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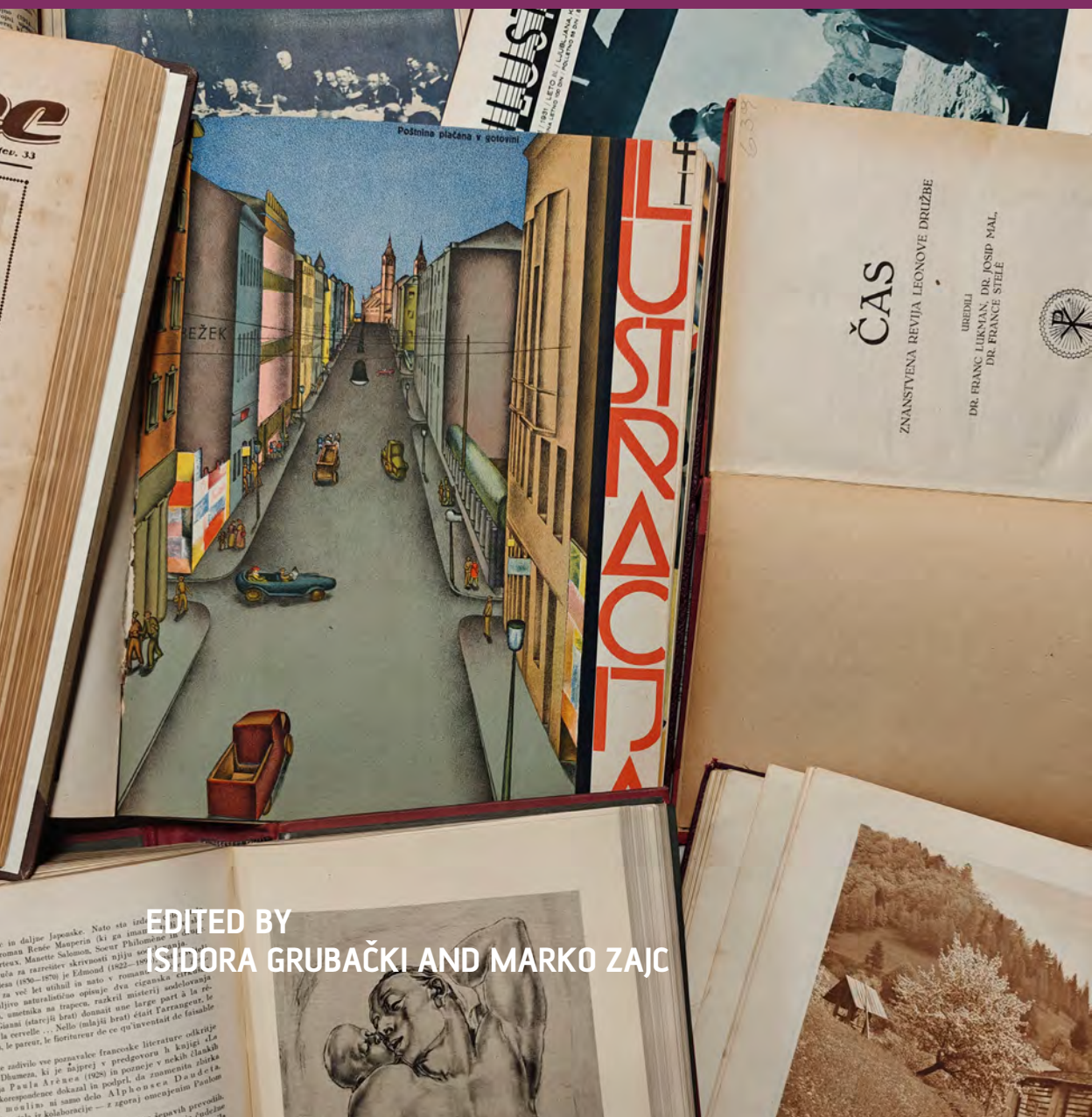
POLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD: THE CASE OF SLOVENIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT



EDITED BY
ISIDORA GRUBAČKI AND MARKO ZAJC

From a review by Marco Bresciani

This volume is the product of excellent scientific research conducted by a group of scholars specialising in various aspects of Slovenian, Yugoslavian, and Central European political thought during the interwar period. It opens with a rich and well-structured introduction by the two editors, who compellingly develop the methodological challenges and carefully justify the interpretative choices of the volume. All the chapters are built on comprehensive bibliographical references and on accurate translations of a single or a small group of sources. Notably, concise reconstructions of the authors' biographies and close analyses of the historical contexts precede the annotated publication of newspaper articles, pamphlet excerpts and essays (political, historical, sociological).

Perhaps the most important scientific achievement of this volume concerns the crucial link, which has been carefully investigated, between the contingent, situational transformation of political and geopolitical contexts, both regional and international, and the development of an ever-evolving political thought. Viewed outside the confines of national historiography, 1918 emerges as a pivotal moment where institutional discontinuities intertwine with the deeper continuities of biographical and intellectual trajectories. Of particular interest are the essays that shed new light on the 'issues' at the centre of political debate in interwar Slovenia: the 'women's issue', the 'minority issue', the 'social issue' and the 'national issue'. These essays reveal the different approaches and internal articulations of these issues.

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ISIDORA GRUBAČKI AND MARKO ZAJC

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Foreword

This reader was prepared within the framework of the Political History Program (P6-0281: *Politična zgodovina*) funded by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (ARIS), hosted by the Institute of Contemporary History in Ljubljana (*Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino*, INZ). Conceived in late 2023, the volume grew out of the conversations and presentations that took place during a workshop held at INZ in April 2024. The lively exchanges at that workshop were crucial in shaping the ideas presented here. We hope this reader takes one of the first steps in developing further research and collaboration in this direction.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all the contributors to this reader, whose work and engagement have been instrumental in achieving its final form. Our thanks also go to Ravel Kodrič, Jurij Perovšek, and Bojan Godeša for their active participation in the workshop and for enriching our discussions with their extensive knowledge and insights. Our special thanks go to Borut Praper, who translated most of the source texts included in this reader, and to Cody James Inglis, who carefully proofread the manuscript. We are also deeply grateful to our publishers, Mojca Šorn and Ivan Smiljanić, for their continuous support and guidance throughout the process, including their assistance with copyright matters. We would further like to thank Balázs Trencsényi for his valuable comments on the concept and introduction of the reader. Finally, we extend our gratitude to the reviewers, Maria Falina and Marco Bresciani, for their insightful feedback and the stimulating discussions that helped to improve this work.

It is our hope that this reader will pique the interest of a broad audience and especially prove useful to students and scholars of Slovenian history and of the history of political thought in East Central Europe.

Note on Names

The regions examined in this book were historically multilingual borderlands, where Slovenian, German, Italian, Hungarian, and other linguistic traditions overlapped. As a result, most places are or were known by several names. Among the names of the places referenced in this book, there are:

Celje / Cilli
Cividale / Čedad
Gorizia / Gorica / Görz
Idrija / Idria
Klagenfurt / Celovec
Kočevje / Gottschee
Ljubljana / Laibach
Maribor / Marburg
Mura / Mur River
Ptuj / Pettau
Rijeka / Fiume
Slovenske gorice / Windische Büheln
Trieste / Trst / Triest
Val Canale / Kanalska dolina / Kanaltal
Villach / Beljak / Villaco
Völkermarkt / Velikovec
Zagreb / Agram

Throughout the text, we use either the most common contemporary placename in English (e.g., Danube, Littoral, Belgrade, Prague) or that of the main language of the country in which the place is currently located, so: Klagenfurt, Ljubljana, Trieste, Villach, and Zagreb. This approach is intended to foreground readability while acknowledging the region's rich multilingual and multicultural history, which we discuss in depth in Part II of the Introduction: "Situating Slovenia: Yugoslav and Transnational Perspectives."

Isidora Grubački and Marko Zajc

INTRODUCTION
Toward a New History of Interwar Slovenian Political Thought

Over the past two decades, there has been a marked increase in interest in the history of political thought in East Central Europe, particularly in terms of English-language scholarship published by historians working in and on the region. In addition to the growing body of research in this field, some of which we address below, a significant aspect of this scholarly activity has been the publication of source texts translated from various East Central European languages into English, often for the first time. The primary goal of these efforts has been to make original sources accessible to scholars working in and on other East Central European contexts, as well as to a broader global audience. Two initiatives in particular stand out for their importance. The first is the four-volume reader *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe (1770–1945): Texts and Commentaries*, a collection of the most representative source texts on the problem of nation-building and collective identity in East Central Europe from the Enlightenment to the end of the Second World War.[1] Most recently, the impressive volume *Texts and Contexts from the History of*

1 Balázs Trencsényi and Michal Kopeček, eds., *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe (1770–1945): Texts and Commentaries*, vol. 1, *Late Enlightenment: Emergence of the Modern*

Feminism and Women's Rights: East Central Europe, Second Half of the Twentieth Century was released, featuring over one hundred translated texts from multiple languages written by women.[2] Beyond the focus on the region, these readers share a common format: each source is accompanied by a scholarly commentary comprised of a brief biography of the source text author and contextual information to enhance understanding. More than mere collections of translated texts, these volumes serve as extremely valuable entry points into the problems and layers of political thought in and about East Central Europe.

This reader is one such endeavor. Produced as part of a project within the Political History Program at the Institute of Contemporary History in Ljubljana between 2023 and 2025, this volume presents English translations of sixteen primary sources of Slovenian interwar political thought selected by nine contributing authors. Each source is accompanied by a brief biographic note about the source text author—or, in cases where the author is unknown, a description of the periodical in which the text appeared—along with a contextual introduction. The process of preparing the reader began at a workshop held in April 2024 in Ljubljana. The event was attended by scholars specializing in the history of political thought in East Central Europe whose task it was to select one or more sources from the history of Slovenian political thought that could illuminate the broader question of political transformations during the interwar period. The binding element was to select texts which could go beyond what we perceived as a simplistic historiographic framing of the history of interwar Slovenian political thought around three camps: Catholic, liberal, and Marxist. Moreover, we asked the contributors to contextualize the selected sources within broader Yugoslav and transnational contexts. Following the discussion of the sources and

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'National Idea' (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006). Balázs Trencsényi and Michal Kopeček, eds., *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe (1770–1945)*, vol. 2, *National Romanticism: The Formation of National Movements* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007). Ahmet Ersoy, Maciej Górny, and Vangelis Kechriotis, eds., *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe (1770–1945)*, vol. 3/1, *Modernism: The Creation of Nation-States* and vol. 3/2, *Modernism: Representations of National Culture* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2010). Diana Mishkova, Marius Turda, and Balázs Trencsényi, eds., *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe (1770–1945)*, vol. 4, *Anti-Modernism: Radical Revisions of Collective Identity* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2014). For some background to the project, hosted at the Center for Advanced Study Sofia, Bulgaria, see "Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Eastern Europe (1770–1945)," https://idreader.cas.bg/, last accessed October 1, 2025.

2 Zsófia Lóránd, Adela Hîncu, Jovana Mihajlović Trbovc, and Katarzyna Stańczak-Wiślicz, eds., *Texts and Contexts from the History of Feminism and Women's Rights: East Central Europe, Second Half of the Twentieth Century* (Budapest–New York: Central European University Press, 2024). Likewise, the volume is linked to the ongoing European Research Council project "The History of Feminist Political Thought and Women's Rights Discourses in East Central Europe, 1929–2001 (HERESSEE)," led by Zsófia Lóránd at the Institute for Contemporary History (*Institut für Zeitgeschichte*), University of Vienna, https://heressee.univie.ac.at/, last accessed October 1, 2025.

their contexts at the workshop, the authors prepared the biographical notes and contextualizing essays with an awareness of each other's contributions and the broader coherence of the reader as a whole.

