

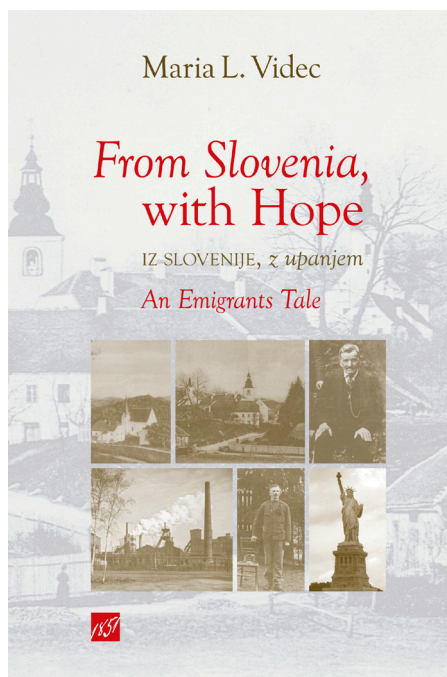


## CELJSKA MOHORJEVA DRUŽBA

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CELJE - LJUBLJANA

MARIA L. VIDEĆ: FROM SLOVENIA, WITH HOPE – IZ SLOVENIJE, Z UPANJEM



### From Slovenia – with Hope

*Dutch politician and university professor Maria Louise Videc, PhD, has been interested since her youth in her Slovenian roots and has explored her ancestors' history of migration in the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century. With her first literary work, a monument to the Slovenian people and its values, the author reveals herself as a talented writer.*

Maria L. Videc was born in The Netherlands. Interested since her youth in her Slovenian roots, she explored her ancestors' history of migration, in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to the Dutch province of Limburg. Their stories inspired her to write this book on Slovenian migration, via the German Ruhr Area to the USA, but were adapted to fit this novel's fiction.

The book celebrates hope, perseverance and – in times of adversity – trust in God, of young Slovenes making the life-changing choice to leave their homeland. The author's research into their history made her appreciate the significant role played by Catholic clergy in actively supporting migrants in their new communities.

#### Book data:

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## About the author

Maria L. Videc (1947) followed an academic career as Professor of Public Administration at the Universities of Leiden and Nijmegen. As from 1999 she also served for 12 years as Senator in the Netherlands Parliament (CDA - Christian Democratic Appeal), and as a member and chairperson of the Netherlands Parliamentary Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, where she was active in the Assembly's Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights. She has published books and articles in the fields of public administration and administrative ethics, public audit and evaluation, and on the ECHR (European Convention on Human Rights) system.

## Book excerpt

### Chapter 8 – 1918, HOMECOMING

It was the height of summer. The sun once more carried the promise of a very warm day. Silence surrounded him, only crickets scraping their monotonous chant.

He slowly walked up the hill, savoring every step. They were his last on the infinitely long road home. When he reached his beloved paternal farmstead, he stood still, very still, taking in the view as if it were a revelation. He heard the dog yelp, and then – a split second later – saw him running up to him, barking like mad. His companion of old had recognized him! Despite his beard, his long hair, his shabby and smelly clothing, his dog had recognized him, going mad with joy. That joy was contagious, and he let it come to him. Then he saw his mother looking out of one of the open windows, to see what the commotion was all about. His mother was so much older than in the image he had been holding on to in the long years of bitter loneliness. She kept looking at him, not moving, not calling, and not saying a word. She then moved away from the window and when he saw her again, she was standing in the doorway, still staring at him. And then he knew that he had to come to her, very, very slowly. And he did, and she started to tremble all over and then to cry.

“*Jože, moj Jože*, is it you, is it you?”

“*Ja, moja ljuba mama*, it is me,” he said softly and took his mother's hands and then took her in his arms.

Then the world changed its colors. His mother started screaming and shouting for her husband, daughters and sons, and they all came, and stared, and cried and laughed. And they wanted to hug him, but hesitated for his frailness, his aloofness, his strangeness.

His father had aged and his brothers and sisters were new to him in their grown youth. He stared at them, with a stare that seemed to come from a long way back, from the steppe, from eternity.

The day would not end. The night would not end, until he had told them a bit of his story. He tried, he really tried, but after a few hours he simply fell asleep, on the spot. It would have to wait. And it could wait. He was free, free to stay or to go where he wanted, free to do whatever he wanted. The very idea made him drunk with expectation and joy, but also endlessly tired. He would need not days, but weeks to be completely home, home with all his heart and his soul.

The next morning his first steps led him to the little chapel he had built behind the farmstead. There was a bunch of wildflowers in front of the statue of Marija Pomagaj. He knelt down and said a prayer – prayed many times during his long way home – thanking Her for Her help and guidance, and once more commending his soul to Her.

In the days that followed, he gradually told his family the story, his story of two years of walking, escaping from captivity in far-away, unimaginably far-away Uzbekistan. He would only tell them the bare facts and at that only the ones he could bear to tell. He felt that he could not yet face the whole story, with all its undercurrents and moments of deep sorrow and despair. It would be emotionally too aggravating; it would gnaw at his very soul. He might tell some of it later, to some of them, but not now, not yet, and maybe never. [...] (pp 73–74)