



**34** ZBIRKA  
RAZPOZNAVANJA  
RECOGNITIONES

Helena Jaklitsch

**SLOVENSKI  
BEGUNCI  
V TABORIŠČIH  
V ITALIJI 1945–1949**



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**1945–1949**

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**Helena Jaklitsch**  
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**V ITALIJI 1945–1949**

*Recenzenta* dr. Bojan Godeša  
dr. Bojan Balkovec

*Jezikovni pregled* Polona Kekec  
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**POVZETEK**

**SLOVENSKI  
BEGUNCI V  
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ITALIJI 1945–1949**

Po drugi svetovni vojni, maja 1945, je Slovenijo zapustilo prek dvajset tisoč Slovencev, med njimi skoraj dvanajst tisoč domobrancev, ki so bili le dva meseca kasneje vrnjeni in pomorjeni, v veliki meri pa je odšla tudi slovenska gospodarska, kulturna, politična in prosvetna elita. V taboriščih na Koroškem je ostalo šest tisoč slovenskih beguncev, več tisoč Slovencev pa se je po vojni znašlo v taboriščih v Italiji. Toda v primerjavi s tistimi v Avstriji, kjer so bili skoraj vsi Slovenci naseljeni v štirih, kasneje pa celo v treh taboriščih, so bili slovenski begunci v Italiji poslani v številna taborišča, v letih, ki so jih preživeli tam, pa so jih pogosto selili. Prav zaradi tega je težje ugotoviti, koliko Slovencev je pravzaprav povojna leta preživelo v taboriščih v Italiji. K manj natančnemu popisu taboriščnikov prispeva tudi dejstvo, da so Slovence, skupaj s pripadniki drugih narodov, ki so prišli iz Jugoslavije, praktično v vseh taboriščih v Italiji vodili skoraj izključno pod oznako 'Jugoslovani', medtem ko so na Koroškem slovenske taboriščnike dosledno vodili po narodnosti. Le redko najdemo v dokumentih Unrre, organizacije, ki je nekaj časa skrbelo za taborišča na Apeninskem polotoku, da bi bili Slovenci izrecno omenjeni. Še največ sreče imamo pri določanju števila taboriščnikov v osrednjem 'slovenskem taborišču', v Serviglianu in kasneje v Senigaliji, če lahko tako poimenujemo taborišči, kjer se je zbrala največja skupina Slovencev. Tam si namreč lahko vsaj nekoliko pomagamo s poročili o volitvah v slovenske taboriščne odbore, z zaobljubo, ki so jo slovenski begunci v Italiji namenili Mariji, če se srečno vrnejo domov, in so jo podpisali skoraj vsi begunci, ali pa s posameznimi dopisi zavezniških uprav. Kar nekaj beguncev pa si je zatočišče pred domačo komunistično oblastjo poiskalo v Rimu. Zaradi vsega tega so številke o tem, koliko Slovencev se je dejansko znašlo v italijanskih taboriščih, zgolj približne. Bogdan Kolar v knjigi Salezijanci med begunci navaja, da naj bi jih bilo približno pet tisoč, pri tem pa se opira na podatke, ki jih v svojih člankih navajata Marijan Marolt in Milica Strgar. Janez Arnež v članku Slovensko šolstvo v begunskih taboriščih v Avstriji in Italiji od 1945 do 1949 navaja, da naj

bi bilo (po njegovih lastnih izračunih) v italijanskih taboriščih okoli 4.500 slovenskih beguncev. Dejansko se število, glede na dostopne podatke, giblje nekje med štiri do pet tisoč beguncev.

Največja slovenska begunska skupnost, sestavljena predvsem iz Slovencev, ki so jih 11. oz. 12. maja 1945 s kamioni prepeljali iz Koroške, je svojo pot, s krajšim postankom v Vidmu, začela v nekdanjem koncentracijskem taborišču v Monigu pri Trevisu, od tam pa so jih konec avgusta 1946 preselili v taborišče v Serviglianu. Ta skupina je štela okoli 1.200 beguncev. Niti ne mesec dni po prihodu v novo taborišče so okoli 250 Slovencev, predvsem družin z majhnimi otroki – taborišče namreč ni bilo primerno zanje – preselili v taborišče v Senigaliji. Po skoraj letu dni se jim je, čeprav v drugem taborišču, pridružila skupina iz Servigliana, vendar zanje tudi to ni bila zadnja selitev. Slovenci so bili v taboriščih tudi v Barleti, Riccioneju, Traniju, Fermu, Lammie Campu, Modeni, Jesiju, Forliju, Eboliju, manjše skupine pa tudi še v nekaterih drugih taboriščih po Italiji. Študentje so po posredovanju dr. Kreka dobili mesta v taboriščih blizu univerzitetnih mest Bologna in Padova.

