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## Introduction

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Slovene lies at the point of convergence of the major language families of Europe — Romance, Germanic, Slavic (Finno-)Ugric — and, as though under the pressure of tectonism, has undergone considerable erosion. To extend the geological metaphor, Slovene has also been shaped in part by these external forces into a highly variegated linguistic landscape with eight major dialect groups (and more than 40 local dialects among them) distributed over a population of about two million. In view of the initial losses that Slovene has incurred since the arrival and settlement of Slavic speakers in the Eastern Alps in the seventh century AD, the fact that Slovene exists at all today attests to its remarkable vitality. Its speech territory, which had covered a substantial portion of what is today Austria and Hungary, contracted as a result of language shift to German and Hungarian, then its remainder was absorbed into the Habsburg Empire and later Yugoslavia (for details see Lencek 1982: 27–45). These processes, helped along by political and social events unfavorable to the Slovenes, have left significant (but continually shrinking) Slovene-speaking communities in border areas in Italy, Austria, and Hungary.

Recent work in Slovene sociolinguistics has been informed by the desire to curtail the recession of the Slovene speech territory. At least two broad programs can be identified: one aimed at the preservation of Slovene dialects and the use of Standard Slovene outside the borders of the Republic of Slovenia in the face of anti-Slovene policies and popular hostility, the other at protecting Slovene language rights and reversing negative trends within the Republic. The papers in this volume treat Slovene in both of these aspects.

It is not surprising that native Slovene sociolinguists have not drawn a sharp distinction between programmatic and purely descriptive work. Language has been closely bound up with the notion of Slovene autonomy and statehood. As Tollefson predicted some 15 years ago, threats

to the Slovene language would lead directly to the destabilization of Yugoslavia (1981: 262–263):

In recent years the main conflict [in language planning] has involved Serbs and Croats. This is likely to remain the central internal problem. Yet, Slovenia plays a pivotal role in the resolution of language problems in Yugoslavia. It provides much of the funding for the economic development of less developed regions; its militia protects three of the seven borders; its commitment to a united Yugoslavia is a major deterrent to Croatian separatism. Should Slovenes express serious dissatisfaction with their position in the Yugoslav system, then Yugoslav unity would be in serious difficulty.

Thus, protection of Slovenian, the main expectation of virtually all Slovenes, is essential to the future of Yugoslavia. Should Slovene perceive a shift in policy against Slovenian, then the major value of the federation for Slovenes would evaporate. Because officials at all levels of government recognize this fact, a major policy change favoring the spread of Serbo-Croatian is unlikely.

Tollefson's prediction that a shift in policy against Slovene would inevitably lead to "serious difficulty" for Yugoslav unity was correct, if — as can now be said in hindsight — somewhat modestly formulated. Such a scenario was predicted also by Toporišič, who criticized the unitaristic language policy:

If a balance is not established [...] there will be a disturbance in our coexistence. [...] an ideology of unity is extended also to language; simultaneously, impatient people in Yugoslavia (and even in Slovonia) are beginning to speak of a Yugoslav language instead of Yugoslav languages, just as we speak in public about Yugoslav nationality instead of the previous Serbian, Croatian, Muslim, Albanian, Macedonian, Montenegrin, etc., nationalities. In short, language unitarism is developing on one side and language separatism on the other, that is, separatism in the sense that we will cease communicating in the language that is the exponent of unitarism [i.e. Serbo-Croatian]. Instead of language pluralism we are developing language separatism: unitarism of the center and separatism of the peripheral. And that is not good (1984: 173).

In fact, erosion of the favorable conditions for the maintenance of Slovene contributed significantly to the snowball effect of the liberalizing "Slovene Spring" of the late 1980s. A flagrant, punitive violation of Slovene language rights within Slovenia, the trial of "The Four" (see the papers by Tollefson, Toporišič, and Paternost in this volume), which took place in Serbo-Croatian, helped drive the process from liberalization to the secession of Slovenia, spelling the end of the Yugoslav Federation.

This volume presents work on Slovene that marks the close of the Yugoslav chapter and treats Slovene in its new setting in (and around)

an independent state. Three papers deal primarily with the recent past of Slovene in Yugoslavia and beyond. The essay by Jože Toporišič gives an overview of the major problems facing Slovene today, with an emphasis on recent political and social changes in the region. Written by a leading exponent of postwar Slovene language planning and a passionate defender of Slovene language rights in the former Yugoslavia, the paper reflects both the rationality of the linguist and the alarm of the activist. Joseph Paternost's review article deals with recent books by two leading Slovene linguists, Velemir Gjurin and Jože Toporišič. Not only have both of these linguists engaged themselves in public battles for Slovene language rights in the former Yugoslavia, but Gjurin, in part with the essays reproduced in his book, took issue with language rights in the Yugoslav Army, a veritable taboo in those days. (This continued the campaign of Janez Janša, a dissident and later the first Minister of Defense of the Republic of Slovenia [see Janša 1986].) Gjurin's contribution was to clarify in the Slovene collective consciousness the legal and ethical issues at stake in language matters (the Army's policies were at variance with the Yugoslav Constitution); it would not be an exaggeration to say that his campaign was one of the catalysts of the secession. Here, as elsewhere (see also Paternost 1992), Paternost reads between the lines to elucidate the language situation in its broader cultural and political contexts.

Four papers deal with Slovene language issues outside of the Republic of Slovenia. Majda Kaučič-Baša asks the question, "Where do Slovenes speak Slovene and to whom?" in a detailed study of the Slovenes in Trieste, Italy. Tom Priestly's paper gives a historical perspective on the *Windischentheorie*, an Austrian policy of "divide and rule" played out largely in the sphere of language policy. Under this policy Carinthian Slovenes were inculcated with the notion that their language and ethnicity were different (*windisch*) from those of the Slovenes south of the Karawanken Alps. This theory has contributed to the severe attrition of Carinthian Slovene (though not exclusively so; see also Priestly 1990). Albina Nečak-Lük reports on language issues in Slovene-Hungarian contact areas in northeastern Slovenia and southwestern Hungary. (In passing she discusses the Hungarian analogue to the *Windischentheorie*, the *Vend* theory.) Although the prognosis for the survival of Slovene in Hungary — more precisely, the Slovene standard and the Prekmurje dialect — is not good, recent attempts have been made by the Hungarian government to improve conditions for bilingualism. Finally, Nada Šabec presents a detailed report on her fieldwork on code switching among the Slovenes of Cleveland, Ohio. Hers is the first thoroughgoing sociolinguistic research on this tight-knit but not well-known ethnic community in the US.

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