Through the reader's central theme of political transformations, our main aim was to explore how Slovenian thinkers engaged with, and responded to, profound shifts in political regimes, ideologies, and institutional frameworks during the interwar period, driven by the collapse of multiethnic empires, the rise of new nation-states, and the widespread crisis of liberal parliamentary systems which had become particularly fragile in East Central Europe. Traditionally framed as an age of "crisis,"[3] the interwar years are increasingly recognized in recent scholarship as a period of far-reaching political and intellectual transformation and experimentation across Europe. Our understanding of the interwar years is in line with the growing body of work which aims to re-value this period not merely as an interval between the First and Second World Wars, but as a distinct era of post-imperial reconfiguration and ideological innovation.[4] For example, Éva Kovács, Raul Cârstocea, and Gábor Egry's recent volume *Ethnicizing Europe* highlights the need to study processes of ethnicization alongside post-First World War violence across Europe. They argue that this requires tracing postwar regimes back to prewar systems of ethnicized legal difference, thereby emphasizing the importance of examining the interwar period within a longer historical framework.[5] Similarly, Klaus Richter and others have examined the interwar period through the lens of the Great Depression, focusing on its broad political, social, and cultural impact in East Central Europe, revealing how it destabilized the liberal international order constructed in the wake of the First World War.[6] In the field of intellectual history, new research has been conducted on the interwar debates over crisis, democracy, and religion in various national and transnational contexts.[7] In his recent monograph, Balázs Trencsényi has argued against the

3 See, for example: Iván Berend, *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe before World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). Agnes Cornell, *Democratic Stability in an Age of Crisis: Reassessing the Interwar Period* (Oxford: University Press, 2020).

4 See, for example, Jan-Werner Müller, *Contesting Democracy. Political Ideas in Twentieth Century Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), particularly chapters 2 (49–90) and 3 (91–124).

5 Éva Kovács, Raul Cârstocea, and Gábor Egry, eds., *Ethnicizing Europe: Hate and Violence after Versailles* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2025), 4.

6 Klaus Richter, Jasmin Nithammer, and Anca Mândru, eds., *The Great Depression in Eastern Europe* (Budapest–New York: Central European University Press, 2025). Klaus Richter, "The Catastrophe of the Present and That of the Future: Expectations for European States from the Great War to the Great Depression," *Contemporary European History* 33, no. 3 (2024): 1002–20.

7 Among others: Maria Falina, "Narrating Democracy in Interwar Yugoslavia: From State Creation to Its Collapse," *Journal of Modern European History* 17, no. 2 (May 2019): 196–208. Maria Falina, *Religion and Politics in Interwar Yugoslavia: Serbian Nationalism and East Orthodox Christianity* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022). Michal Kopeček, "Czechoslovak Interwar Democracy and Its Critical Introspections," *Journal of Modern European History* 17, no. 1 (2019): 7–15.

view of simply denoting the interwar years as "crisis" years and has made a case that it was in large part the "discursive frames, narrative tools, analytical categories, and self-representation of historical actors" who co-created the image of the interwar period as that of crisis-ridden.[8]

We see the Yugoslav and Slovenian story as part of this broader story of the (transnational, European, and global) transformations that occurred in the interwar period. The Slovenian case study is particularly fruitful for showing the variety of positions taken as well as the transformation and fluidity of political thought in this period. The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was established on December 1, 1918; up until early January 1929, the state functioned as a constrained but ultimately parliamentary, constitutional democracy. Yet, following the growing instability of the mid-to-late 1920s and the immediate aftermath of the 1928 assassination of Stjepan Radić and other Croatian Peasant Party representatives in the National Assembly in Belgrade, King Aleksandar Karađorđević declared a royal dictatorship on January 6, 1929. The parliamentary system was abolished in the wake of the introduction of the royal dictatorship, fundamentally altering the political landscape.[9] Various studies have accounted for the dynamic and volatile conditions in which it emerged and evolved. An important example in political history is Dejan Djokić's study of interwar Yugoslavia, in which he challenged the notion that the country's crises stemmed from the existence of fully formed Serbian and Croatian nationalisms prior to 1918. Instead of viewing Yugoslavia as an anomaly in interwar Europe, Djokić argued that its political turmoil resulted from decisions made after 1918. What initially began as a constitutional debate around the question of state centralism eventually evolved into a Serb-Croat conflict.[10] Similarly, in the field of Yugoslav social history, the historians Fabio Giomi and Stefano Petrungaro have examined the shifting dynamics of the interwar period through the lens of voluntary associations and their evolving role in society, showing how the relationship between the state and society changed across the different political regimes in Yugoslavia during the interwar years.[11]

8 Balázs Trencsényi, *Intellectuals and the Crisis of Politics in the Interwar Period and Beyond. A Transnational History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2025), 5. Balázs Trencsényi, Lucija Balikić, Una Blagojević, and Isidora Grubački, eds., *East Central European Crisis Discourses in the Twentieth Century: A Never-Ending Story?* (New York: Routledge, 2025).

9 See, for example: Christian Axboe Nielsen, *Making Yugoslavs: Identity in King Aleksandar's Yugoslavia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014). Marie-Janine Calic, *A History of Yugoslavia* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2014).

10 Dejan Djokić, *Elusive Compromise: A History of Interwar Yugoslavia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

11 Fabio Giomi and Stefano Petrungaro, eds., "Voluntary Associations in Yugoslavia (1918–1941)," *European Review of History* 26, no. 1 (2019): 1–162.

Complementary to these efforts, in this reader we aim to enhance understanding about the ways in which political thought changed and transformed in the interwar period. As we show, political thought in this period did not simply reflect institutional change, but it actively shaped new visions of state, democracy, citizenship, and social justice, among numerous other political ideas and concepts. The central idea for this volume has been that each contribution tells us something precise about the specific moment when the source text was written, published, or spoken: for example, reflecting on the promise of parliamentarism still held in the early 1920s, or rather the catastrophic visions of the late 1930s, when another global war appeared increasingly likely. Simultaneously, each contribution offers a broader view of the transformation of political thought as a collection of texts and contexts with the political transformations discussed in the biographical note and contextualization. Taken together, the contextual essays and the sources are meant to offer a complex image of the interwar moment as a dynamic space in which older political frameworks were adapted and new political languages emerged. The aim is therefore not (only) to trace continuities and ruptures but also to illuminate how political thought evolved and changed through non-linear trajectories. Overall, we hope this reader will reach a wide audience, encompassing students and scholars but also a curious public—in Slovenia, across East Central Europe, and beyond.

As discussed below in detail, this volume offers a snapshot of current research in the history of political thought in East Central Europe. These sources, translated from Slovenian and a few other languages into English, make some aspects of Slovenian political thought accessible to those who do not read Slovenian and are not immediately familiar with the context. The sources, biographies, and contextual introductions provide opportunities for comparative analysis of the trajectories and character of political thought in Slovenia and so also within East Central Europe more broadly. Finally, we hope that this reader, together with the present introduction, will help raise important questions in the pursuit of a more inclusive history of political thought in Slovenia—one that embraces a wider range of political thinkers and moves beyond the traditional framework of the "three camps": Catholics, liberals, and Marxists.

The remainder of the introduction is divided into two main parts. The first, entitled "**Historiographic Overview**," provides a survey of Slovenian historiography on the interwar period. This is an essential context for understanding the texts and political ideas presented in this volume. This section also highlights the relatively marginal position of the history of political thought within Slovenian national historiography, largely due to its development within the field of political science rather than history. The final section of this part then addresses the

canon of Slovenian political thought and how it has been shaped. The second part, "**Framing the Reader**," offers a more detailed discussion of the editorial choices made in compiling this volume. It begins by reflecting on the meaning of "Slovenia" in the context of the reader, then explores how the selected sources serve to diversify and complicate traditional understandings of Slovenian political thought. The section concludes by introducing the sources in chronological order.

I: HISTORIOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

The Political History of Interwar Slovenia after 1945

In the post-1945 period, the histories of interwar Yugoslavia and Slovenia were not in the foreground. Historiographic focus was rather directed either toward the pre-1918 period or toward an analysis of the partisan struggle. The first overviews of the interwar period appeared only in the 1960s. Ferdo Čulinović's *Jugoslavija između dva rata* (Yugoslavia between the Two World Wars), published in Zagreb in 1961, is considered the first historical overview of the interwar period published in Yugoslavia,[12] whereas the Slovenian historian Metod Mikuž published an overview of interwar Slovenian history in 1965.[13] Most of the new research on the first Yugoslav state was published in the 1970s.[14] Slovenian historiography of the interwar period was almost exclusively concerned with Slovenian history; Slovenian historians did not approach their work from a broader Yugoslav perspective. While these studies primarily dealt with the history of the labor movement and social issues, analysis of the political developments that led to the establishment of the coalition Liberation Front (*Osvobodilna fronta*, OF) in 1941 was also a topical issue. At the time, historians highlighted the Yugoslav dimension, but only when emphasizing Slovenia's role in the establishment of the broader Yugoslav project. One of the fundamental works in the field of Slovenian political history was written by a Serbian historian, Momčilo Zečević,

12 Ferdo Čulinović, *Jugoslavija između dva rata* (Zagreb: JAZU, 1961).

13 Metod Mikuž, *Oris zgodovine Slovencev v stari Jugoslaviji 1917–1941* (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1965).

14 Janko Pleterski, *Prva odločitev Slovencev za Jugoslavijo: politika na domačih tleh med vojno 1914–1918* (Ljubljana: Slovenska matica, 1971). Janko Prunk, *Pot krščanskih socialistov v Osvobodilno fronto slovenskega naroda* (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1977). Slavko Kremenšek, *Slovensko študentovsko gibanje 1919–1941* (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1972). Alenka Nedog-Urbančič, *Ljudskofrontno gibanje v Sloveniji: od leta 1935 do 1941* (Ljubljana: Borec, 1978). Miroslav Stiplovšek, *Razmah strokovnega-sindikalnega gibanja na Slovenskem 1918–1922*, vol. 1 (Ljubljana: Partizanska knjiga–Delavska enotnost, 1979).

who analyzed the Slovenian People's Party during the unification of the South Slavic state at the end of the First World War.[15] On the other hand, Slovenian historiography in the socialist period continued to explore the history of Slovenians outside the borders of prewar Yugoslavia.[16]

The period between the two world wars became increasingly popular among Slovenian historians only in the 1990s. This is not surprising, as the interpretation of the interwar period was linked both to the transition to parliamentary democracy and to the independence of Slovenia. Political historians sought answers to questions about Slovenian autonomy/independence and the (non-)democratic nature of the Slovenian space during the interwar period. By examining the interwar period, Slovenian historians explored the origins of Slovenian statehood and, at the same time, distanced themselves from the socialist era. Nevertheless, for the most part,[17] Slovenian historiography did not treat the first Yugoslav state as a mistake, but as prehistory to independence.[18] Bojan Balkovec defined the National Government in Ljubljana during the transition from the Habsburg Monarchy to the South Slavic state as the first Slovenian government,[19] whereas Jurij Perovšek interpreted the independent activity of the National Government in Ljubljana in November 1918 as Slovenian national independence.[20] Ervin Dolenc's 1996 book on cultural policy emphasized the conflict between liberalism and Catholicism, rather than the class struggle highlighted by earlier historians.[21] Historians were also interested in political Catholicism, parliamentary politics, and the political biographies of "great men" forgotten during the socialist period.[22] The establishment of an independent Slovenian state also required new

15 Momčilo Zečević, *Slovenska ljudska stranka in jugoslovansko zedinjenje 1917–1921: Od Majniške deklaracije do Vidovdanske ustave* (Maribor: Obzorja, 1977).

