

LITHUANIAN IMMIGRATION TO ARGENTINA

Marta Maffia, Gabriela Morgante, Mónica Fora

INTRODUCTION

The work that we have been performing since 1989 about »Lithuanian Migration in Argentina«, at the Socio-cultural Investigation's methods and techniques academic chair of La Plata Faculty of Natural Sciences and the La Plata University National Museum, is part of a didactic experience in which some of the main activities (both at the laboratory and the campus) concerning this investigation are carried out, with mutual participation of students and teachers.

In spite of the fact that some data is available, there are no records of further full research about Lithuanian migration in Argentina carried out by other Argentinean anthropologists. This essay constitutes a new contribution to the knowledge and understanding of the diverse components of our multicultural society, a recognition of the active role that these communities have played, together with other minority groups in the gestation of our country and the better comprehension of the experiences of American immigrants.

At this stage of our investigation our objective was: Firstly, the characterisation of the geographical, social and historical conditions of the country of origin, in order to frame the causes and motivations that led immigrants to leave their homeland. In second place, facing the lack of substantial information regarding their arrival and settlement in our country, and with the support of interviews as our only means of gathering information, we tried to reconstruct the adaptation process experienced by Lithuanians in our country, and, in the end, its consequences.

Lithuanian migration in Argentina inscribes itself within a wider context, the one of the massive migratory phenomena that, in general, includes both, minorities such as Armenians, Yugoslavians, Ukrainians, Polish, Greeks, Syrians and Lebanese, and majorities made up by Spaniards and Italians.

Lithuanian presence in our country starts to show up by the end of the last century, growing in importance during the first decades of the present one. This is the consequence of adverse situations, from a geographical, political and socio-economic point of view, obliging Lithuanians to restructure their way of living in a different context; the one offered by the receptive society.

In general, the term »migration« alludes to the geographical mobility of a certain group of people, either in an individual or a collective way. As Leon and Rebecca Grinberg said, »Migration in itself, (...) is that in which the movement occurs from one country to another, or from one region to another one sufficiently different and distant, during a period of time long enough so that it implicates 'living' in the receptive country and developing daily activities in it«.

Taking the migratory theme as a basis, numerous theories have been formulated. From the classical perspective, Ravenstein (1885–1889) and other authors attributed the main cause for these displacements to the economic factor, combined to other factors which interfered either positively or negatively in the individual migrating decision. This theory was subject to various reformations: Klideberger (1967), Bartoli (1966), Lind (1969) and Wallerstein (1979).

On a different theoretical line and taking the multiplicity of factors involved in migration into account, Salt (1981) suggests valorising the systemic approach, confronting it as a dynamic process which reflects the complex contexts in which movements occur. The decision of migratory actors should be framed into the more or less close contexts which exercise their influence on it. What's more, it must be considered that the migratory flow itself alters such contexts in a »cybernetic« interaction which demands a constant definition of them.

This perspective, which we support, proposes framing the question of migration within the theories of social changes, involving the changes suffered both by the migrant, and the native and the receptive country in the process. The systemic approach allows the integration of a number of interacting factors located between macro-sociology and the actors' will. The actors differentiate among each other concerning their ability to build new diversified life alternatives and the relationship between the countries involved in the spatial mobility flow, as a

building factor of migratory practices. The perception of the economic, political and historical contexts of the origin and destination countries does not explain why some emigrate and others don't, therefore the two levels of analysis must be articulated. Authors like Zelinsky (1971), Courgeau (1982), and Thechter (1986) are inscribed within this trend, that regards social actors as historical subjects, since »the act of migration redefines history«. Taking this model into account, we will consider the motives that our informants wield about their decision to migrate.

The issue of migration is intimately linked to the concepts of »adaptation« and »identity«. Even though the deepening in the polemic theory about these notions exceeds the limits of this essay, we will briefly mention what we do mean when we apply them. Diverse perspectives can be adopted in the study of identities, different not only as regards the analysis unit (individual or collective) and the approach from diverse disciplines (Anthropology, Psychology, Sociology) but also, from a specific area, in terms of a theoretical object. The search of the migrant's identity involves very complex processes and acts. As for H. Lahitte, »...Identity is an articulation, a norm, a connection between a series of acts and processes. Processes in the sense of all those perceptions that express the introspection, and acts; since those perceptions allow the recognition, identification, configuration and representation of others. Trapped among different cultural filiations, the migrant constructs his identity in a dynamic way, adjusting his behaviour to the norms and models proposed both by his native group and the receptive society.«

On the other side, F. Barth considers that »the ethnic identities act like inclusion/exclusion categories and also as interaction ones, for both the 'ego' and the 'alter' must tally with each other, if the conduct is to have a meaning«.

