspect highlighted by the book is the dynamics of national identities and traditions preservation, expressed in political and cultural communities abroad. The organization of community life in Slovenia shows the associative and integrative commitment of migrants, the emergence of specific identity groups, and their relationship with the dominant social, political, and cultural environment. The concrete experiences of individuals represent a critical point of observation of the multiformity of these movements and transnational links, direct testimonies of the extension of the migratory process beyond the delineated political, economic and social boundaries. This social-historical picture closes with World War II, an event with a dramatic and violent impact on the movements of the Slovenian population, which was followed by a new phase in the migration history marked by the new political geography of the Cold War.

Benedetta Fabrucci

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