Življenje taboriščnikov ni bilo lahko. Ne le, da so izgubili domovino – ko so maja 1945 odhajali, so bili prepričani, da odhajajo zgolj za dva, morda tri tedne – in mnogi tudi svoje najbližje, tudi razmere v taboriščih niso bile prizanesljive. Prve mesece so begunci pogosto spali na betonskih tleh barak ali na skromnih slamnjačah. Šele postopno so taboriščni obrtniki naredili preproste postelje, vendar je tudi to trajalo počasi, saj niso imeli zadosti materiala. Barake, bodisi lesene bodisi kovinske, so bile prepisne in neizolirane, v zimskem času pa ni bilo dovolj kurjave, da bi skromni gašperčki ogreli hladne prostore. Čeprav so bili v Italiji, so bile zime hude. Prav tisto leto, ko so bili tam Slovenci, je v Serviglianu zapadlo največ snega v zadnjih nekaj desetletjih, temperature pa so se na termometru spustile zelo nizko. V pločevinastih barakah, v katerih je v Senigaliji bival dobršen del slovenske skupnosti, je bilo še posebej neznosno v poletnih mesecih. V nekaterih taboriščih so begunce naselili v



napol podrte stavbe, v katerih ni bilo niti luči niti vode. Velik problem so bile sanitarije ter tekoča voda, ki je bila za taboriščnike skromno odmerjena. Bolj ali manj strogo omejeno je bilo gibanje izven taborišč. Brez soglasja taboriščnih vodij taboriščniki niso smeli zapuščati taboriščnih prostorov; marsikje je veljala tudi policijska ura. Ob tem seveda ni šlo za to, da večinoma ne bi dobili soglasij za krajše izhode, bolj zoprni je bil občutek, da je tvoja svoboda omejena in da si odvisen od dobre volje nekoga drugega. Skromnim bivanjskim razmeram je treba dodati tudi stisko s prostorom. Marsikje si je moralo več družin tudi več mesecev deliti isti prostor; da bi si vsaj nekoliko zagotovili družinsko intimnost, so med postelje postavili zasilne lesene pregrade ali zavese, k složnemu življenju pa jih je spodbujal tudi Anton Orehar, duhovnik, ki je prevzel skrb za slovenske begunce v Italiji: »Ne naveličajmo se v begunstvu drug drugega. Vsi smo z istim križem obloženi, pomagajmo ga drug drugemu nositi, a nikar oteževati in greniti življenje, ki je že samo na sebi zadosti grenko.«<sup>950</sup>

Ne le v taboriščih, tudi med domačim prebivalstvom je prva leta primanjkovalo hrane, toda stiska v taboriščih je bila še večja. Domačini so namreč nekaj dodatne hrane pridelali na poljih, medtem ko je bilo za taboriščnike to težje. Saj so se slovenske matere potrudile ter zasejale kakšno zelenjavo ali krompir, toda zaradi pogostih selitev je pridelek večkrat ostal nepobran. Hrana je bila tako skromna in enolična, predvsem pa hranilno komaj zadostna za vsakodnevne potrebe. Svoje bivanje v taboriščih so morali odrasli tudi 'odplačati,' in sicer z nekajurnim dnevnim prostovoljnim delom v korist celotne skupnosti. Nekateri so skrbeli za kuhinjo, drugi so delali v taboriščni upravi, spet tretji so skrbeli za urejenost zunanjih površin. Slovenci so se z natančnim delom zelo izkazali. Še posebej občudovani so bili obrtni izdelki slovenskih obrtniških mojstrov, ki so nastajali iz najpreprostejših materialov in vendarle dosegali izredne estetske in kakovostne standarde. Svoje izdelke so tudi razstavljali, z

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950 Zedinjena Slovenija, št. 125, str. 5.

njihovo prodajo pa so dobili nekaj sredstev, ki so jih lahko namenili za bogato kulturno in prosvetno življenje, ki so ga vzpostavili v taboriščih.