E. Erikson, in his classical essay about identity in 1950, started developing a scheme for the understanding of the link between the individual, the ethnic group and society. This author defines identity as a process that takes place in the heart of individuality and also in the heart of communal culture. On that score, he points out: »...we face a process located in the nucleus of the individual and, therefore, in the nucleus of community culture, a process which establishes, in fact, the identity of these two identities...«.

In the context of our investigation, the concept of identity is intimately linked to the notion of ethnicity, this meaning »the positive tendencies of identification and inclusion of different ethnic groups, which have emerged in the last

decades, as a consequence of social trends that have appeared in complex societies created by the action of apparently assimilated groups that reaffirm their ethnic identities, differentiating themselves from the global society.«

According to J. and G. Giordano, ethnicity is a term which refers to a descriptive value that allows us to recompose a sense of community and group, transmitted for generations by family, and reinforced by the rest of the surrounding community. »It is much more than a race, religion or national or geographic origin, it includes conscious and unconscious processes that satisfy a profound psychological necessity of an identity and historical continuity«. »It overwhelms our behaviour, feelings and thoughts in obvious or subtle ways. Plays a fundamental role in the determination of what we eat, how we work and relax, how we celebrate our rituals and feel about our lives, death and sickness.«

Yinger synthesises in a clear way the composing dimensions of the concept »ethnia«: »The ethnia exists since the moment in which three conditions are verified: 1) A significant segment of a society is regarded as different through combinations of some characteristics (religion, race, origin, language) which a certain culture is associated with; 2) Its members regard themselves as such; 3) Its members participate in activities built up from their real or mythical origin and common cultures.« Migrants develop these activities as an adaptive answer to the restrictions and opportunities offered by the receptive society. This adaptive answer refers to »the group of procedures, selection and utilisation of resources and tendencies in the selection of alternatives, made evident by a certain unity throughout the process of satisfying basic needs and facing the pressure of the environment«.

SOURCES, METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

The »corpus« for this investigation is made up by a group of nearly seventy Lithuanian migrants and their children settled in the districts of Berisso, La Plata, Capital Federal and Avellaneda, both men and women of different ages. These were interviewed during the 1989–1993 period both in the context of »societies« and informants' particular residences or working places.

Despite the existence of three previous national census (in 1869, when there is an 11% of foreign population, in 1895, when there is a 26%, and in 1914, when foreigners represent the 29% of our country's population), it is in the 1947

census where the Lithuanian presence in our country is individualised. From 2.426.532 foreigners (a 15% of the total population of the country), 13.516 are Lithuanian immigrants. This, together with the almost absolute absence of written sources that might support with data their exact means and date of arrival, total numbers of individuals entering the country, places of settlement, etc., obliged us to rely on oral sources in most cases.

The techniques used were: The structured and non-structured, photographed interview, all recorded simultaneously on audio and videotape, capturing both images and sounds. This will allow us, in further instances, to recompose the behaviour of this group, incorporating the analysis of their non verbal language in kinetic and proxemic studies.

In the particular case of photographed interviews, it was proved that a remembrance process is produced, through which images of the informant's past life come to his mind, allowing him to recompose his stories, also contributing to establish a »feedback« of the information and a better »rapport« with the investigator.

»Participation« (commonly known as »participant observation« from a Malinkowskian point of view), was employed in different events: The preparation of typical dishes at the informant's residence or »societies«, rituals and celebrations in the heart of the groupings, and the teaching of their language.

BRIEF CHARACTERISATION OF THE GEOGRAPHICAL AND SOCIAL-HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Lithuania constitutes an Oriental European state by the Baltic Sea, with an extension of 65.200 square km and a population of 3.690.000 inhabitants according to the 1989's census. Together with Estonia and Letonia it constitutes the Baltic States. The Lithuanians, together with the Letonians and Prussians conform a branch of the Indo-European Arian family.

