

Migrations in the territory of former Yugoslavia from 1945 until present time /today/¹

Since the second half of the 19th century, migrations in the territory of former Yugoslavia were strong and frequent. Its reasons were of economic, political and religious nature. The most important economic reasons were economic retardation, agrarian over-population and the growing birth rate. Of the political and religious reasons the most important ones before 1945 were the change of the state format (i.e. the inclusion of Kosovo and Metohija into Serbia and later into Yugoslavia. The consequence was a mass migration of the Turks and also of the Albanians or the inclusion of the Bosnia and Herzegovina into Austria Hungary, which provoked similar processes among the Muslims. The unsuccessful rebellions against the Turks (i.e. the Ilinden rebellion at the beginning of the 20th century) can also be attributed to the religious and political reasons. Due to the new borders After World War I, there were further mass migrations which resulted in the emergence of numerous strong national minorities. Out of 300.000 of the Coastal Slovenians who became Italian citizens, over 70.000 migrated partly to Yugoslavia, partly to the overseas countries, predominantly the USA and South America. From the end of the 19th century until World War II there were also temporary migrations due to seasonal work (falling trees, work in the fields), which usually lasted a few months. From the end of the 19th century until the beginning of World War II almost 1.000.000 people left the country for the USA, Canada, Australia, South America and several European countries (mostly France, Luxembourg, Belgium and Germany - above all Westfallen).

World War II was characterised by refugees, mass – mostly forced - migrations (deportations), i. e. of the Serbs from Croatia or the Slovenes to Serbia, Croatia and Germany, and the colonisation of the evacuated territories by German population (in Slovenia this meant, that 15.000 members of the Göttscher German minority were settled in the homes of the deported Slovenians in the Posavje and the Obsotljeje region.

After World War II, the first wave of emigrants from all republics consisted of political emigrants (members of collaborationist units and their families; people who could not accept communism). Most of them fled at the end of the war, however, the allies returned a part of them. An exact number of people who fled the country after the war has never been established, yet the estimations go up to several hundred thousands. A part of the emigration wave consisted of the members of the German and the Italian nationality. Almost all the members of the numerous German national minority emigrated after World War II (the reasons being mass nazification and the collaboration in the occupational apparatus during World War II). Based on the agreement between the Yugoslav and the Italian government on the possibility of the choice of citizenship, the majority of Italian population moved from Slovenia and Croatia; yet the Italian minority - contrary to the German - was preserved and eventually gained strong protection as a minority.

Due to victims of war and post-war migrations, Yugoslavia is estimated to have lost between 2 1000 and 2 9000 of its inhabitants (the numbers were frequently a subject of political manipulations). After that, the population started to grow - from 15 million it grew to 22 million at the beginning of the eighties, which corresponds to the growth of 41,6%. The birth rate in the more developed parts of the country (i.e. Slovenia and Croatia) was 20%, whereas it amounted to 60% in the less developed parts and even to 116% in Kosovo. Until the beginning of the sixties, there had been no further mass migrations, which is among others due to the fact that Yugoslavia was a politically closed and isolated

¹ Repe, Božo. Les migrations sur le territoire de l'ancienne Yougoslavie de 1945 a nos jours: predavanje: Séminaire européen d'enseignants "Etre migrant(e) en Europe", 6-9 mars 2002, Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines, Université de Neuchâtel. Neuchâtel, 2002.

country (disputes with the western allies because of the border, disputes with the Soviet Union because of the Inform biro). The settlement of the border issues in the mid-fifties and the gradual opening of the country resulted in the increased wave of economic emigration.

In the forties, the internal migrations were first caused by colonisation. From mountainous areas of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, people were moved to fertile Vojvodina, to the possessions, which previously belonged to Germans. These colonisations brought about numerous national and psychological consequences. People from the mountains were not used to the farming in the plain country; between them and the natives conflicts occurred even if they were of the same nationality - the cultural differences were simply too big. Another aspect of the migrations was that the authorities wanted to change the nationality structure, particularly in regard with the strong Hungarian minority in Vojvodina.

The second wave of migrations was caused by the accelerated industrialisation in the mid-fifties, which was carried out in Yugoslavia according to the Soviet model. Several hundred thousands of mostly unskilled workers moved to the towns. Since the politically initiated industrialisation was not followed by setting up an appropriate infrastructure (flats, schools, kindergartens, shops, services, etc.), the settling was more or less carried out spontaneously, by erecting improvised housing units from which people only very gradually moved to the big, newly built residential quarters.

Slovenia turned to become the largest immigration area. In the mid-fifties, it was the first Yugoslav republic to change from a predominantly agrarian into a predominantly industrialised society, the consequence being a constant influx of people from other republics. On the whole, till 1990, over 289 000 people moved to Slovenia, as opposed to the 207 000 who left it (out of which over 70 000 went to western European countries; the rest of them either returned home to their respective republics, or moved elsewhere, mostly to the west). As you may know, Slovenia has a population of less than two million; according to the national census of 1991, 87,6% were of Slovenian nationality. In 1990, the total rise of the population due to immigration thus amounted to 140 000 people.

In the period between 1960 and 1966, about 380 000 people moved from Yugoslavia to other countries; mostly due to economic reasons. In the mid-seventies when the emigration was at its peak and the needs for labour force in the Western-European countries the biggest, about

1 400 000 people used to be on the so-called "temporary labour" abroad. After that, the number began to fall gradually (about 400 000 returned home). In the mid-eighties it amounted to

a million clear. In the first period, most economic emigrants came from Serbia (37% of the total number), later from Croatia (24%). In the eighties, however, there was an increased influx of emigrants from Bosnia and Herzegovina; in the mid-eighties, 180 000 emigrants from this republic used to work in Western-European countries.

For the former Yugoslavia economic emigrants was be a very special psychological-sociologic phenomenon. On the one hand they presented a strong economic support for the country (most of them kept their money in Yugoslav banks, they built houses of their own, supported their relatives), yet on the other, they brought the market mentality into the socialist society, imported the most up-to-date domestic appliances and western cultural patterns. Particularly before the holidays, the mass migrations led to indescribable crowds of people waiting at the border crossings.

The last wave of migration from Yugoslavia affected the country because of the political, the national and religious, and partly also because of economic reasons during the wars (1991 - 1996). During the war, a methodical ethnic cleansing was carried out. According to different sources, about three million people either emigrated or moved away. In 1994, there were almost 700 000 refugees from former Yugoslavia in various European countries. The ethnically cleansed areas were Bosnia and Herzegovina, the territories of Croatia previously inhabited by the Serb population, and to a large extent also Kosovo (as early as in the eighties, several tens of thousands Serbs moved away).

During the 45 years of its existence, the second, socialist Yugoslavia thus went through numerous migration waves - both, internal and external. Whereas the politically motivated migrations took place during World War II, immediately after it and then again during the recent wars in the nineties, the economic migrations were going on in the fifties and the sixties of the previous century (the internal ones as a result of industrialisation and the external due to the surplus of the labour force), and partly in the nineties (i. e. from Serbia, from which about 300 000 young people moved because of poverty and hopelessness. Due to political and economic reasons, the newly established states in the territory of former Yugoslavia are more or less closed and the formerly strong migration currents thus interrupted (with the partial exception of returning of the refugees, which seems to be very slow). In the formerly more developed parts of the country, predominantly Slovenia, there is a new need to import labour force, partly for unskilled work and partly for the highly skilled one (i.e. doctors), for whom there is a major shortage in Slovenia.