Marsikje je taboriščno življenje grenila tudi samovolja nekaterih taboriščnih vodij. Ti so bili namreč slovenskim beguncem ponekod bolj, ponekod pa manj naklonjeni. Še posebej zoprno je bilo Slovencem v času bivanja v obeh taboriščih v Senigaliji, saj sta se nenaklonjenemu taboriščnemu vodstvu pridružila tudi župan mesta, ki je pripadal komunistični stranki, ter lokalna skupnost.

Ne glede na vse tegobe so Slovenci svoje taboriščno življenje povsod, kjer so bili, zelo resno zastavili. Celo tam, kjer so predstavljali med vsemi taboriščniki najmanjšo skupino, so jim taboriščni vodje postopno zaupali večino ali vsaj dobršen del tistih vodstvenih mest, ki so bila namenjena taboriščnikom. Slovenci so imeli svoj taboriščni odbor, ki so ga izvolili na podlagi tajnih volitev. Odbor si je prizadeval za dobre odnose s taboriščnim vodstvom, imel je stike z Narodnim odborom v Rimu, posebno skrb pa je seveda namenjal slovenskim taboriščnikom. V Serviglianu so, da bi olajšali življenje predvsem najrevnejšim beguncem, pa tudi drugim, ustanovili dobrodelni sklad, znotraj katerega so odprli različne delavnice (šiviljsko, krojaško, mizarstvo idr.). Sredstva, ki so jih zbrali ne le z izdelki »domačih mojstrov«, temveč tudi s prodajo vstopnic za prireditve, ki so jih organizirali, so namenili za nakup različnega materiala, šolskih potrebščin, zdravil, lesa in drv. V sklad pa so mesečno od skromne plače prispevali tudi Slovenci, ki so bili tako ali drugače zaposleni. Sklad je s svojim delom nadaljeval tudi v Senigaliji, odprl pa je celo trgovino, v kateri so lahko taboriščniki kupili kakšne dodatke k hrani, dodaten kos obleke (mnogi so imeli s seboj ob prihodu v taborišče zgolj tisto obleko, s katero so šli od doma). Za taboriščnike je skrbel tudi Rdeči križ.

Čeprav Slovenci v taboriščih po Italiji niso razvili tako bogate tiskarske dejavnosti kot slovenski begunci na Koroškem, pa se lahko vseeno pohvalijo z ne tako majhnim številom časopisnih

naslovov ter izdajo nekaj knjig. Zavedati se je treba, da je bilo to zahtevno delo, saj je v tistem času primanjkovalo papirja in je na črnem trgu dosegal visoke cene; enako tudi črnilo, potrebno za tisk. Skoraj v vseh taboriščih, kjer so bili, je izhajal vsaj en časopis oziroma glasilo, še posebej pa velja izpostaviti časopis Zedinjena Slovenija, ki so ga začeli izdajati 6. septembra 1945 v taborišču v Serviglianu in je predstavljal osrednje glasilo vseh slovenskih beguncev v Italiji. Izhajal je neprekinjeno do 1. februarja 1948. Takrat so zapisali: »Z današnjo številko se Zedinjena Slovenija poslavlja od svojih naročnikov, bralcev, prijateljev, od taborišča in od vse slovenske begunske skupnosti. Polni dve leti je vršila svoje poslanstvo med nami in je imela stalno pred sabo samo ta cilj: služiti skupnosti, ji pomagati do večje uveljavitve v tujem svetu in širiti dober glas in pošteno ime našega naroda, katerega sinovi in hčere smo in hočemo vedno tudi ostati.«<sup>951</sup> Zedinjena Slovenija je zelo kmalu dobila tudi svojo leposlovno prilogo Svet in dom, v kateri so sodelovali vsi najpomembnejši literarni delavci v izgnanstvu, list pa so z ilustracijami bogatili Bara Remec in drugi. Tiskali so tudi druge časopise in revije, namenjene mladim, otrokom in odraslim, izdajali pa so tudi liste z versko vsebino. V taborišču v Senigaliji je izšlo celo nekaj številčk ženskega modnega časopisa Lepa Vida, v taborišču v Eboliju pa so slovenski begunci glasilo Mi in svet izdajali v barvah, kar je bil za tiste razmere nepredstavljen dosežek.