The territory is made up by an extensive plain area, with some undulations at low altitudes, covered with conifer forests, some swampy regions, and peat deposits. The coastal area is made up by dunes.

In spite of the industrialisation process, Lithuania has got a basically agricultural economy, with potato, rye, barley and beet crops; bovine and porcine cattle.

The capital city is Vilnius, and other important cities are Kaunas, Memmel, Suvalki and Shavli.

In the past, Lithuania was an independent Great Dukedom. It was formed in the year 1236, under the leadership of prince Mindaugas, who unified the numerous tribes that inhabited the area. By this time the Dukedom extended itself up to river Dnieper by the east and the Black Sea in the south.

By the end of the fourteenth century, Lithuania was absorbed by Poland, due to a pact which involved the conversion of the duke to Catholicism. By the beginning of the fifteenth century, under the reign of Vitautas, the country reached the climax of its development. In the sixteenth century, due to the Polish-Lithuanian Dublin alliance (Against the Russian expansion), Lithuania gradually lost its institutions, finally becoming a Polish province. By the end of the eighteenth century, Lithuania was partitioned between Russia and Prussia, after the disintegration of Poland.

As a consequence of the Russian Revolution in 1918, Lithuania emerged as an independent Republic, and adopted a democratic Constitution in 1922. After the Second World War, it became one of the Russian Union's Soviet Socialist Republics, which signified the exodus of one third of its population. Since the 1990's elections, with the victory of the autonomists, a tense confrontation arose with the Soviet state. In February 1991 president Vitautas Landsbergis called for a referendum which showed a 91% support in favour of the independence of the country; in September that same year it was accepted by the USSR and the rest of the nations.

LITHUANIAN MIGRATION IN ARGENTINA

1.

The American continent will be the chosen one by the various migratory movements from Lithuania that will not only come to Argentina, but also to Brazil, Uruguay, Colombia, Venezuela, USA, and Canada. In our country, we can distinguish different migratory contingents: One, before the First World War, by the end of the nineteenth century; a second one by the beginning of the twentieth century; a new flow arrives between 1927 and 1930, coincidental with the economic crisis suffered by Argentina; and, finally, after the Second World War

another group of Lithuanians settles in our country, many on their way to the US, Canada and Australia.

According to the informants' testimonies, the first families were settled in the Patagonia. One of them recalls that in 1877 a Lithuanian who lived there founded Colonia Sarmiento, where some descendants of these first colonisers can still be found. By the same time, other groups settled in provinces such as Entre Rios and Santa Fe, and before the First World War, in Tucuman. The Lithuanian presence is also noticeable in the province of Mendoza, while Buenos Aires is the main receiver of immigrants, who establish themselves in Bernal, Avellaneda, Villa Lugano, Lomas de Zamora, La Plata and Berisso.

In response to the needs that arouse upon their arrival in our country, and to be able to share their joy and pain during the adaptation process, »Societies« were built up. At the beginning, they acted like mutual aid entities, solving housing problems and finding jobs for the newcomers, also providing medical aid and funerary services.

»...It must be considered that we arrived in very poor conditions. By those times, those who came had very little money and desperately needed to work, and not knowing the language of a country is dramatic. That's why these communities were formed...«

»...But many arrived in Argentina and formed little groups. Why? Of course, they came there without knowing the language or the country, with practically no parents, since the huge mass wouldn't come but after the First World War. So they formed »Lithuanian Societies«, or clubs, ...it was almost a necessity, ...now they could make themselves understood, and help each other with the money, there was a common fund and so they started growing...«

Later, these societies absorbed other functions, such as cultural manifestations and other recreational activities.

»...Societies still exist, but just to keep traditions alive, feel like Lithuanians, show they are Lithuanians; youth keep traditions and a patriotic attitude towards Lithuania...«

In 1907 a »society« is formed in Rosario. The oldest one in Berisso is called Nemunas at present, founded in Ensenada in 1904 under the name of Vargdienis and moved to Berisso in 1913. »United Lithuanians« dates from 1914 in Lanus, and had a representation in Cordoba. In the Capital District there is the Villa Lugano Lithuanian Centre, founded in October, 1926. In 1931, a second society is created in Berisso, called Mindaugas. In Avellaneda, there is a society

located at the Mother of Piety parish, founded in August 1942 by the Marian fathers, who arrived in the country in 1939. In some cases, such as the Tucuman society, there are no records of the exact date of the foundation of societies, since immigrants who constituted them thought that they wouldn't be staying for long.