16 Milica Kacin-Wohinz, *Narodnoobrambno gibanje primorskih Slovencev: 1921–1928* (Koper: Lipa–Trieste: Založništvo tržaškega tiska, 1977). Lojze Ude, *Koroško vprašanje* (Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1976). Janko Pleterski, Lojze Ude, and Tone Zorn, eds., *Koroški plebiscit: Razprave in članki* (Ljubljana: Slovenska matica, 1970).

17 Vasilij Melik, a member of the older generation and an expert on the nineteenth century, surprised many in 1993 with his thesis that the process of unification with the Kingdom of Serbia on December 1, 1918, was a mistake. See Ervin Dolenc, "Slovensko zgodovinopisje o obdobju 1918–1991 po razpadu Jugoslavije," *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 44, no. 2 (2004): 120.

18 Jože Pirjevec, *Jugoslavija, 1918–1992: Nastanek, razvoj ter razpad Karadjordjevićeve in Titove Jugoslavije* (Koper: Lipa, 1995).

19 Bojan Balkovec, *Prva slovenska vlada 1918–1921* (Ljubljana: Znanstveno in publicistično središče, 1992).

20 Jurij Perovšek, *Slovenska osamosvojitev v letu 1918: Študija o slovenski državnosti v Državi Slovencev, Hrvatov in Srbov* (Ljubljana: Modrijan, 1998).

21 Ervin Dolenc, *Kulturni boj: Slovenska kulturna politika v Kraljevini SHS 1918–1929* (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1996).

22 Egon Pelikan, *Akomodacija ideologije političnega katolicizma na Slovenskem* (Maribor: Obzorja, 1997). Andrej Rahten, *Slovenska ljudska stranka v beograjski skupščini: Jugoslovanski klub v parlamentarnem življenju Kraljevine SHS 1919–1929* (Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, ZRC SAZU, 2002). Andrej Rahten, *Pozabljeni slovenski premier: Politična biografija dr. Janka Brejca (1869–1934)* (Klagenfurt – Ljubljana –

research into the period between the two wars in the former Habsburg Littoral, which was subsequently annexed to Italy after the collapse of the empire and marked by the pressure of Italian fascism.[23] The Slovenian–Italian border area has traditionally been burdened by national disputes, fascist violence, anti-fascist resistance and revenge, and migration. In 1993, an official Slovenian–Italian historical commission was established, which, after a long process of coordination, completed a joint text only in 2000.[24]

Historians who began their careers in the early twenty-first century have continued to be interested in the interwar period yet tended to focus less on questions of national statehood than those historians who entered the field during the time of independence and transition to parliamentary democracy and capitalism. Their research explored topics such as political movements during the interwar period, the emergence of women in political life, and the role of religion in regional politics. Some concentrated on institutional histories and focused on the structures of parliamentarism and of political parties, while others pursued social history from the perspective of everyday life, legal records, and women's history.[25] More broadly, the history of women and feminism at the intersection of political, social, and even intellectual history has experienced a great boom.[26] In

Vienna: Mohorjeva založba, 2002). Igor Grdina, *Preroki, doktrinarji, epigoni: Idejni boji na Slovenskem v prvi polovici 20. stoletja* (Ljubljana: Inštitut za civilizacijo in kulturo, 2005).

23 Egon Pelikan, *Tajno delovanje primorske duhovščine pod fašizmom: Primorski krščanski socialci med Vatikanom, fašistično Italijo in slovensko katoliško desnico: Zgodovinsko ozadje romana Kaplan Martin Čedermac* (Ljubljana: Nova revija, 2002). Boris Mlakar, "Zaton Organizacije jugoslovanskih nacionalistov: Orjune pod budnim očesom italjanskih fašističnih oblasti," *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 53, no. 2 (2013): 48–63. Boris Mlakar, "Goriška sredina," *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 37, no. 2 (1997): 325–34. Boris Mlakar, "Fašistična stranka na Primorskem v tridesetih letih 20. stoletja in poskus predstavitve njenega slovenskega članstva," *Acta Histriae* 24, no. 4 (2016): 787–800.

24 *Slovensko-italijanski odnosi 1880–1956: Poročilo Slovensko-italijanske zgodovinsko-kulturne komisije* (Ljubljana: Nova revija, 2001).

25 Jure Gašparič, *SLS pod kraljevo diktaturo: Diktatura kralja Aleksandra in politika Slovenske ljudske stranke v letih 1929–1935* (Ljubljana: Modrijan, 2007). Irena Selišnik, *Prihod žensk na oder slovenske politike* (Ljubljana: Sophia, 2008). Milica Antić Gaber, ed., *Ženske na robovih politike* (Ljubljana: Sophia, 2011). Mateja Ratej, "Politika Slovenske ljudske stranke pred sklenitvijo Blejskega sporazuma leta 1927," *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 45, no. 2 (2005): 43–58. Jure Gašparič, *Hinter den Kulissen des Parlaments. Die jugoslawische Skupština 1919–1941* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 2023). Mateja Ratej, *Rožengrunt: Žensko nasilje v štajerskih kočarskih družinah med svetovnima vojnama* (Ljubljana: Beletrina, 2023).

26 For some more recent publications, see Project EIRENE, accessed May 20, 2025, https://project-eirene.eu/publication/, and works such as: Ana Cergol Paradiž, *»Bela kuga«: ilegalni abortusi in zmanjševanje rodnosti na Slovenskem v obdobju med obema vojnama* (Ljubljana: Založba Univerze v Ljubljani, 2023). Marta Verginella and Urška Strle, eds., *Women and Work in the North-Eastern Adriatic: Postwar Transitions* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2025). Marta Verginella, ed., *Women, Nationalism, and Social Networks in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1848–1918* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2023). For contributions to intellectual history, see Manca G. Renko, "The Woman without Qualities?: The Case of Alice Schalek, Intellectual Labour and Women Intellectuals," *Acta Histriae* 29, no. 4 (2021): 921–46. Isidora Grubački and Kristina Andělova, "Crises of Feminism and Democracy in the Interwar Period. Yugoslav and Czechoslovak Entanglements," in

recent years, successful attempts have been made to contextualize the Slovenian situation within East Central Europe.[27] Despite the emergence of new approaches and a younger generation of Slovenian historians, most works on this period in the past fifteen years have been produced by established political historians.[28] Their focus has remained on interwar politics, diplomatic history, and biographical studies, particularly of key political figures.[29] Research on the Upper Adriatic under fascism has also gained attention, with notable studies on anti-fascist cultural resistance and traumatic events.[30]

The political history of the interwar period in Slovenia is a small but diverse field within Slovenian national historiography, which has mainly dealt with pressing issues of national identity and statehood. After the Second World War, this period was seen as a prelude to the partisan national liberation war, while the interpretation of the period at the end of the socialist era was linked to criticism of socialist historiography and the search for the roots of Slovenian statehood. Historians were also intrigued by the question of party politics and democracy. They also pointed to regional differences, with particular emphasis on the issue of Slovenians under fascist Italy and, to a lesser extent, the issue of Slovenians in Austria. In the last decade and a half, Slovenian historiography on this period has continued to deal with the old dilemmas of national history and the biographies of important actors, although the number of works with a comparative and transnational perspective is growing.

East Central European Crisis Discourses, 159–82; contributions in Lóránd et al., *Texts and Contexts from the History of Feminism and Women's Rights*, e.g., Manca G. Renko, "Angela Vode: The Woman in Contemporary Society (1934)," 98–108.

27 Oskar Mulej, *Liberalism after the Habsburg Monarchy, 1918–1935: National Liberal Heirs in the Czech Lands, Austria, and Slovenia* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2024).

28 Jurij Perovšek, *Samoodločba in federacija: Slovenski komunisti in nacionalno vprašanje 1920–1941* (Ljubljana: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2012). Jurij Perovšek, *O demokraciji in jugoslovanstvu: Slovenski liberalizem v Kraljevini SHS/Jugoslaviji* (Ljubljana: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2013). Jurij Perovšek, *Politika in moderna: Idejnopolitični razvoj, delovanje in zareze v slovenski politiki od konca 19. stoletja do druge svetovne vojne* (Ljubljana: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2022). Marko Zajc, "ORJUNA in PAČ na poti v Trbovlje: K zgodovini fizičnega nasilja v političnem boju," *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 54, no. 2 (2014): 101–23. Marko Zajc, "Odnos vojske Kraljevine SHS/Jugoslavije do Slovencev," *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 55, no. 1 (2015): 7–21.

29 Andrej Rahten, *V prah strti prestol: Slovensko dojemanje habsburške dinastije v postimperialni dobi* (Celje: Društvo Mohorjeva družba – Celjska Mohorjeva družba, 2023). Andrej Rahten, *Anton Korošec: Slovenski državnik kraljeve Jugoslavije* (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 2022). Mateja Ratej, *Triumfator: Anton Korošec v prvi Jugoslaviji* (Ljubljana: Beletrina, 2022).

30 Egon Pelikan, *Tone Kralj in prostor meje* (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 2016). Borut Klabjan and Gorazd Bajc, *Ogenj, ki je zajel Evropo: Narodni dom v Trstu 1920–2020* (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 2021).

Mapping the Field: A Historiography of Slovenian Political Thought

In the period of socialist Yugoslavia (1945–1991), Slovenian historiography laid the foundations for the study of Slovenian political and social history both in a positivist manner and from the perspective of studying structures and using comparative methods.[31] Even though historians did, to an extent, also write the history of political thought in this framework, they did not frame this accordingly, and did not call it "the history of political thought." On the other hand, what was called the history of Slovenian political thought was established at the intersection of the humanities and the social sciences, between historical studies and political science. In this section, we offer an overview of the field of the history of political thought in Slovenian historiography. Secondly, we argue that this field developed in close entanglement with the development of Slovenian statehood and the Slovenian national question, and that the Slovenian national question has been and remains the central concern of this historiography.

After the Second World War, the founders of modern Slovenian national historiography at the Department of History of the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana wrote about political thought and ideas but did not establish a specific paradigm for the history of Slovenian political thought. Bogo Grafenauer (1916–1995), for instance, focused primarily on questions of structural change and national development through the lens of historical materialism and class struggle. While political thought was not central to his work, Grafenauer still constructed a traditional Slovenian national narrative grounded in both positivist and Marxist historiography, along with the long-standing theme of Slovenian "servitude." Grafenauer defined the historical Slovenians in the pre-national era as Slavs by origin, peasants by class affiliation, and people who spoke the Slovenian language.[32] In this way, he defined Slovenians—regardless of their self-identification and lack of a glorious history—as a collective historical actor that developed into the Slovenian nation in parallel with the development of capitalism. Fran Zwitter (1905–1988) occasionally dealt with questions of political ideas and wrote about Illyrianism and Yugoslavism.[33] Zwitter's successor, Peter Vodopivec (b. 1946), contributed significantly to the history of political ideas with his conceptual breadth, but instead of approaching Slovenian history through political thought, he preferred

31 Bogo Grafenauer, *Struktura in tehnika zgodovinske vede: Uvod v študij zgodovine* (Ljubljana: Filozofska fakulteta, 1980).

32 Jernej Kosi, "Nacionalno zgodovinopisje kot orožje ljudstva: Grafenauerjeva koncepcija slovenske zgodovine," *O mojstrih in muzi: Zgodovinopisje Boga Grafenauerja in Ferda Gestrina*, eds. Peter Štih and Žiga Zwitter (Ljubljana: Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti, 2018), 60–84.