V osrednji slovenski begunski skupnosti so se lahko pohvalili tudi z izjemno kakovostnim Emigrantskim pevskim zborom Slovenija, ki je dosegal veliko prepoznavnost, njihovi samostojni koncerti so bili odlično obiskani, pogosto pa so jih vabili tudi na različna gostovanja v bližnjo in daljno okolico. Za zbor je bilo vrhunec njihovo gostovanje v Rimu, kjer so med drugim peli na avdienci pri papežu in na vatikanskem radiu. Toda to ni bil edini pevski zbor. V vseh taboriščih so Slovenci takoj, ko se je dalo, ustanovili različne zборе, tako otroške kot mladinske in odrasle, nastale pa so tudi manjše orkestralne in godalne zasedbe, ki so

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951 Zedinjena Slovenija, 1. 2. 1948, str. 3.

jih prav tako zelo radi prisluhnili. V Senigaliji je delovala tudi individualna pevska šola s poukom o osnovah glasbene teorije in pevske tehnike.

Slovenski begunci so veliko pozornosti namenjali tudi gledališčni dejavnosti. Izjemno zahtevne in vrhunsko odigrane gledališke predstave, med katerimi najdemo tudi Shakespeara, Gogolja in druge uveljavljene avtorje, pa tudi predstave slovenskih avtorjev, z izredno dodelano scensko postavitvijo ter kostumi, ki so jih z veliko iznajdljivostjo sešile taboriščne šivilje, so pritegnile številne obiskovalce pa tudi tuje delegacije. Gledališkim predstavam so se pridružili tudi bralni in literarni večeri ter akademije, pripravljene za pomembnejše praznike ali ob pomembnejših obletnicah.

Ob vsej raznovrstni in bogati kulturni dejavnosti pa ima posebno mesto slovensko begunsko šolstvo, ki je v zahtevnih okoliščinah in razmerah dosegalo nepredstavljivo kakovost. Na begunski poti se je namreč znašlo tudi zelo veliko otrok in mladine. Skoraj deset odstotkov vseh Slovencev v Monigu je bilo mlajših od 15 let. Njim je bila namenjena posebna skrb slovenskega taboriščnega vodstva. Tako so le v nekaj dneh po prihodu v taborišče ustanovili ne le ljudsko šolo in otroški vrtec, temveč tudi slovensko begunsko gimnazijo, ki je svoja vrata odprla celo nekaj dni prej kot tista na Vetrinjskem polju. Gimnazijo je sprva vodil dr. Srečko Baraga, ko pa so ga zavezniške oblasti povabile v Trst z nalogo, da obnovi slovensko zamejsko šolstvo, ki je bilo v času fašizma popolnoma zatrto, je to nalogo prevzel Ivan Prijatelj. V begunski gimnaziji jim je uspelo zagotoviti odličen učiteljski zbor, ki je bil do dijakov, ne glede na okoliščine, v katerih so delovali, zelo zahteven. Zavedati se je treba, da je takrat primanjkovalo vsega – tudi učbenikov, zvezkov in drugih učnih pripomočkov. Toda to profesorskega zbora ni oviralo, da ne bi dijakom ponudilo kar tri različne gimnazijske programe. Tako so lahko izbirali med klasično gimnazijo, realko in učiteljiščem.

Pri poučevanju, ne le v gimnaziji, temveč tudi v ljudski šoli, so veliko dali na interdisciplinarnost, kar pomeni, da so