At present, as a consequence of the recent Lithuanian independence, there is an Honorary Lithuanian Consulate in Argentina.

Those Lithuanians that arrived by the end of last century were mostly farmers, some of them lacked education and, once in our country, they were employed in the construction of the railway system, in the countryside, or at slaughter houses in Rosario, Buenos Aires and Berisso. Among those who arrived after the Second World War, there were plenty of professionals. Nowadays many of them and their descendants perform activities related to their academic titles: Teachers, doctors, engineers, etc. The intense activity of most of them has been one of the reasons for their weak participation in societies.

»...When I was eighteen, I became a member of a society. By then there were much more Lithuanians than today, more excitement, more life... Since 1962, the year I got married, I left the society. Years of hard work followed. I worked at YPF (an oil company), probably in excess as I worked over twelve hours a day, Saturdays and holidays... My mother would invite me to an event, and, sincerely, I had lost interest in them...«

2.

According to the analysis of these and other testimonies, and the contact with informants, war emerges as the main cause for migration. Even though there was a first migratory wave by the end of the nineteenth century (with very few living immigrants at present), due to the unfavourable economic, political and social situation that characterised the last years of the tsarist regime, the great migratory flow takes place before the First World War, while the frontiers were still open. During the postwar period, more Lithuanians decided to abandon their homes, mostly influenced by parents living abroad. The American continent showed up as a very popular destination for European immigrants:

»...My dad came with my uncle, they left Lithuania for fear of being part of the Tsar's military service, it was seven years long, and they wouldn't waste their youth. Therefore, they escaped...«

»...America was a very coveted place, where we could live much better than postwar Europeans. And so, after 1914, before the First World War, there was a great emigration, due to the rumours of an imminent world combat...«

»...My mother arrived after the First World War, in 1921. My father had come before... She would be 14 by then, and had to hide beside the hills so that the Russian troops wouldn't see her; they plundered the whole village. They had to escape for their lives. That was one of the reasons that pushed her to take the decision: I'm going to Argentina, I won't have any problems there...«

»...Those who came after the First World War, left because there was a lot of wealth in the hands of a small group of people. Then, the workers didn't have a pleasant life, difficult enough to emigrate in the search of a better future somewhere else...«

After the Second World War, many Lithuanians arrived in Argentina, not only escaping from a bad economic situation, as a consequence of the war, but also due to the communist regime implanted in Oriental Europe. One of our informants recalls the ordeal that some of his relatives had to endure after the Second World War:

»...Well, after, immigration came here, little by little, slowly; relatives calling each other; but the great migration started after the Second World War...«

Most Lithuanians paid for their trip, either with the help of a local relative, or employed by factories. Not all of them regarded Argentina as their final destination, many of those who arrived would then go to the United States. But to enter that country, a visa was necessary, and it could take as much as ten years to get one. Thus, most immigrants got married to Argentineans during that period of time, and finally stayed in this country.

But war was not the only motive that pushed Lithuanians to leave their homeland: The poor living conditions, and the adverse climate were other important expulsion factors.

The climate, very harsh, with extremely cold winters that can last up to six months; and summers with very long days of hard work to collect the necessary provisions for the winter. The following describes the average Lithuanian home:

»...When you go by a wonderful house, there is a terrible smell. The fact is that there are lots of cows, all under a roof to protect them from the climate. It's not like here, they must have a place to protect the animals, for their own survival...«

Survival in Lithuania by the time these immigrants arrived, strictly depended on hard work. By three in the morning men would wake up to work in the countryside. When it was harvest time, everyone, even the kids, would work in the fields. Children between the ages of eight and ten were initiated in looking after the crops and cattle.

»... When I was thirteen, my father, with a horse, and I with another one, would take the pigs to be sold in the marketplace...«

Nevertheless, Sunday was a non-working day, it was a day of reunion, and the place was the church; the children would go for a stroll around the town, and men gathered to have some drinks.

In spite of the fact that Lithuanian economy was based upon agriculture, land was not equally shared. There were two main social classes: the landowners, who had large territories and comfortable, luxurious houses; and the farmers, who could live permanently at the landowner's house, or be temporarily employed during the crop season. They had to work for the landowner and could keep the exceeding production to be sold or kept for their families. This situation was another factor that led Lithuanians to leave their country.