33 Fran Zwitter, *O slovenskem narodnem vprašanju*, ed. Vasilij Melik (Ljubljana: Slovenska matica, 1990).

to study mentalities and economic and social views, more characteristic of the *Annales* school.[34]

Among the historians of the generation that came of age during the Second World War, Janko Pleterski (1923–2018), who was active in the socio-political landscape of socialist Yugoslavia, was the most concerned with ideological issues. His book *Narodi, Jugoslavija, revolucija* (1985), which at the time represented also a proposal for resolving the post-Tito crisis of Yugoslavism, remains a key text in the history of Yugoslav political thought. Pleterski came to a simple conclusion that was consistent with Edvard Kardelj's (1910–1979) theses on the national question in Yugoslavia: according to Pleterski, Yugoslavia is only possible if the Yugoslav nations (and nationalities) are fully acknowledged—as they were, according to the Constitution—and the socialist revolution continues. Nations, Yugoslavism, and revolution were, to Pleterski, the three elements of the Yugoslav "trinomial." If one collapsed, Yugoslavia would also collapse.[35] Pleterski was both an academic and an activist in the League of Communists; in other words, a historian and a creator of political thought at the same time. This dual role was particularly characteristic of historians of political thought and practice in the communist movement. They were often communist activists themselves in the period before the Second World War: for example, Dušan Kermavner (1903–1975) and France Klopčič (1903–1986), both members of the first generation of Slovenian communists, were known for their sharp public polemics on the history of the labor movement.[36]

In socialist Slovenia, the political and cultural establishment assigned nation-building primacy to fields other than history. That role traditionally fell to Slovenian language studies and comparative literature. Within this arena, alongside the official ideological line, alternative visions of Slovenia's past and future also emerged. In Slovenia, alongside existentialism, the critical generation turned to phenomenology—above all Heidegger—whose influence proved decisive for Dušan Pirjevec (1921–1977), a philosopher and comparativist navigating between regime loyalty and dissent. Combining phenomenology, Kardelj's Marxism, theories of nationalism (Hans Kohn, Hannah Arendt, Hannah Vogt), and a distinctive rereading of the Slovenian canon, Pirjevec provided the critical generation and cultural nonconformists an alternative framework to articulate a critique of the state socialist cultural-political reality. For Pirjevec, the modern

34 Peter Vodopivec, *O gospodarskih in socialnih nazorih na Slovenskem v 19. stoletju* (Ljubljana: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2006).

35 Janko Pleterski, *Narodi, Jugoslavija, revolucija* (Ljubljana: Komunist–Državna založba Slovenije, 1986).

36 Dušan Kermavner, *Ivan Cankar in slovenska politika leta 1918* (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1968). France Klopčič, *Neravnodušni državljan: Razčlembe in zamisli* (Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1974).

nation appears on two levels: as a nexus of the ethnic—hence a linguistic-cultural community—and as an organized community defined by power, rationalization, and governance.[37] Pirjevec defines the nation as a large group, "a movement" that strives for statehood and actively pursues it. The Slovenian nation never became a genuine "movement," Pirjevec claimed, since foreign predominance kept it inhibited or blocked. He identified a transgenerational characteristic of Slovenian literature and politics, which he called the "Prešeren structure." In this model, Slovenian literature—with poet France Prešeren (1800–1849) as its canonical center—assumed the leading role in national self-affirmation and legitimation during a period without statehood. Within this framework, literature functions not merely aesthetically, but also as the community's symbolic and normative horizon, substituting absent political institutions.[38] After Pirjevec's death in 1977, this trajectory was carried forward by a dissident group of intellectuals that, in the 1980s, became known as the *Nova revija* circle: Tine Hribar, Ivo Urbančič, Dimitrij Rupel, and Niko Grafenauer.[39] In the late 1980s, this circle—drawing on reinterpretations of Pirjevec's theses—formulated an alternative Slovenian national program, regarded in the Slovenian contemporary national narrative as a pivotal text for independence and democratization.[40] Pirjevec's conceptual framework had remarkably little exchange with those of historians and political scientists, a gap that warrants closer scholarly scrutiny.

More than with the Department of History at the Faculty of Arts, the history of political thought was rather linked closely to the study of political science at the Faculty of Sociology, Political Science, and Journalism (now the Faculty of Social Sciences) in Ljubljana. Namely, the founder of political science in Slovenia, Adolf Bibič (1933–1996), introduced the basic subject "History of Political Ideas" into the study of political science.[41] In 1976, Bibič invited Janko Prunk (b. 1941), a historian from the Institute for the History of the Labor Movement (*Inštitut za zgodovino delavskega gibanja*, now the Institute of Contemporary History), to

37 Dušan Pirjevec, *Vprašanje o poeziji, vprašanje naroda* (Maribor: Obzorja, 1978), 132. See Balázs Trencsényi, Michal Kopeček, Luka Lisjak Gabrijelčič, Maria Falina, Mónika Baár, and Maciej Janowski, *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe*, vol. 2, *Negotiating Modernity in the Short Twentieth Century and Beyond*, Part 2, *1918–1968* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 127.

38 Marijan Dović, *Prešeren po Prešernu: Kanonizacija nacionalnega pesnika in kulturnega svetnika* (Ljubljana: Literarno-umetniško društvo Literatura, 2017), 204.

39 Marko Juvan, "Slovenski kulturni sindrom v nacionalni in primerjalni literarni vedi," *Slavistična revija* 56, no. 1 (2008): 1–17.

40 Marko Zajc, "The *Nova revija* Magazine's 1986 Survey on the Yugoslav Crisis," in *East Central European Crisis Discourses in the Twentieth Century: A Never-Ending Story?*, ed. Balázs Trencsényi, Lucija Balikić, Una Blagojević, and Isidora Grubački (New York: Routledge, 2025), 294–316.

41 Igor Lukšič, "Politologija v Republiki Sloveniji: 60 let institucionalizacije," *Teorija in praksa* 59, no. 1 (2022): 215.

join the faculty, where he lectured on general history and the history of political thought for the next few decades.[42] Other collaborators at this institute also became increasingly involved in the field of the history of political thought, although they did not define their work as such. Franc Rozman (b. 1941) wrote about the political views of the labor movement in the Habsburg period,[43] Vida Deželak Barič (b. 1954) studied not only the organizational history of the communist movement but also its views,[44] while Jurij Perovšek (b. 1954) established himself as a leading expert on the political thought of Slovenian liberalism and on the national question between the two wars.[45] Perovšek's conceptual approach was closest to that of Janko Prunk. In fact, both furthered their studies at the Leibniz Institute of European History in Mainz, where they became acquainted with the German historiographic tradition of the history of political ideas.[46]

Janko Prunk can be defined as the central figure in shaping the paradigm of Slovenian political thought during the transition from socialism. He is also important for this reader because his research focused primarily on the interwar period. His book on Christian socialists is considered a standard work of Slovenian political thought.[47] Since the early 1980s, he has written several articles on political thought, including on Kardelj and one of the key politicians and thinkers of the interwar period, the Catholic conservative Anton Korošec (1872–1940). In 1986, he published a book on Slovenian national programs,[48] and his view of the history of Slovenian political thought matured in parallel with the transition to parliamentary democracy and independence. In 1992, his best-known work, *Slovenski narodni vzpon* (Slovenian National Ascension), was published, in which he analyzed Slovenian political thought and national politics between 1768 and 1992.[49] It is interesting to note that the book was published at a time when Prunk was actively involved in national politics: in 1992–93, he was Minister for Slovenians Abroad and National Minorities in Slovenia in the first coalition government of Janez Drnovšek.

42 Janko Prunk, "Zgodovina slovenske politične misli," *Teorija in praksa* 59, no. 1 (2022): 365–77, especially 375.

43 Franc Rozman, *Socialistično delavsko gibanje na slovenskem Štajerskem* (Ljubljana: Založba Borec, 1979).

44 Vida Deželak-Barič, "Razvoj Komunistične partije Slovenije na Štajerskem v letih 1941–1943 s stališča njene organiziranosti," *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 27, no. 1–2 (1987): 105–32.

45 Jurij Perovšek, *Programi političnih strank, organizacij in združenj na Slovenskem v času Kraljevine SHS (1918–1929)* (Ljubljana: Arhivsko društvo Slovenije, 1998).

46 Jure Gašparič and Andreas Schulz, "Jurij Perovšek – Sedemdesetletnik; Deutsch-Slowenische Begegnungen," *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 64, no. 2 (2024): 317–23.

47 Prunk, *Pot krščanskih socialistov.*

48 Janko Prunk, *Slovenski narodni programi: Narodni programi v slovenski politični misli od 1848 do 1945* (Ljubljana: Društvo 2000, 1986).

49 Janko Prunk, *Slovenski narodni vzpon: narodna politika (1768–1992)* (Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1992).

According to Prunk, a distinctive feature of Slovenian political thought is that it always emphasizes the relationship with the nation. Slovenian political thought talks about the nation more than is customary among large nations, which do not even think about the dilemmas of their existence, which is not unusual, Prunk argued, since the Slovenian nation developed without its own state. Prunk (like his historical contemporaries) did not discuss how the Slovenian nation came into being, but described it as a "lively, vital, and sensitive creation"[50] that always responded to opportunities for development before reaching a new level of national self-awareness at the end of the 1980s, which recognized the necessity of having its own state. After independence in 1991, a new national consciousness emerged which, as Prunk suggested, would be able to assign the nation to its rightful place in the post-industrial world. Prunk sought to answer the fundamental question "Why did we Slovenians decide the way we did at certain historical turning points and not differently?"[51] Having been interested in the rise of Slovenian politics from its early beginnings to the establishment of an independent state, the author looked to the history of political thought as a means to capture continuity, particularly the tendencies toward political autonomy and independence. Overall, even though Prunk is not a complete determinist and presents different concepts that opposed Slovenian individuality / autonomy / statehood, in his historical narrative he took a value-laden stance toward the actions of historical actors. Specifically, he declared utopian both the idea of a unified Yugoslav state between the two wars and the belief in a Yugoslav federation as a necessary framework for Slovenian political unity, which was established during socialist Yugoslavia.

The book created a significant stir in the historical community. Peter Vodopivec published a harsh review of the book in the leading Slovenian newspaper *Delo*. Vodopivec, who had studied in Paris in the late 1970s and promoted the history of mentalities, new socio-historical approaches, and research into everyday life, accused Prunk of an outdated approach, factual errors, superficiality, and a focus solely on national political issues. Above all, he was bothered by Prunk's generalized statements about historical Slovenians.[52] Vodopivec's colleagues from the Faculty of Arts, Janez Cvirn and Igor Grdina, joined the criticism of Prunk's book in *Delo*. In addition to the narrow selection of literature and factual errors, Cvirn mainly criticized the repetition of stereotypical views introduced into Slovenian history by Edvard Kardelj, as well as historical determinism.[53] Grdina

50 Ibid., 11.
51 Ibid., 12.
52 Peter Vodopivec, "Zamujena priložnost. Kako je obravnavana tema, ki je 'že dolgo vabila pisca'," *Delo* 35, no. 51, March 4, 1993, 14.
53 Janez Cvirn, "Prunkov slovenski narodni vzpon – v monografiji," *Delo* 35, no. 63, March 18, 1993, 14.

attacked Prunk with a sarcastic list of political actors and events that Prunk had not mentioned.[54]

Prunk responded to criticism with a call for honesty in scientific debate, while at the same time indignantly challenging Vodopivec to try similar work himself.[55] He also responded in a paternalistic tone to his younger colleagues, asserting that he was familiar with philosophical views critical of progress, but nevertheless believed that, despite fluctuations, Slovenian national development had been a steady rise, culminating in the establishment of its own nation-state.[56] Janko Pleterski came to Prunk's defense in the debate, emphasizing that Prunk's book was based on "today's experience, which shows that the process of emancipation of the Slovenian nation is a special feature of its history that is also important for others."[57]

As Tjaša Konovšek notes in a recent article on the normativity of nationhood in post-1989 Slovenian historiography, this debate was not just about ideological differences or personal conflicts, but about much more: a disagreement about the nature of history and how it relates to the present. Roughly speaking, two views of Slovenian history emerged. Prunk and Pleterski shared the opinion that the nation is connected to its past experience, and therefore it is necessary to rewrite the history of the nation in independent Slovenia. Both were convinced that the nation had proven to be the central concept around which historical development revolves. By contrast, Vodopivec, Cvirn, and Grdina defended an understanding of the nation in connection with the newly formed Slovenian state as a radical and unexpected episode in the political development of the wider Slovenian space, which was by no means a historical necessity, but rather a break with the traditional political views of the past. While the first understanding was based primarily on the past, the second accepted the new environment of the Slovenian nation-state as an unpredictable and unknown fact that was primarily a matter of the future rather than the past.[58]

Although, as Tjaša Konovšek notes, both views of Slovenian history found their way into encyclopedic reviews and curricula, we can observe that the study of political thought in Slovenian historiography became decidedly unpopular after the aforementioned debate. While many historians in the 1990s and early 2000s dealt with political thought—for example Ervin Dolenc, Egon Pelikan,

54 Igor Grdina, "Čez teden dni bo g. dr. Prunku morda spet treba odgovoriti. I," *Delo* 35, no. 75, April 1, 1993, 14.

55 Janko Prunk, "Za poštenost v znanstvenem razpravljanju," *Delo* 35, no. 57, March 11, 1993, 14.

56 Janko Prunk, "Ta teden mi je odgovoriti gospodu Janezu Cvirnu," *Delo* 35, no. 96, March 25, 1993, 14.

57 Janko Pleterski, "Po burji še beseda, izrečena že ob predstavitvi knjige," *Delo* 35, no. 126, June 3, 1993, 6.

58 Tjaša Konovšek, "The Normativity of a Nation: A Case Study of Slovene Historians in Early Post-Socialism," *Forum Historiae* 16, no. 1 (2022): 137.