predmete med seboj vsebinsko povezovali. Želeli so, da bi učenci in dijaki dobili karseda poglobljeno in široko znanje in da bi se naučili misliti. Popolno slovensko begunsko gimnazijo je ustanovila tudi begunska skupina, ki je odšla v Senigalijo št. 7. Tudi tam so se trudili mladini ponuditi kakovosten šolski program. Vodstvo obeh gimnazij si je ves čas prizadevalo, da bi – tako kot slovenska begunska gimnazija na Koroškem – pridobili javno priznanje, vendar jim to ni uspelo, tako da so del mature morali dijaki opravljati tudi na italijanski gimnaziji. Toda ne glede na to so dijaki, ki so v taborišču končali gimnazijo, zelo uspešno nadaljevali tudi na univerzah ter kasneje zgradili uspešne mednarodne kariere na številnih področjih. Mnogi med njimi so svoj uspeh pripisovali prav slovenski begunski gimnaziji. Tudi po drugih taboriščih so slovenski begunci ustanovili različne šole. Kot zanimivost velja izpostaviti ljudsko šolo v Riccioneju, ki je k pouku vpisovala tudi odrasle. V taborišču je bilo namreč kar nekaj Primorcev, ki nikoli niso hodili v slovenske šole, in njim je bila namenjena posebna skrb slovenskega taboriščnega vodstva. Za naše današnje pojme je skoraj nepredstavljivo, da so morali za šolanje, kljub težkim razmeram, plačevati šolnino. Ta je bila seveda nizka in tisti, ki je niso mogli plačati, so bili plačila oproščeni, toda tudi na ta način so hoteli mladim pokazati, kako pomembno je znanje in da je zanj potrebno tudi kaj žrtvovati.

Veliko pozornost so namenjali tudi neformalnemu izobraževanju, saj so želeli, da vsi slovenski begunci, tudi odrasli, pametno izkoristijo čas v taborišču. Zanje so organizirali številne jezikovne ter strokovne tečaje in pripravili izjemno veliko predavanj; takih s poljudno vsebino kot takih, ki so zahtevala poglobljena predhodna znanja. Tako enih kot drugih so se taboriščniki množično udeleževali.

Kot so povedali begunci, vsega tega ne bi zmogli brez globoke vere, ki se je odražala tudi v njihovem vsakdanjem življenju. V vseh taboriščih so tako najprej postavili kapelico; tisto v Monigu je med drugim opremil slovenski kipar France Gorše, takrat tudi sam begunec. Ohranjali so verske navade, ki so jih

prinesli od doma, v taborišču pa so ustanovili tudi skavte. Brez neomajne vere ne bi prenesli vseh pritiskov, ki so jih bili deležni od nekaterih taboriščnih vodij, ki so želeli, da bi se čim prej vrnili domov. Ti so tako začeli omejevati kulturno in prosvetno življenje, temu pa so bile namenjene tudi pogoste selitve. Njihovo življenje so zaznamovali tudi repatriacijske komisije, ki so prihajale v taborišča, izgoni najbolj aktivnih predstavnikov begunske skupnosti ter zaostrovanje bivanjskih razmer v taborišču. Toda ne glede na vse se večina taboriščnikov ni odločila za vrnitev domov, temveč so se po treh letih življenja v taboriščih odločili za odhod v nove domovine, še posebej v Argentino, ki je najbolj širokosrčno odprla vrata za slovensko begunsko skupnost.



**SUMMARY**

**SLOVENIAN  
REFUGEES IN THE  
ITALIAN CAMPS  
1945–1949**



After World War II, in May 1945, more than 20,000 Slovenians left their country, among them almost 12,000 members of the Home Guard who would be sent back only two months later and killed. Meanwhile, a lot of the Slovenian economic, cultural, political, and educational elite left as well. After the war, six thousand Slovenian refugees remained in the camps in the Austrian Carinthia, while several thousand Slovenians ended up in the Italian camps. However, unlike the camps in Austria, where almost all of the Slovenian refugees were assigned to only four and later even three camps, the Slovenians in Italy were sent to many different camps and were relocated often during the years they spent there. For precisely this reason it is all the more difficult to ascertain how many Slovenians in fact spent the post-war years in the Italian camps. The imprecision of the camp resident list was also contributed to by the fact that practically in all of the Italian camps, Slovenians were registered as »Yugoslavs«, together with the members of the other nations who had arrived from Yugoslavia; while in Carinthia, the Slovenian refugees were consistently registered according to their nationality. The documents of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration – the UNRRA, which was in charge of the camps located in the Italian Peninsula for a while – rarely mention Slovenians explicitly. The central »Slovenian camp« – if we may refer to it as such because this was where the largest group of Slovenians had gathered – was located in Servigliano and later in Senigallia. The number of the Slovenian refugees here is comparatively easy to determine, as we can in this case, at least to a certain degree, resort to the reports on the elections for the Slovenian camp committees; to the vow to Mother Mary, made by almost all Slovenian refugees in Italy in case they should return home happily; or to the individual letters of the Allied administrations. Meanwhile, quite a few Slovenians sought refuge in Rome to get away from the communist authorities at home. Due to all of the above, the number of Slovenians that in fact ended up in the Italian camps can only be