3.

The Lithuanian immigrant structured his daily life, mainly during the first period, around two central poles: One being the family and the »societies« as »micro-contexts«, reproducing the culture of their origin through the conservation of their language, and their typical ceremonies and food; and the other one being public life, work and schools, in a strange culture, with no affective connotations. The possibility of rebuilding their identity relied in these two poles.

What follows is the characterisation of some of the cultural components brought by these immigrants which, kept and transformed by some of their descendants, contributed to the consolidation of their existence as a particular human group in a strange land.

The food: Lithuanian informants do not hesitate to affirm that in all European countries with cold climates, the diet is based on potatoes, cream, pork, rye, cheese, jam, herring and beet among others. It is the dressing, then, the element that permits the recognition of the origin of each preparation. The different meals were: Breakfast, a midmorning meal, lunch and dinner. The breakfast consisted

of tea or milk with rye bread toasts and butter. By midmorning, women would take some »crepes« to the working men in the fields, which they ate with creme, onions or bacon. Then lunch would come, consisting of sweet milky soup and another one seasoned with beetroot, pork or cabbage. Finally, by six in the afternoon, they would dine and go to bed until the following morning.

The house was not only a place to live in, but also a place where food was prepared and conserved. They were big houses, usually divided into two areas, one for the family, and the other one for the cattle, separated by an oven in the centre of the house. Pork was processed into sausages and bacon. Apples, plums and a native fruit called »yarmushnia« were dried to prepare compotes. Peppers, beets and radish were stored in vinegar barrels. Huge quantities of radish and cheese were cooked with salt and butter, and eaten with black bread.

In order to obtain all the necessary ingredients for these preparations in our country, many immigrants cultivated seeds brought from their own farms in Lithuania. Such is the case of the »kriera«, a plant whose roots are grated and mixed with vinegar and salt, and then used to accompany the pork. So are the »grustinias«, which constitute a dressing similar to the vinegar. The »salote« or Lithuanian lettuce is cultivated to prepare salads. Thanks to these and other ingredients, many typical dishes can nowadays be prepared by Lithuanians and their descendants in our country. One of these is the beet soup, also found in Ukraine, Russia and other countries of this region, which was originally prepared with bacon, pork and milk cream. At present pork has been replaced with beef. Another important dish is the grated potato cake, with eggs, bacon, onions and flour. The »virtiniukai« is also very common: a cheese, onion, bacon and potato mass, seasoned with bitter cream and onion sauce. Vetch and bean preserves are also prepared and a kind of gelatine is made with pig limbs.

Music and Dance: Both dancing and singing are at present, two of the main elements that determine the nature of »Societies«, and have been as well, one of the causes of their creation:

»...Where would they go to sing their songs, hear their music, exercise their social habits, share a common code, if not to a specific place? Therefore, they organised themselves into groups in Berisso, in order not to feel lonely in this new world...«

In Villa Lugano, Lanus, and the Berisso Mindaugas Society there are now groups endeavoured to these practices. Most of them are made up by children

and grand-children of the original Lithuanians, though some young members of other societies have been incorporated.

In the particular case of the Mindaugas Society, the choir was originally created to sing traditional Lithuanian songs and was made up only by women. Later on male voices were incorporated and the repertoire was increased to include more popular songs. Within the latter the most representative ones are »dainos«, performed in a diatonic scale and with an inconstancy of rhythms. A balance between an onomatopoeic poetic text and a music imitating the sounds of nature and daily activities is characteristic of these songs.

The typical instruments accompanying the songs are: the »kankles« or Lithuanian sitars, the »trinitas« or trumpets, a wind instrument made up by a wooden horn with a hollow tip, and the accordion. At present piano and violin have also been included.

Dances are performed in typical linen and wool garments, hand-crafted by the members of the ballet, with figurative and geometric designs. They represent the different aspects of Lithuanian life: Labour situations, ceremonies, the beginning of the spring, the winter, or other natural phenomena, and human love. They all have a meaning. The choreography of most of these dances is organised in order to have sixteen dancers on the stage.

The language: the Lithuanian language is one of the oldest still in use. It is very similar to the Sanskrit, the Latin and the Ancient Greek. It constitutes the most primitive of the Arian languages still in use at present and is the only surviving branch of the Baltic language (of Lithuanian and Letonian nature as different from the Estonian). The other Baltic branch, which disappeared during the sixteenth century, is the Ancient Prussian.