Bojan Godeša, Janez Cvirn, Igor Grdina, Jože Pirjevec, to name but a few—they did not, as a rule, define their research work as "the history of political thought."[59] They rather placed their research in the field of political or cultural history, using terms such as "views," "concepts," and "ideology" instead of "political thought." On the other hand, as noted, the study of political thought developed primarily in the Department of Political Science at the Faculty of Social Sciences, where Janko Prunk lectured. In this academic environment, the history of political thought was intertwined with political theory and philosophy, as well as with more quantitative approaches.

Prunk's colleagues at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Igor Lukšič and Jernej Pikalo, also dealt with the history political thought. Both were politically active as social democrats and held ministerial positions.[60] They attempted to weave Slovenian political thought into the international paradigm of the study of political ideas. Lukšič, for example, acknowledges that the history of political ideas can be presented as national histories, that this approach has its advantages, but is ultimately convinced that the history of political ideas cannot be merely the sum of national political histories.[61] In his book *Med hlapci in revolucionarji* (Between Servants and Revolutionaries, 2019), Lukšič emphasized that political ideas in Slovenia developed through historical struggles for political subjectivity, with a crucial role played by the tension between two opposing poles: servility (*hlapčevstvo*) toward existing authorities and radical revolutionary movements that sought to abolish the established order entirely. Lukšič demonstrates that Slovenian political thought did not merely absorb foreign ideas, but rather selectively translated, adapted, and embedded them into its own historical experience, particularly through the Catholic, liberal, and Marxist traditions.[62]

59 The approach of the historians in question to political thought as an area of study would certainly merit separate consideration. They have undoubtedly made significant contributions to the study of the history of Slovenian political thought, even if they did not describe their work in those terms. Ervin Dolenc and Igor Grdina, for example, position themselves within the field of cultural history; Bojan Godeša is drawn to the history of ideas; Janez Cvirn skillfully intertwined political ideas, political practice, and everyday life in his writings; Egon Pelikan is distinguished by his analysis of ideology through debates among intellectuals within the public sphere and in visual art; while Jože Pirjevec, in numerous works, persistently situated the Upper Adriatic and Trieste within the framework of Slovenian national history.

60 Igor Lukšič was Minister of Education and Sport between 2008 and 2012. Jernej Pikalo was Minister of Education, Science, and Sport between 2013 and 2014 and between 2018 and 2020. The Social Democrats (SD) party is the successor to the League of Communists of Slovenia (*Zveze komunistov Slovenije*, ZKS), which was renamed to ZKS – Party of Democratic Renewal (ZKS–SDP) in 1990. In 1993, it merged with smaller left-wing parties to form the United List of Social Democrats. In 2005, it adopted the name Social Democrats. It operates within the framework of the European Party of Socialists (PES).

61 Igor Lukšič and Jernej Pikalo, *Uvod v zgodovino političnih idej* (Ljubljana: Sophia, 2007).

62 Igor Lukšič, *Med hlapci in revolucionarji. Nastanek političnih doktrin na Slovenskem* (Ljubljana: Modrijan, 2019).

Another representative of this tradition is Milan Zver, who worked as an assistant at the Department of Political Science between 1987 and 1992. In the early 1990s, Zver devoted himself to professional politics in the Social Democratic Party of Slovenia (today, the Slovenian Democratic Party, SDS),[63] although he continued his academic work and obtained his doctorate in 1998 under the mentorship of Janko Prunk. Like Lukšič and Pikalo, Zver also gained experience in a ministerial position.[64] In the 1990s, he attempted to profile himself as the ideologue of the then Social Democratic Party with his book *100 let socialdemokracije* (100 Years of Social Democracy, 1996).[65] In the book, he presented a historical narrative according to which there is a connection in political practice and thought between the social democratic party of the early twentieth century and his party at the end of the twentieth century. Zver historically justified his party's anti-communism by defending Bernstein's revisionism as the correct direction, in contrast to Karl Kautsky and later communists.[66] In 2002, Zver published a thorough analysis of Slovenian political thought in his book *Demokracija v klasični slovenski politični misli* (Democracy in Classical Slovenian Political Thought). He defined this classicism not only in terms of time, but also normatively. He did not include communist and pro-fascist movements in his analysis because, in his words, they cannot be included within the so-called democratic horizon.[67] Thus, Zver's history of political thought can be read as part of the post-socialist trajectory of Slovenian political parties. His own party began as an anti-communist social democratic formation, then shifting to a center-right party, then moving further to the right. Parallel to these processes, Zver turned his gaze from social democracy to classical democracy. The year of publication is telling too, published when the party was rapidly distancing itself from the social democratic label.[68]

Overall, this section has shown that, after Second World War, Slovenian historiography did not develop a paradigm for the history of political thought; the

63 The political party was part of the anti-communist DEMOS coalition that ruled Slovenia during its independence. Originally founded in 1989 as the Social Democratic Union of Slovenia (*Socialdemokratska zveza Slovenije*, SDZS), it was renamed the Social Democratic Party of Slovenia (*Socialdemokratska stranka Slovenije*, SDSS) in the lead-up to the April 1990 elections, the first multiparty elections in Slovenia after the Second World War. In its early years, SDSS modeled itself on the German and Austrian social democratic parties. After 1993, when Janez Janša took over the party leadership, the SDSS shifted rightward. In 2003 the party was renamed the Slovenian Democratic Party (*Slovenska demokratska stranka*, SDS) and became the strongest force on the political right in Slovenia. It has increasingly adopted populist and far-right rhetoric over the past twenty years, although it still remains within the framework of the European People's Party.

64 Milan Zver was Minister of Education and Sport from 2004 to 2008.

65 Milan Zver, *100 let socialdemokracije* (Ljubljana: Veda, 1996).

66 Jurij Hadalin, "Kaj bi rekel Henrik Tuma? Od Socialdemokratske stranke Slovenije do Slovenske demokratske stranke," *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 61, no. 3 (2021): 244.

67 Milan Zver, *Demokracija v klasični slovenski politični misli* (Ljubljana: Orbis, 2002), 11.

68 Hadalin, "Kaj bi rekel Henrik Tuma," 256.

concept was rather developed by political scientists, with the exception of historian Janko Prunk, who was embedded at the Faculty of Social Sciences and collaborated closely with his colleagues there. The history of political thought was most relevant immediately after independence, when Prunk's book *Slovenski narodni vzpon* sparked an extensive public debate. This debate clarified two views of the Slovenian historical narrative. The label "political thought" was linked narrowly to Prunk's perception of Slovenian history; with few exceptions (e.g., the work of Jurij Perovšek), "political thought" did not play a significant role in post-socialist Slovenian historiography. It is furthermore particularly noteworthy that writings on the history of Slovenian political thought were mainly undertaken by academics and political scientists who themselves were actively involved in politics: Prunk, Lukšič, Pikalo, and Zver. It also seems that the history of political thought was primarily a male domain with rare exceptions, such as Cirila Toplak,[69] who collaborated with Prunk but developed her own orientations and approaches. In 2023, Prunk published his *Zgodovina slovenske politične misli* (History of Slovenian Political Thought), in which he rounded off and supplemented his research into the subject. Regardless of the author's focus on the Slovenian national question and statehood, as well as his continued penchant for deterministic and value-laden judgements, this monograph can nevertheless be defined as the only historical overview of Slovenian political thought so far.[70]

The question arises as to why the history of political thought has not left a greater mark on Slovenian historiography. One reason is certainly that the intellectual climate of socialist society was not conducive to this approach. Another reason could be found in the fate of a "small nation" that was not bound by historical rights but by natural law discourses and ethnolinguistic conceptions of the nation. A third reason could be linked to the political thought of socialist Yugoslavia and Slovenia, which, as already mentioned, was largely shaped by Edvard Kardelj; more than a high-ranking official and architect of Yugoslav self-management, Kardelj was also the ideologist of socialist Slovenianism and socialist Slovenian statehood.[71] Both above-mentioned streams in Slovenian historiography were in dialogue with the previous era, symbolized by Edvard Kardelj and

69 Cirila Toplak, *Kdo smo mi brez drugih?: Slovenstvo* (Ljubljana: Fakulteta za družbene vede, Založba FDV, 2014).

70 Janko Prunk, *Zgodovina slovenske politične misli* (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 2023).

71 Most notably Edvard Kardelj, *Razvoj slovenskega narodnega vprašanja* (Ljubljana: Naša založba, 1939), which was republished four more times: 1957, 1970, 1977, and posthumously in 1980. On the fourth occasion, a separate volume on Kardelj's role in Slovenian historiography was organized and published by the Historical Society for Slovenia (*Zgodovinsko društvo za Slovenijo*). See Vasilij Melik, Janez Stergar, and Miroslav Stiplovšek, eds., *Edvard Kardelj – Sperans in slovensko zgodovinopisje* (Ljubljana: Zgodovinsko društvo za Slovenijo, 1980). The volume included contributions from Janko Pleterski, Ignacij Voje, Metod Mikuž, France Filipič, Bogo Grafenauer, Miroslav Stiplovšek, and Branko Marušič.

his conception of the Slovenian nation and so Slovenian national history. While Prunk skillfully wove Kardelj's interpretation into a deterministic picture of the rise of the Slovenian nation and gave the process new meaning (defining it as an important step on the pre-determined path to Slovenian statehood), other historians rejected Kardelj's concepts as outdated and irrelevant.

The Canon of Slovenian Political Thought and the Theory of Political Camps

In the history of political thought, the canon refers to a recognized body of texts, authors, and ideas considered foundational or exemplary for understanding politics, power, justice, and governance. These works are typically seen as shaping key debates and frameworks within a tradition of political theory.[72] In examining the Slovenian canon of political thought, it is useful to situate the discussion within broader contemporary historiographic efforts to renegotiate the relationship between local and pan-European intellectual traditions, such as *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe*.[73] As highlighted by the authors of that volume, the task of canon-formation is never neutral; it often involves retrospective construction, whereby texts from different periods are often read through a teleological lens that seeks to establish an unbroken line toward modern national consciousness.[74] In the Slovenian case, too, the intellectual traditions of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are frequently framed as anticipations of later ideological formations, with the primary focus on the national question and often within the three-camp model. Engaging with the theory of political camps ("*Lagertheorie*"), this section contributes to the kind of "entangled history" that Trencsényi and his collaborators have advocated—one that goes beyond merely expanding the pool of shared references to examine critically the categories through which political modernity has been understood.[75] However, our approach here diverges from that of *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe*. While those volumes primarily examine region-specific ideological cultures and subcultures and their evolving relationship with

72 Jeanette Ehrmann, "Within, beyond or against the Canon: What Does It Mean to Decolonize Social and Political Theory?," *Journal of Classical Sociology* 22, no. 4 (2022): 388–95.