approximated. In his book »*Salezijanci med begunci*» (Salesians among Refugees), Bogdan Kolar states that their number was around five thousand. He bases this estimate on the information provided in their articles by Marijan Marolt and Milica Strgar. In his article »*Slovensko šolstvo v begunskih taboriščih v Avstriji in Italiji od 1945 do 1949*» (Slovenian Education in the Refugee Camps in Austria and Italy between 1945 and 1949), Janez Arnež states that, according to his own calculations, the Italian camps housed around 4,500 Slovenian refugees. The actual number that can be ascertained from the information available must have been between four and five thousand refugees.

The largest Slovenian refugee community, consisting predominantly of the people transported from Carinthia with trucks on 11 or 12 May 1945, initially ended up in the former concentration camp in Monigo near Treviso, after a short stopover in Udine. From there they were relocated to the Servigliano camp at the end of August 1946. This group consisted of around 1,200 refugees. Not even a month after their arrival to the new camp, around 250 Slovenians were relocated to the camp in Senigallia – especially families with small children, as the previous location was not appropriate for them. After almost a year, they were joined by a group from Servigliano in yet another camp – but not even this was the last relocation for them. Slovenians were also in the camps in Barletta, Riccione, Trani, Fermo, Lammie Camp, Modena, Jesi, Forli, and Eboli; while other smaller groups also stayed in certain other camps around Italy. After the intervention of Dr Krek, students could transfer to the camps near the university cities of Bologna and Padua.

The life of the camp residents was not easy. Not only had they lost their homeland (when they had left in May 1945, they had been convinced that it would only be for two, maybe three weeks), but many of them had also lost their nearest and dearest. Meanwhile, the situation in the camps was difficult as well. During the first months, refugees would often sleep on the concrete floor of their barracks or in modest straw beds. Only

gradually were the camp artisans able to make simple beds, but even that took a long time due to the material shortage. The barracks – either wooden or metal – were drafty and uninsulated, and in the winter there was not enough fuel for the small stoves to heat the cold rooms. Even though this was Italy, winters were harsh. During the very winter that Slovenians were there, the heaviest snow in the last few decades fell in Servigliano, and the temperatures dropped severely. The sheet metal barracks where a significant part of the Slovenian community lived in Senigallia were particularly unbearable in the summer months. In certain camps, refugees were settled in half-destroyed buildings without electricity or water. Bathrooms and running water represented a big problem, as the amount of water allocated to the refugees was modest. Movement outside of the camps was more or less firmly restricted. Without the consent of the camp managers, the residents were not allowed to leave the camp premises, and curfews were often in place. People were usually able to get permissions for brief leaves, so this was not exactly a problem. What was indeed unpleasant, though, was that their freedom was restricted and that they depended on the mood of somebody else. We should also add spatial constraints to the modest living conditions. Multiple families often had to share the same rooms for many months. In order to ensure at least a little bit of family privacy, they would erect partition walls or curtains between the beds, and Anton Orehar – a priest who assumed the duty to take care of the Slovenian refugees in Italy – would encourage them to live in harmony: »Let us not get fed up with each other in our exile. We all have the same cross to bear, so let us help each other with the burden and never make our lives more difficult or unpleasant, as it is already bitter enough on its own.«<sup>1</sup>

The food shortage was not only an issue in the camps, but also among the native population. Nevertheless, the distress of the people in the camps was even greater. The native population

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1 *Zedinjena Slovenija*, No. 125, p. 5.

was at least able to grow a bit of additional food in the fields, while the inhabitants of the camps could not do that easily. Slovenian mothers would work hard and try to grow vegetables or potatoes. However, due to the frequent relocations, they would often be unable to harvest the fruit of their labour. Food was thus modest, monotonous, and, above all, barely sufficient for the refugees' everyday needs. Adults had to »pay« for their stay in the camps as well: with a few hours of voluntary daily labour for the benefit of the whole community. Some people would take care of the kitchen, others would work in the camp administration, and yet others would take care of the surroundings. Slovenians made quite a name for themselves with their precise work. Artisanal products made by Slovenian artisans, made from the simplest of materials yet nevertheless achieving extraordinary aesthetic and quality standards, were especially admired. The artisans would also exhibit their products, and the sales ensured some resources that could be used in order to develop a rich cultural and educational life in the camps.