Watson, the Curlander, estimates that one third of the Lithuanian language derives from the Finn, the Gothic or the German one, together with some terms introduced by the Polish. But, philologist Rusk considers that the Lithuanian constitutes a language by itself with German grammar input and Slovenian vocabulary.

By the end of the eighteenth century, Lithuania was shared between Prussia and Russia. The language was introduced into the Prussian Kingdom and lost its nature, whereas in Russia, the language remained practically unaltered. The existence of Lithuanian names in Russian territory confirms the latter. In this century Lithuanian speakers amounted to 2,500,000.

According to the surveyed bibliography, the primary Indo-European declination and the whistling accent are given characteristics of the language related to its archaic nature. With regard to the former, some researchers find six, and others seven declinations, which modify the significance of words according to the person they refer to, its purpose, etc. The whistling accent gives the language a special nature since what identifies the transfer of one language to other nations is the lack of accent features.

The actual Lithuanian language is divided into a series of dialects: Lithuanian, Balc-Lithuanian (in northern Poland), Prussian-Lithuanian (in Prussian Poland) and Letonian. But none, with the exception of the Letonian, show the nature of this language.

As some Lithuanian specialists state, no fixed rules that might regulate the position of the accent have been found, making it easier to learn it orally than grammatically. Its study is even more difficult due to the coincidences between the accent's intensity and intonation. As regards declination, despite having lost its neutrality, it keeps the duality between the plural and the singular.

In Lithuanian language verbs outweigh nouns in importance. As for professor Ceculis, who chaired language classes at the Berisso Mindaugas Society in 1993, verbs are responsible for the melody and rhythm of the conversation. There are four verbal tenses: Present, future, infinitive and participle. This language is full of words connected with nature and plenty of diminutives, specially affective ones.

The practice of this language within Lithuanians in our country was carried out among children and parents in a family context, and in societies. Before the 40's there was a school where both Spanish and Lithuanian were taught. As the Second World War broke out, this school was closed and its activities ceased, since it was economically supported by the Lithuanian government, and the latter was dissolved when Lithuania was incorporated to the USSR. The language was also strengthened by literature, songs and the contact that many immigrants kept with their parents in Lithuania. The continuity of the use of the language in our country meant the incorporation of some new words:

»...I often remember that many Lithuanians that had been here for a long time would tell me 'anda al almacina y compra masitas' (go to the *gracery* – grocery – and buy some biscuits). The ending of the words was changed, many Spanish words were assumed as their own ones, causing a total deformation of the language...«

But they had to assimilate Spanish as a means of easing personal and labour contacts, and therefore facilitating their social mobility among the new community. Nowadays there are few Lithuanian speakers, which is understandable. Those who persist in trying to keep their cultural origin alive keep on cultivating their music, dances and language in the heart of »societies«.

SOME PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

In this essay we have analysed certain aspects that partially characterise the lives of Lithuanian immigrants and their descendants in our country. In this first stage a series of parameters were selected that, in a second one, will allow the elaboration of a survey that will function as a secondary control system and a deeper way of investigation.

Concerning the motives which led Lithuanians to leave their native country, it becomes evident that a multiplicity of macro and micro factors have interacted and articulated this decision. Lithuania, almost since its constitution as an independent Republic at the beginning of the century, has been involved in diverse and complex social, economical, religious, historical and political events (the tsarist regime, the huge warlike combats, the post-war depression and the implantation of the communist regime within a mostly catholic nation). This situation, together with a basically agricultural economy, with a very adverse climate and stressed social differences, contributed to the migration process towards idealised countries such as Argentina; where they did not only expect to find economic wealth, but also a peaceful future, far from the shocked Europe they had left.

Within the main factors that worked and still work as ethnic identity builders (from a qualitative point of view) are: the common origin, the language, the music, the dances and religion. The latter, though not specifically analysed, constituted one of the most important elements of cohesion and support of the Lithuanian identity, allowing their differentiation from other ethnic minorities, especially those with Communist orientations.

Concerning their origin, the »Lithuanian being« was based upon a triple interaction between the members of the group, the rest of the communities and the Argentinean native population in their daily tasks (either while working or at the places where they lived), clearly establishing the limits among each others.