73 Balázs Trencsényi, Maciej Janowski, Mónika Baár, Maria Falina, and Michal Kopeček, *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe*, vol. 1, *Negotiating Modernity in the 'Long Nineteenth Century'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). Balázs Trencsényi, Michal Kopeček, Luka Lisjak Gabrijelčic, Maria Falina, Mónika Baár, and Maciej Janowski, *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe*, vol. 2, *Negotiating Modernity in the 'Short Twentieth Century' and Beyond*, Part 1: *1918–1968* and Part 2: *1968–2018* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

74 Trencsényi et al., *A History of Modern Political Thought*, vol. 1, 8–9.

75 Ibid., 1–3.

broader European (both Western and non-Western) intellectual trends, our focus returns to the question of the national canon. We discuss in this section the national Slovenian political canon based on their presence in Slovenian historiography and school history.[76] More broadly, through this reader, we aim to expand the Slovenian political canon by including a wider range of thinkers and themes—thus also contributing to and diversifying the broader transnational conversation.

The *Lagertheorie* was developed in the 1950s by historian Adam Wandruszka to analyze the political system of the First Austrian Republic. According to his theory, political camps in Austria were separated not only politically, but also ideologically, socially, and culturally. Wandruszka showed that the division began in the nineteenth century with the split between liberals and conservatives, emphasizing the role of confessional differences—Catholic conservative circles on the one hand and liberal, secular circles on the other. In the late nineteenth century, the socialist camp emerged, transforming the binary structure of the political space into a tripartite one. After the collapse of Austria-Hungary, the political camps became further institutionalized. Three distinct camps emerged in Austria: the Christian social-conservative camp around the Christian Social Party (*Christlichsoziale Partei*, the predecessor of today's Austrian People's Party, the *Österreichische Volkspartei*); the socialist camp around the Social Democratic Worker's Party of Austria (*Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei Österreichs*, the predecessor of today's Socialist Party of Austria, the *Sozialistische Partei Österreichs*); and the national camp around the Greater German People's Party (*Großdeutsche Volkspartei*, the predecessor of today's Freedom Party of Austria, the *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*). These camps dominated not only parliamentary politics, but also trade unions, the media, cultural organizations, and education, creating a strong camp-based political culture in which voters remained loyal to their group for generations.[77]

The term "camp" is used here to refer to movements, parties, and groups. It also points toward the militancy of the political parties and their social peripheries as well as their mutual intransigence.[78] After 1945, the division of Austrian

76 Due to space limitations, not all significant figures and works could be included, and we acknowledge that alternative selections are possible.

77 Adam Wandruszka, *Österreichs politische Struktur. Die Entwicklung der Parteien und politischen Bewegungen* (Vienna: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 1954). See also Lothar Höbelt, "Adam Wandruszka und die 'gottgewollten drei Lager'," *Annali dell'Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento* 33 (2007): 253–65. Oskar Mulej, "Stanje in notranja razmerja v slovenskem naprednem (liberalnem) taboru na pragu 2. svetovne vojne," *Dileme: Razprave o vprašanjih sodobne slovenske zgodovine* 7, no. 2 (2023): 43.

78 Margareta Mommsen-Reindl, "Österreich," in *Lexikon zur Geschichte der Parteien in Europa*, ed. Frank Wende (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1981), 443.

politics into camps continued, although the parties also developed mechanisms for cooperation, which ensured political stability (the so-called *Proporz*).[79] The theory of political camps experienced a renaissance of sorts in the 1980s, when the German Christian democratic politician Heiner Geißler developed his own theory of camps, intended to redefine the four-party system in West Germany after the Greens entered parliament in 1983. Geißler divided the political arena into two camps: the "bourgeois" camp (*Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands / Christlich-Soziale Union* and *Freie Demokratische Partei*) and the "left" camp (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* and *Die Grünen*). In his opinion, the key to political success was to secure a majority within one's own camp, as winning votes at the expense of allies within the camp would only result in a zero-sum game.[80]

The Slovenian use of the concept is closer to the Austrian than the German version. As in the Austrian case, the Slovenian political field evolved into tripartite structure. Likewise, both Slovenian and Austrian historiography consider the term unsuitable for describing the political situation in the first half of the nineteenth century. As expected, canonical status in Slovenian historiography was earned primarily through discussion on the national question. The poetry of France Prešeren, in which Slovenian and general Slavic sentiments intertwine with Romanticism, became part of the Slovenian political canon due to its rejection of Illyrianism as well as its advocacy of Slovenian linguistic individuality.[81] The Revolutions of 1848 brought forth the United Slovenia program (*Zedinjena Slovenija*): a demand for the unification of the "Slovenian lands" into a single kingdom within Austria, which placed the main author of the program, the liberal Carinthian priest Matija Majar (1809–1892), among the important canonical writers.[82] From this moment onwards, Slovenian political history has assessed political processes through the prism of the implementation of this founding national program. Despite the intense political activity during the years 1848/49, Slovenian historiography does not refer to this period using the term "political camp."

Slovenian historians adopted the phrase "political camp" to characterize the political landscape of the post-1867 constitutional period, when parties did not yet exist in the sense of mass-structured organizations. For the period of early

79 "Proporzsystem in der Krise," Parlament Österreich, https://www.parlament.gv.at/verstehen/historisches/1945-1995/proporzsystem-krise, last accessed October 10, 2025.

80 "Heiner Geißler," Geschichte der CDU, Konrad Andenauer Stiftung, https://www.kas.de/de/web/geschichte-der-cdu/personen/biogramm-detail/-/content/heiner-geissler, last accessed October 10, 2025.

81 Illyrianism was a cultural and political movement of South Slavic intellectuals in the first half of the nineteenth century centered on the idea of the linguistic and national unity of the South Slavs as Illyrians. See Peter Vodopivec, *Od Pohlinove slovnice do samostojne države: Slovenska zgodovina od konca 18. stoletja do konca 20. stoletja* (Ljubljana: Modrijan, 2006), 48.

82 See, e.g., Vasilij Melik, "Majarjeva peticija za zedinjeno Slovenijo 1848," *Časopis za zgodovino in narodopisje* 15, no. 1–2 (1979): 286–94.

parliamentarism, they identified only a "Slovenian political camp" which was supposed to be in opposition to the "German camp."[83] In doing so, historians have often followed the language of the sources; the word 'camp' was popular during the period of Habsburg parliamentarianism, especially in moments of heated political struggle, as it implied the combative metaphor of a military camp. The use of the term is inconsistent, however. The disputes between the liberal "Young Slovenes" and the conservative "Old Slovenes" in the 1870s are sometimes seen as internal divisions within a single Slovenian camp, and at other times as a clash between two separate Slovenian camps.

When it comes to thinkers from the second half of the nineteenth century, we can notice a process of canonization of writers and literary figures rather than political actors. Namely, Slovenian historians did not identify Janez Bleiweis (1808–1881) as a political thinker *per se*, but rather as a practitioner and leader of the conservative "Old Slovenes." On the other hand, the role of political thinker was often attributed to the "Young Slovene" Fran Levstik (1831–1887), a writer and journalist who had no party-political influence but was known for his sharp texts in defense of Slovenian national and linguistic rights. Josip Jurčič (1844–1881), the author of the first Slovenian novel and editor of the core liberal newspaper *Slovenski narod* from 1872 to 1881, was likewise considered a political thinker, though his ideas about the integration of Slovenians into the Croatian-Serbian language community were overlooked, or rather ignored.[84]

In the 1890s, with the emergence of what Carl Schorske famously called "politics in a new key,"[85] a period of differentiation and organization of Slovenian political groups began—a period that Slovenian historiography also refers to as the formation of political camps.[86] The first political thinker to emerge in the Catholic camp was Anton Mahnič (1850–1920), a clergyman from Gorizia with a fierce agenda against modern society and a penchant for ideas of re-Catholicization. Slovenian historians likewise pay a lot of attention to Janez Evangelist Krek (1865–1917), who they describe as a Christian socialist theorist and practitioner,[87] while Anton Ušeničnik (1868–1952), the founder of Slovenian Catholic sociology, also played an important role as a thinker.[88] On the liberal side, the writer and leader of the liberal party in Carniola, Ivan Tavčar (1851–1923), is occasionally

83 Vasilij Melik, *Slovenci 1848–1918: Razprave in članki*, ed. Viktor Vrbnjak (Maribor: Litera, 2002), 324.
84 Ivan Prijatelj, *Slovenska kulurnopolitična in slovstvena zgodovina*, vol. 5, *1848–1895* (Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1966).
85 Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980).
86 Prunk, *Slovenski narodni vzpon*, 105. Vodopivec, *Od Pohlinove slovnice do samostojne države*, 111.
87 Edo Škulj, ed., *Krekov simpozij v Rimu* (Ljubljana: Mohorjeva družba, 1992). Egon Pelikan, "Janez Evangelist Krek: Modernizator katoliškega gibanja na Slovenskem," in *Janez Evangelist Krek - sto let pozneje (1917–2017)*, ed. Matjaž Ambrožič (Ljubljana: Teološka fakulteta, 2018), 137–48.
88 Prunk, *Zgodovina slovenske politične misli*, 73.

considered a political thinker, but usually in the context of the cultural struggle with the Catholic camp,[89] whereas historians have characterized Ivan Hribar (1851–1941) almost only as a pragmatic mayor and economist, even though he contributed to the political thought behind neo-Slavism.[90] One of the important issues that shook Slovenian politics in the last two decades of the Habsburg Empire was the relationship between Slovenians and the rest of the South Slavs. Although this issue preoccupied all three camps, it was particularly significant in the liberal intellectual scene. The "third generation of liberals," as Janko Prunk calls them, emphasized anti-Catholicism and Yugoslav unitarianism. Among them were intellectuals such as Bogomil Vošnjak and Albin Ogris, as well as politicians who took over the liberal camp after 1918 (notably Gregor Žerjav and Albert Kramer).[91]

Falling slightly out of the "camp" logic, Slovenian historiography also identifies a small yet intellectually influential group of canonical authors as followers of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, including the historian Dragotin Lončar (1876–1954) and the lawyer Anton Dermota (1876–1914).[92] These thinkers sought to address the Slovenian national question by advocating for national-cultural autonomy and connecting it to Yugoslavism as a union of distinct nations. After 1902, both aligned more closely with the social democratic camp, while the psychologist and publicist Mihajlo Rostohar (1878–1966) embraced rather the liberal political option, despite continuing to advocate for Slovenian national individuality.[93] Among the social democrats, we find various canonical writers; Slovenian historiography often cites the writer and playwright Ivan Cankar as a political thinker, especially his ideas about the relationship between Slovenians and other South Slavic nations. The following lines from his 1913 lecture "Slovenians and Yugoslavs" rank among the most famous quotes in Slovenian political history:

> By blood we are brothers, by language at least cousins, but by culture—which is the fruit of centuries of separate upbringing—we are much more foreign to each other than a farmer from Upper Carniola is to one from Tyrol, or a winegrower from Gorizia is to one from Friuli.[94]

89 Zvonko Bergant, "Politični portret Ivana Tavčarja v letih 1894–1918," in *Melikov zbornik: Slovenci v zgodovini in njihovi srednjeevropski sosedje*, ed. Vincenc Rajšp et al. (Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, ZRC SAZU, 2001), 809–20.