In many camps, life was also made more difficult by the arbitrariness of certain camp managers, whose disposition towards the Slovenian refugees might have been favourable or not. The period during which the Slovenians stayed at both camps in Senigallia was particularly awful for them, as the disapproving camp leadership was also joined by the city mayor, a member of the Communist Party, and the local community.

Regardless of all the hardships, the Slovenians took their life in the camps – wherever they might have stayed – very seriously. Even where they represented the smallest group among all the camp residents, the camp management would gradually entrust them with the majority or at least a significant part of the leadership positions, intended for the residents. Slovenians had their own camp committee, chosen at secret elections. It strived to maintain good relations with the camp leadership and contacts with the National Committee in Rome; and, of course, it paid special attention to the Slovenian camp residents.

A charity fund was established in Servigliano with the intention of making life easier for the camp residents, in particular the poorest refugees as well as others; and a variety of workshops (sewing, tailoring, carpentry, etc.) were organised in this context. The resources gathered not only with the products of »camp artisans« but also with the sales of tickets for the events that the camp residents would organise were intended for the purchase of various materials, school supplies, medicine, wood, and firewood. Slovenians who were employed in any way would contribute to the fund monthly from their modest wages. The fund kept operating in Senigallia as well. It even opened a store where the camp residents could purchase some additional food and clothes (when they arrived to the camp, many refugees only possessed whatever they had worn when they had left their homes). The camp residents were also taken care of by the Red Cross.

Although the Slovenians in the camps around Italy did not develop publishing activities as rich as those of the Slovenian refugees in Carinthia, they could nevertheless boast a considerable number of newspapers as well as the publication of a few books. We have to be aware that this was demanding work, as in that time paper was in short supply and it could be very expensive on the black market; and the same was true of the ink required for printing. In almost all of the camps where Slovenians were located, at least one newspaper or gazette was published. The newspaper *Zedinjena Slovenija* (United Slovenia), which started coming out on 6 September 1945 in the Servigliano camp and represented the central publication of all Slovenian refugees in Italy, should be mentioned explicitly. It was published without interruptions until 1 February 1948. At that point it stated: »With the today's issue, *Zedinjena Slovenija* bids farewell to its subscribers, readers, friends, the camp, and all of the Slovenian refugee community. The newspaper has kept fulfilling its mission among you for as long as two years, and throughout this entire time it has only had this goal in mind: to serve the

community; help it assert itself better abroad; and spread the good name and good word about our nation, whose sons and daughters we are and want to remain.«.<sup>2</sup> The *Zedinjena Slovenija* newspaper soon acquired a literary supplement entitled *Svet in dom* (World and Home), which all of the more renowned literary workers in exile took part in. It was illustrated by Bara Remec and others. Other newspapers and magazines, intended for children, youth, and adults would be printed as well; as would religious publications. The camp in Senigallia even published a few issues of a women's fashion magazine called *Lepa Vida* (Beautiful Vida); while in the Eboli camp, the Slovenian refugees would even publish their gazette *Mi in svet* (Us and the World) in colour, which was an unimaginable achievement for the circumstances at the time.

Furthermore, the central Slovenian refugee community boasted a first-rate choir called *Emigrantski pevski zbor Slovenija* (Emigrant Choir Slovenia), which became exceedingly renowned: its independent concerts were very well attended, and it would often be invited for guest appearances near and far. The Choir's achievements culminated in its guest appearance in Rome, where it also performed at a Pope's audience and was broadcast over radio Vatican. This was not the only example, though: in all of the camps, Slovenians would establish a variety of choirs – children's, youth, as well as adult – as soon as they could. Many smaller orchestral and string bands were created as well, and they were very much appreciated as well. Furthermore, an individual school of singing that included basic music theory and singing technique education operated in Senigallia.