For example, the gathering of Lithuanians in Societies helped to consolidate the feeling of belonging to a specific group, strengthening the bonds with their Lithuania through cultural practices such as their language, music, typical food and celebrations. Furthermore, these institutions facilitated the adaptation process to the receptive society and the necessary integration to the new context, by solving housing or employment problems.

The language acts like the symbolic cohesion factor among the group, as a distinctive element of belonging and communication. Even though it is true that Spanish had to be adopted to make social contact possible, especially when looking for a job; the practice of the native language was kept in families and »societies«. At the latter, it was not only taught in the written form, but also through recreational activities, such as the interpretation of typical dances and traditional songs.

Thus, when being transferred through migration, the »common origin«, together with the »language«, »the music« and »other cultural ceremonies« (like traditional cooking), eased and reinforced the singularity of the group, allowing the participation in a different culture and framing its ethnic identity.

According to what has been observed, analysed and registered, an »Adaptive Lithuanian Strategy« could be conceived, as a process of combination of invariable elements of their culture and a series of partial situations, transformations and incorporations, as a consequence of their inevitable development in the new context. For example, the replacement of ingredients in their typical recipes, the transformation of Spanish words by adding Lithuanian declinations and the incorporation of new instruments in the interpretation of traditional melodies, were some of the observed modifications.

As regards the incorporation of new members into societies, regarded as strangers by the group (in the cultural aspect), we may say that during the first stage of their settlement in our country, Societies were entirely made up by Lithuanians, and no strangers were accepted. With time, the loss of Lithuanian members and their descendants in Societies activated the acceptance of new non-Lithuanian members, which is today accepted as a profit (conceived this way by the members themselves) and is materialised in the celebration of numerous weddings between Lithuanians and members of other communities, who actively participate in cultural traditions such as the choir, the ballet or the learning of the language.

There is no doubt, according to Gino Germani, that »...mixed weddings have been one of the most effective means in the process of assimilation of the local social and cultural conditions by adult immigrants...«

In short, the constitution of the Lithuanian identity in Argentina was based upon two pillars: Families and Societies. The former jump-started a process of conservation, perpetration and reproduction of elements of the Lithuanian culture, such as the spoken language and food preparations. But it was, on the other hand, submitted to a series of changes exercised by the local interaction and the incorporation of new habits, such as Spanish and mixed weddings. Societies, on the other hand, reinforced the feeling of belonging to the Lithuanian community through the execution of specific activities. Both pillars allow the conceptualisation of the »Lithuanian being«, based on the differences and similarities with the rest of society, adding personal and family recollections.

Considering that personal, social and ethnic identities emerge within a relational context, in which the minimal sense that can be conferred to the exchange that relies there, is the one of »difference«, a series of questions arise: Which processes intervene in the creation of the Lithuanian ethnic identity, not only in a collective but also at a personal level?; Which contexts facilitate its conformation?; What aspects of the interactive inter and intra-groups and intra or inter-personal ones should be retained so that the concept of identity (ethnic, individual, social) becomes operative? These will work as a starting point for the next stage of our investigation.

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POVZETEK

LITOVSKI PRISELJENCI V ARGENTINI

Marta Maffia, Gabriella Morgante, Mónica Fora

Čeprav imamo na razpolago nekaj podatkov, nimamo izčrpnih poročil drugih argentinskih antropologov o raziskavah priseljevanja Litovcev v Argentino. Pričujoča razprava predstavlja nov prispevek k spoznavanju in razumevanju različnih komponent večkulturne družbe, priznanju aktivne vloge, ki so jo imele te skupnosti skupaj z drugimi manjšinskimi skupnostmi pri oblikovanju Argentine in boljšemu razumevanju izkušenj ameriških priseljencev.

Na tej stopnji raziskave nas zanima, prvič, karakterizacija geografskih, družbenih in zgodovinskih okoliščin v državah izvora, da bi lahko določili vzroke, zakaj so priseljenci zapustili domovino. Drugič, navkljub pomanjkanju obširnejših podatkov o njihovem prihodu in naseljevanju v Argentini smo s pomočjo

intervjujev, ki so naš edini vir informacij, skušali rekonstruirati proces prilagajanja Litovcev v Argentini in, navsezadnje, njegove posledice.