90 Irena Gantar Godina, *Neoslavizem in Slovenci* (Ljubljana: Znanstveni inštitut Filozofske fakultete, 1994).

91 Prunk, *Zgodovina slovenske politične misli*, 92.

92 Irena Gantar Godina, *T. G. Masaryk in masarykovstvo na Slovenskem (1895–1914)* (Ljubljana: Slovenska matica, 1987). See also Perovšek, "Dragotin Lončar," in *Politika in moderna*, 205–21.

93 Prunk, *Zgodovina slovenske politične misli*, 89.

94 Ivan Cankar, "Slovenci in Jugoslovani," *Zarja* 3, no. 557, April 15, 1913, 1; no. 558, April 16, 1913, 1; republished in Ivan Cankar, *Izbrano delo*, vol. 1, ed. Josip Vidmar (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1976).

Cankar also developed the thesis of historical subjugation or "servitude" as a defining characteristic of the Slovenian nation, though this was already present in Slovenian political journalism in the late nineteenth century.[95]

The socialist leader and politician Etbin Kristan (1867–1953), present in this reader, earned himself a place in both Slovenian historiography and transnational historical studies due to his occasional advocacy of non-territorial autonomy.[96] Meanwhile, the distinguished lawyer from Gorizia, Henrik Tuma (1858–1935), who switched from the liberal to the socialist camp in 1908, earned his place in the Slovenian canon primarily by emphasizing the importance of Trieste for Slovenians and the Yugoslav peoples and warning against Italy as the greatest enemy.[97]

The most important political text from during the First World War was the May Declaration, which was read out in the *Reichsrat* in Vienna on May 30, 1917, by Anton Korošec, president of the Yugoslav Club and leader of the Slovenian People's Party. The declaration called for the unification of all Yugoslav territories within the Habsburg Empire on the basis of the national-cultural principle and Croatian state law.[98] Slovenian historiography also considers the newspaper debate between Fran Šuklje (1849–1935), representing the Catholic camp, and the liberal leaders Ivan Tavčar and Ivan Hribar in 1918 on the internal organization of the future Yugoslav state to be similarly important.[99]

Slovenian political writing between the two world wars produced a wealth of material, so we will focus on the most influential authors. In the socialist camp, which split into communist and social democratic factions, Dragotin Gustinčič (1882–1974) secured a place in the canon of Slovenian political thought by playing an important role in the debates over the national question within the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in 1923.[100] Among the younger generation of communists, Edvard Kardelj stood out with his book on the Slovenian national question, as did Boris Kidrič (1912–1953), who was interested in cultural issues.[101] Slovenian political thought during the socialist period was undoubtedly marked by the fact that the author of the most important text on the national question was also the most important theorist of Yugoslav socialist federalism: the influential

95 As represented in Ivan Cankar, *Hlapci: drama v petih aktih* (Ljubljana: L. Schwentner, 1910).

96 Börries Kuzmany, *Vom Umgang mit nationaler Vielfalt: Eine Geschichte der nicht-territorialen Autonomie in Europa* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2024), 51.

97 Janko Pleterski, *Študije o slovenski zgodovini in narodnem vprašanju* (Maribor: Obzorja, 1981), 94.

98 Vlasta Stavbar, *Majniška deklaracija in deklaracijsko gibanje: Slovenska politika v habsburški monarhiji, od volilne reforme do nove države (1906-1918)* (Maribor: Založba Pivec, 2017).

99 Perovšek, *Slovenska osamosvojitev v letu 1918*, 34–38.

100 Perovšek, *Samoodločba in federacija*, 72.

101 Janko Pleterski, "Zgodovinska misel slovenskih marksistov v času Speransove knjige," *Zgodovinski časopis* 33, no. 4 (1979): 533–44; published also in *Edvard Kardelj – Sperans in slovensko zgodovinopisje*, 5–16.

politician Edvard Kardelj. His work *Razvoj slovenskega narodnega vprašanja* (The Development of the Slovenian National Question; first published in 1939 and expanded in 1957) had the status of a canonical political text of the highest order in the socialist period (1945–1991).[102] Written in 1938, the central theme of the book is the connection between the struggle for Slovenian national liberation and the revolution. The Slovenian question, Kardelj argued, was not just a local issue, but a link in the chain of imperialist contradictions that intertwined the entire world. Kardelj was convinced that the leading role in the Slovenian national liberation movement must be taken by the "avant-garde of the working class."[103] This was conditioned by Slovenian history, which was "one long chain of oppression and the trampling of the small Slovenian nation."[104] In his book, Kardelj repeatedly used the idea of Slovenians as a "nation of proletarians,"[105] carrying on the ideas expressed in the literary works of Ivan Cankar before 1918.[106]

The most famous political debate among the liberal intelligentsia took place in 1932, when the young cultural figure Josip Vidmar (1895–1992) published the book *Kulturni problem slovenstva* (The Cultural Problem of Slovenian Identity), in which he attacked the older generation of Slovenian liberal politicians for compromising the liberal public as hostile to the Slovenian nation by supporting Yugoslav unitarianism.[107] The younger generation of the Slovenian progressive intelligentsia had found itself inadvertently caught between the Slovenian autonomism of conservative Slovenian Catholicism and the integral Yugoslavism of the older liberals. Slightly later the same year, on the occasion of the American-Slovenian writer Louis Adamič's (1898–1951) stay in Slovenia, the poet Oton Župančič (1878–1949) published an article in the premier urban liberal cultural review *Ljubljanski zvon*, where he argued that Adamič had remained Slovenian even though he exclusively wrote in English and had lost his fluency in the

102 See also note 71.

103 Edvard Kardelj, *Razvoj slovenskega narodnega vprašanja* (Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1957), iv.

104 Kardelj, *Razvoj slovenskega narodnega vprašanja* (1957), 337.

105 *NB*: The idea was by no means unique to Slovenia. In 1910, the Italian nationalist Enrico Corradini, a contemporary of Cankar, advanced the notion of Italy as a "proletarian nation." Just as the working class was exploited under capitalism, so too, Corradini argued, Italy—as a latecomer nation—was subjected to exploitation by wealthier powers such as Britain and France. Economically underdeveloped and disadvantaged in colonial competition, Italy on this model would be compelled to assert itself militarily in order to gain recognition and secure resources. See Enrico Corradini, "La nazione proletaria," in *Scritti e discorsi 1901–1914*, ed. Lucia Strappini (Turin: Einaudi, 1980), 45–47. Whereas the analogy of Slovenes as a proletarian nation developed within the socialist camp and became a significant ideological foundation of socialist Slovenia in the twentieth century, the Italian version of the analogy served to legitimize expansionist nationalism, colonialism, and ultimately fascism. A comparative analysis of these two phenomena clearly merits closer scholarly attention.

106 Pleterski, "Zgodovinska misel slovenskih marksistov," 538–39.

107 Josip Vidmar, *Kulturni problem slovenstva* (Ljubljana: Tiskovna zadruga, 1932).

Slovenian language.[108] This came in part as a metaphysical rebuttal to Vidmar's view of Slovenian identity—the latter constituted precisely by language use and culture produced within the Slovenian language—and a nod of approval toward the integral Yugoslavism of the older liberals, who likewise argued that even if Slovenes used Serbo-Croatian they could remain nationally Slovenian. The fierce debate that followed led to a dispute within the editorial board and the publishing house of *Ljubljanski zvon*, which decided not to publish Vidmar's response to Župančič in addition to a further set of similarly polemical pieces. Along with Vidmar and a group of other likeminded writers, *Ljubljanski zvon*'s editor until this point, Fran Albreht (1889–1963), resigned in protest, published the articles in a separate volume, and co-founded with Vidmar the new journal *Sodobnost*, which became the primary platform for progressive advocates of Slovenian national individuality through the rest of the 1930s.[109]

By the 1930s, the ideologues of the Catholic camp had differentiated into three distinct currents. While all shared a commitment to an autonomous resolution of the Slovenian position within the Yugoslav framework, they diverged significantly in their conceptions of political order and approaches to the social question. The Catholic Right gravitated toward a fascist rejection of the European democratic tradition. Among its key representatives were Lambert Ehrlich (1878–1942), a theologian and staunch critic of both liberalism and communism, and Ciril Žebot (1914–1989), an economist who later authored a positive treatise on corporatism and fascism.[110] Slovenian political thought considers the sociologist and economist Andrej Gosar (1887–1970) to be the representative figure of Catholic centrism. He advocated a democratic parliamentary system and a market economy, as well as self-management, a robust social system, and the socialization of the economy. The Slovenian Catholic Left, which had been aggressively forced to adopt a corporatist model, increasingly moved toward Marxist principles. In the context of these debates, the Christian socialist trade union (the Yugoslav Professional Association, *Jugoslovanska strokovna zveza*) split from the SLS in 1932.[111] Within the Catholic Left, the priest and labor activist Angelik Tominec (1892–1961) established himself as the central ideologue of the Christian labor movement. Although he rejected socialism and communism as

108 Oton Župančič, "Adamič in slovenstvo," *Ljubljanski zvon* 52, no. 8 (1932), 513–20.

109 Ervin Dolenc, "Kulturni problem slovenstva," in *Slovenska novejša zgodovina: Od programa Zedinjena Slovenija do mednarodnega priznanja Republike Slovenije*, vol. 1 (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga–Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2005), 342–46. See also Fran Albrecht, ed., *Kriza Ljubljanskega zvona* (Ljubljana: Kritika, 1932), for the articles.

110 Ciril Žebot, *Korporativno narodno gospodarstvo: Korporativizem, fašizem, korporativno narodno gospodarstvo* (Celje: Družba sv. Mohorja, 1939).

111 Egon Pelikan, "Andrej Gosar in znamenja časov," *Dr. Andrej Gosar (1887–1970)*, ed. Jure Gašparič and Alenka Veber (Celje: Društvo Mohorjeva družba – Celjska Mohorjeva družba, 2015), 147–61.

godless, he recognized the value of Marxism in terms of its economic analysis of society.[112] Above all, however, the poet Edvard Kocbek (1904–1981) is considered the canonical author of the Catholic Left, whose essay "*Premišljevanje o Španiji*" (A Reflection on Spain, 1937), published in the traditional Catholic outlet *Dom in svet*, shook the conservative Catholic intellectual scene.[113]

Beyond the logic of "camps," Slovenian historiography often also evaluates political thinkers through the lens of their actions and experiences during the Second World War. After the Axis powers invaded Yugoslavia on April 6, 1941, and divided the Slovenian part of Yugoslavia among the three occupying forces—Italy (Lower Carniola, Ljubljana), Hungary (Prekmurje), and Germany (Upper Carniola, Styria, and later taking over the Italian and Hungarian occupation zones in 1943–44)—communists, Christian socialists, a group of cultural workers and the left wing of the Sokol gymnastics association formed the Liberation Front (*Osvobodilna fronta*, OF) and decided to take up armed resistance, forming partisan units. Two figures previously mentioned, Josip Vidmar and Boris Kidrič, participated in the founding meeting of the OF, while Edvard Kardelj and Edvard Kocbek rose to prominent positions within the leadership of the partisan movement after the OF's founding. Slovenian political history written during the socialist period—and beyond—elevated the Fundamental Points of the Liberation Front to the status of a transformative canonical political text. In addition to goals such as national liberation, the realization of a unified Slovenia, and the establishment of a "consistent people's democracy," the document, influenced by Kocbek's initiative, also proclaimed a commitment to "transforming the Slovenian national character."[114] Andrej Gosar, a representative of the Catholic center, chose neither partisan resistance nor collaboration, and in 1944 he was interned in the Dachau concentration camp. The anti-communist activist Lambert Ehrlich was killed by the Security Intelligence Service of the Liberation Front for organizing collaborationist forces.[115] Ciril Žebot was also involved in organizing the anti-communist militia, but after the capitulation of fascist Italy, he fled to Rome. After the war, he became one of the leading thinkers in the Slovenian emigration in the US,

112 Prunk, *Pot krščanskih socialistov*, 105. Silvin Krajnc, "Aktualnost krščanskega socialnega nauka o delu in lastnini p. Angelika Tominca: ob 50. obletnici njegove smrti," *Bogoslovni vestnik* 71, no. 1 (2011): 99–109.