Slovenian refugees focused on theatre activities as well. Extraordinarily demanding and superbly-staged theatre performances – including plays by Shakespeare, Gogol, other renowned authors, as well as those written by Slovenian playwrights, with extremely high-quality set designs and costumes that the camp seamstresses would create with remarkable

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2 *Zedinjena Slovenija*, 1 February 1948, p. 3.

inventiveness – would attract numerous visitors and foreign delegations. The theatre performances were supplemented by reading clubs, literary evenings, and academies, prepared on the occasions of the more important holidays or anniversaries.

Apart from these diverse and rich cultural activities, the Slovenian refugee education has to be underlined as well, as it managed to achieve a remarkable quality in such demanding circumstances and situations. As it was, many children and youth had ended up among the refugees as well. Almost ten percent of all the Slovenians in Monigo were younger than 15. This youth represented a special concern for the Slovenian camp leadership. Within just a few days of their arrival to the camp, not only did they establish a people's school and a kindergarten, but also a Slovenian refugee grammar school that opened its doors even a few days earlier than the school in Viktring near Klagenfurt. The school was initially managed by Dr Srečko Baraga. However, when the Allied authorities invited him to Trieste with the task of restoring the Slovenian education across the border, which had been completely suppressed during the fascist period, this task was assumed by Ivan Prijatelj. The refugee grammar school managed to establish a top-notch school board, extremely demanding towards the pupils regardless of the circumstances in which it operated. We have to be aware that everything was in short supply at the time, including textbooks, notebooks, and other school supplies. However, this did not deter the school board from offering the pupils as many as three different school programmes. Thus they could decide between the classical grammar school (the so-called classical *gimnazija*); a technically-oriented secondary school; and a teacher's college.

Not only in the grammar school but also at the people's school, a lot of attention was paid to interdisciplinarity, meaning that the teachers would make sure that the subjects were inter-related. They wanted the pupils and students to acquire the most detailed and extensive knowledge possible, as well as to learn how to think for themselves. A full Slovenian refugee grammar

school was also founded by the refugee group staying at Senigallia No. 7. There they strived to offer the youth a high-quality school programme as well. Throughout this time, the leaderships of both grammar schools kept endeavouring to ensure the schools' public recognition, similarly as the Slovenian refugee grammar school in Carinthia. However, they did not succeed, which is why the pupils had to pass a part of the final exam at an Italian grammar school. Regardless, the pupils who finished a grammar school in the camps would often be very successful at their further studies at universities, only to later secure flourishing international careers for themselves in numerous fields. Many of them would ascribe their success precisely to the Slovenian refugee grammar school. In the other camps, the Slovenian refugees would establish a variety of schools as well. The people's school in Riccione, which would also enrol adults, has to be underlined as particularly interesting. As it happened, that camp was populated by quite a few Slovenians from the Coast, who had never attended Slovenian schools. These people were paid particular attention to by the Slovenian camp leadership. For the today's standards it is almost unimaginable that these schools were subject to tuitions, despite the difficult circumstances. The tuition was modest, of course, and those who could not afford to pay were exempt. However, this is how the teachers taught the youth the importance of knowledge as well as make them understand that it was worthy of certain sacrifices.

Informal education was very important as well, as it was prudent that all Slovenian refugees, including the adults, should make good use of their time in the camps. Numerous language and vocational courses were organised for these people, and surprisingly many lectures – popular scientific as well as those that called for extensive pre-existing knowledge – would be organised. The camp residents would participate in both in large numbers.

As the refugees stated themselves, they would not be able to handle the situation without their profound faith that was



also reflected in their everyday life in the camps. Thus the first thing they did in all of the camps was to erect chapels. The one in Monigo, for example, was even furnished by the Slovenian sculptor France Gorše, himself a refugee at the time. Religious practices that they had brought from home were preserved, and scouts were established in the camps as well. Without their unshakable faith, these people would also be unable to put up with all the pressures that they were exposed to, exerted by certain camp managers who wanted them to return home as soon as possible. These managers thus began to restrict the residents' cultural and educational life, and this was also what the frequent relocations were intended for. The life of the refugees was also made more difficult by the repatriation commissions that kept coming to the camps; the expulsion of the most active representatives of the refugee community; and the worsening living conditions in the camps. Regardless of everything, most camp residents never decided to return home. Instead they opted, after living in the camps for three years, to emigrate to their new homelands – especially Argentina, which had opened its doors to the Slovenian refugee community most open-mindedly.