Priseljevanje Litovcev v Argentino je del širšega konteksta v pojavu množičnih selitev, ki na splošno vključuje tako manjšine, ki jih sestavljajo Armenci, Jugoslovani, Ukrajinci, Poljaki, Grki, Sirijci in Libanonci, kot večino, ki jo sestavljajo Španci in Italijani.

"Korpus" za raziskavo sestavlja skupina skoraj sedemdesetih litovskih priseljencev in njihovih otrok, naseljenih na območju Berissa, La Plata, zveznega okrožja Buenos Airesa in Avellanede, moških in žensk različnih starostnih skupin.

Kljub obstoju treh starejših popisov prebivalstva (1869, 1895, 1914), je prisotnost Litovcev v Argentini individualizirana v popisu iz leta 1947. Izmed 2,426.532 tujcev (15 % celotne populacije države) je 13.516 litovskih priseljencev.

V Argentini lahko ločimo več valov priseljevanja: pred prvo svetovno vojno imamo enega ob koncu devetnajstega stoletja, drugega v začetku dvajsetega stoletja; naslednji val pride med letoma 1927 in 1930 ter sovpada z ekonomsko krizo v Argentini; po drugi svetovni vojni je prišla še ena skupina Litovcev, med katerimi jih je bilo veliko na poti v ZDA, Kanado in Avstralijo.

Prve družine so se naselile v Patagoniji. Eden od njih se spominja, da je leta 1877 Litovec, ki je tam živel, ustanovil Colonio Sarmiento, kjer še danes najdemo potomce prvih priseljencev. Ob istem času so se tudi druge skupine naselile v provincah Entre Rios, Santa Fe, Tucuman in Mendoza, največ pa jih je prišlo v Buenos Aires. Naselili so se v Bernahu, Avellanedi, Villa Luganu, Lomas de Zamori, La Plati in Berissu.

V pričujoči razpravi smo analizirali nekatere vidike, ki deloma karakterizirajo življenje litovskih priseljencev in njihovih potomcev v Argentini.

Ob raziskovanju vzrokov, zakaj so Litovci zapustili domovino, vidimo, da je odločitvi botrovalo veliko makro in mikro dejavnikov.

Skupen izvor, jezik, glasba, plesi in vera predstavljajo nekatere od najpomembnejših elementov kohezije in podpore litovski identiteti ter omogočajo razlikovanje od drugih etničnih manjšin, zlasti komunistično usmerjenih.

Glede na njihov izvor je bistvo Litovcev temeljilo na trojnem medsebojnem vplivu med člani skupine, drugimi skupnostmi in prvotnim prebivalstvom Argentine pri njihovih dnevni dejavnostih (na delovnem mestu ali na domu) in določilo meje med njimi. Zbiranje Litovcev v družbah je, na primer, pomagalo pri utrjevanju občutka pripadnosti določeni skupini, krepilo vezi z Litvo prek kulturnih dejavnosti, kot so jezik, glasba, tradicionalna hrana in praznovanja. Poleg tega

so te inštitucije olajšale proces prilagajanja družbi, ki jih je sprejela, in potrebno integracijo v nov okvir z reševanjem stanovanjskega in zaposlitvenega problema.

Po naših opažanjih, analizah in zapisih bi lahko govorili o 'litovski strategiji prilagajanja' kot o procesu združevanja nespremenljivih elementov njihove kulture z nizom delnih situacij, sprememb in vključitev, ki so posledica njihovega neizogibnega razvoja v novem okviru. Nekatere spremembe, ki smo jih opazili, so na primer zamenjava sestavin v njihovih tipičnih receptih, spreminjanje španskih besed z dodajanjem litovskih sklanjatev in uporaba novih glasbil v interpretaciji tradicionalne glasbe.

Oblikovanje litovske identitete v Argentini je torej temeljilo na dveh stebrih: na družinah in družbah. Prve so začele proces ohranjanja, izvajanja in reprodukcije elementov litovske kulture, kot sta jezik in priprava hrane. Po drugi strani pa so bile izpostavljene spremembam zaradi vpliva okolja in privzemanja novih navad, posebno španskih, in mešanih porok. Družbe so krepile občutek pripadnosti litovski skupnosti z izvajanjem določenih dejavnosti.

Oba stebra pomagata pri oblikovanju pojma 'litovstva', ki temelji na razlikah in podobnostih s preostalo družbo, s spomini posameznikov in družin.