113 Peter Kovačič Peršin, "Kocbekovo *Premišljevanje o Španiji*," *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 56, no. 1 (2016): 56–79. Edvard Kocbek's 1937 article "A Reflection on Spain" is the only text in this collection that has been previously translated and contextualized in English. See Ervin Dolenc, "Kocbek's 'Reflections on Spain': An Introduction," *Slovene Studies* 25, no. 1 (2005): 47–56.

114 Bojan Godeša, "Ustanovitev Osvobodilne fronte slovenskega naroda," in *Slovenska novejša zgodovina*, vol. 1, 608–15. Eva Mally, *Slovenski odpor: Osvobodilna fronta slovenskega naroda od 1941 do 1945* (Ljubljana: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2011), 49–72.

115 Boris Mlakar, "Začetki oboroženih oddelkov protirevolucionarnega tabora v ljubljanski pokrajini," in *Slovenska novejša zgodovina*, vol. 1, 656–61.

became a professor of political economy at Georgetown University, and advocated for the idea of an independent Slovenian state.[116]

In conclusion, the canon of Slovenian political thought predominantly highlights thinkers who advocated for Slovenian individuality, autonomy, or statehood, while those with divergent views are often marginalized as representing a "wrong direction." A central issue within this canon is its complex and often ambivalent relationship to Yugoslavism and/or the Yugoslav state. In the meantime, many—including women activists and feminists—remain still largely excluded from the canon of Slovenian political thought. Moreover, despite historians' awareness of ambiguous contexts and fluid identifications, there persists a strong tendency to categorize canonical thinkers within established political camps, whereas those who do not neatly fit are often overlooked. Finally, we ought to note that the canon disproportionately favors thinkers from central Slovenia over those from peripheral regions.

II: FRAMING THE READER

Situating Slovenia: Yugoslav and Transnational Perspectives

Fragmented by geography, political allegiances, and differing regional identifications (for instance, between Slovenians in Trieste, Maribor, or Ljubljana), the case of Slovenia and the internal heterogeneity of the Slovenian public sphere makes it an ideal site for exploring how competing political visions coexisted and evolved. The concept 'Slovenia' in the period between the two wars was not merely a simple territorial and/or political designation, but a problematic concept that requires a more detailed historical explanation. This section explains what we mean by Slovenia and Slovenian political thought in territorial but also conceptual terms.

How can we discuss Slovenian politics and political thought when Slovenia did not exist as a separate administrative entity either within the Habsburg Empire or interwar Yugoslavia? Can we even speak of a strictly *Slovenian* political space? Following Rogers Brubaker's distinction between categories of practice and categories of analysis, the Slovenian political space could be understood primarily as a category of historical practice.[117] We remain mindful that the political thinkers featured in this book held diverse views on the nature of the space

116 Tamara Griesser Pečar, "Ciril Žebot: Prizadevanje za samostojno Slovenijo," *Acta Histriae* 26, no. 1 (2018): 277–304.

117 Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity,'" *Theory and Society* 29, no. 1 (2000): 1–47.

termed 'Slovenia', yet they did share a common belief in its existence and in their own role in shaping it. Thus, even though Slovenia did not exist on any political map, for most authors of this reader—including, for example, the communist Slovenes from Italy at the time—Slovenia was not merely a future project, but also a tangible and lived reality. Conversely, from the outset, and as visible from Part I of this introduction, the notion of the Slovenian political space has also served as an analytical category for national historiography, carrying a strong risk of reifying or naturalizing Slovenian nationalism. Nevertheless, it is important to stress that these are not unique features of Slovenian politics, but rather common to any modern national political space. Can we clearly define the German political space? Or the French? Factors such as smallness, ambiguity, entanglement with Yugoslavism and (pan- or neo-)Slavism, the lack of a historical state tradition, late emergence of independent national statehood, and uncertain borders do not imply that the Slovenian political space lacked existence or relevance. These characteristics do not render it too marginal to be included in global and comparative analyses either. Moreover, examining the Slovenian political space through comparative and transnational lenses not only broadens the scope of Slovenian national historiography but also offers new insights into fundamental features of the political.

Like other emerging national movements at the time, nationalist Slovenian intellectuals in 1848 drew up the United Slovenia (*Zedinjena Slovenija*) program, which envisaged the unification of territories inhabited by the imagined Slovenian national population into a single political entity founded on ethnolinguistic principles within the Habsburg Empire.[118] Nevertheless, the geographic boundaries of the imagined United Slovenia only loosely align with those of the modern Republic of Slovenia. For Slovenian leaders in the nineteenth century, Trieste and its surroundings were surely part of Slovenia, as was the Gorizia region.[119] "Venetian Slovenia" ("*Beneška Slovenija*"), the territory between today's Cividale and the old Habsburg–Venetian border, which now also corresponds to the present-day border between Slovenia and Italy, was (and still is) considered the westernmost part of the Slovenian national territory.[120] In southern Carinthia, in present-day Austria, the extensive area including Villach, Klagenfurt, and Völkermarkt with their surroundings, as well as the Val Canale, now in Italy, were undoubtedly considered 'Slovenian' by the Slovenian nationalist elite. The border in Styria, as envisaged by Slovenian nationalist activists, ran north of today's

118 Jernej Kosi, *Kako je nastal slovenski narod: začetki slovenskega nacionalnega gibanja v prvi polovici 19. stoletja* (Ljubljana: Sophia, 2016), 45.

119 Jože Pirjevec, *"Trst je naš!": boj Slovencev za morje (1848–1954)* (Ljubljana: Nova revija, 2008).

120 Ines Beguš and Aleksander Panjek, "Mejniki zahodne meje: prelomnice 1420–1866," *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 64, no. 3 (2024): 14–36.

Drava River, Maribor, and the Slovenian Hills. The conviction that part of the Hungarian area along the Mur River was Slovenian was widely accepted among Slovenian ethnographers, but until 1918 it was largely excluded from the political imagination.[121]

The southern border of the imagined Unified Slovenia posed a particular problem before 1918. On the one hand, it could rely on a precisely defined border between Styria, Carniola, and Croatia, which also served as the intra-imperial border with Hungary after 1867. On the other hand, factors such as linguistic proximity, the everyday entanglement of communities along the Hungarian border, the influence of common South Slavic ideology, and political alliances between Slovenian and Croatian nationalism loosened the border with Croatia.[122] Although Slovenian nationalists envisioned the imagined United Slovenia as a clearly bounded and internally ethnically homogeneous space, the reality was far more complex. This vision was complicated by the presence of a sizable German-speaking population in the Kočevje (Gottschee) region of Carniola, the German-speaking population in provincial towns and cities in southern Styria (today's Maribor, Celje, and Ptuj), as well as in Ljubljana and few other areas in rural Carniola. Likewise, Slovenian nationalists could not ignore the predominant presence of the Italian-speaking population in the coastal towns of northern Istria and Trieste.[123]

This ethnocentric perception of Slovenia in Slovenian political circles did not change with the end of the Habsburg Empire and the establishment of the common South Slavic state in 1918. Slovenian politicians viewed the new borders as a great disappointment. The Treaty of Saint-Germain (1919), followed by the Carinthian plebiscite in 1920, severed the historically significant regions of southern Carinthia from the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. The Treaty of Rapallo (1920) went even further, cutting deeper into the perceived Slovenian "national body" by awarding Italy not only the former Austrian Littoral—including Trieste, Gorizia, and Istria—but also parts of former Carniola, such as Postojna and Idrija. On the other hand, Yugoslavia gained the former Hungarian border area along the Mur River, mostly populated by Slovenian speakers, which became known as Prekmurje.[124] While the southern border of Slovenia was relatively clear during the Habsburg period as the border

121 Jernej Kosi, "The Imagined Slovene Nation and Local Categories of Identification: 'Slovenes' in the Kingdom of Hungary and Postwar Prekmurje," *Austrian History Yearbook* 49 (2018): 87–102.

122 Marko Zajc, *Kje se slovensko neha in hrvaško začne: slovensko-hrvaška meja v 19. in na začetku 20. stoletja* (Ljubljana: Modrijan, 2006).

123 Jasna Fischer, "Slovensko narodno ozemlje in razvoj prebivalstva," in *Slovenska novejša zgodovina*, vol. 1, 17–21.

124 Nevenka Troha and Milica Kacin-Wohinz, "Mirovna konferenca in oblikovanje mej," in *Slovenska novejša zgodovina*, vol. 1, 218–26.

between the Cisleithanian and Transleithanian parts of the empire, after 1918 this demarcation became less important, and administrative borders regularly changed. For example, between 1929 and 1931, the Bela Krajina (before 1918 part of Carniola) was part of the Sava Banovina with its center in Zagreb. After 1918, the term Slovenia took on a new meaning in the sense of a narrower, Yugoslav Slovenia, but the term Slovenia as a designation for the entire territory inhabited by the Slovenian population also remained in use. The two meanings intertwined, and in public discourse it is often difficult to determine which meaning the actors had in mind.

To further complicate the Slovenian political landscape, it is necessary to briefly address the significant yet deeply ambiguous relationship with Yugoslavism. In the nineteenth century, Slovenian nationalist activists lacked a clear vision of how Slovenian national integration should ultimately unfold—whether through the formation of a distinct Slovenian nation or within a broader Yugoslav or even pan-Slavic nation. The options were not limited to just these two paths. A variety of vague and intermediate models emerged, envisioning a future in which Slovenians would preserve their language and identity while still joining with their "South Slav brethren" in a unified entity, adopting a shared, broader language but maintaining their distinct cultural features.[125] After the rupture of 1918, a particularly *Yugoslav* nationalism gained a foothold in the new state. While national-cultural autonomist programs were put forward by the left-wing "Masarykians" around Albin Prepeluh, Dragotin Lončar, and Fran Erjavec as well as by Slovenian Catholic conservatives led by Anton Korošec and the Slovenian People's Party, Slovenian urban liberals internalized the idea of a single, integral Yugoslav nation, although they never renounced Slovenian language and culture. As Siniša Malešević notes, Yugoslav nationalism often developed not in opposition to separate ethno-nationalisms but as an overlay to existing ethno-nationalist projects. Despite its professed civic character, the institutional structures of the interwar Yugoslav state often functioned as platforms that supported and facilitated the growth of distinct Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian, and other ethno-nationalist agendas.[126]

Overall, then, in the Slovenian case of a small nation characterized by gradual territorial delimitation and the equally gradual acquisition of the classic attributes of statehood, methodological nationalism can only resort to and reproduce

125 Marko Zajc, "Jugoslovanstvo pri Slovencih v 19. stoletju v kontekstu sosednjih 'združevalnih' nacionalnih ideologij," v *Evropski vplivi na slovensko družbo*, eds. Nevenka Troha, Mojca Šorn, and Bojan Balkovec (Ljubljana: Zveza zgodovinskih društev Slovenije, 2008), 103–14.

126 Siniša Malešević, "Grounding Civic Nationhood: The Rise and Fall of Yugoslav Nationalism, 1918–91," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 66, no. 1–2 (2024): 8–35.

anachronisms and determinism.[127] Although there were no territorial units called "Slovenia" at that time, nationalist historiography treats the historical reality before 1945 as if a proto-state of Slovenia already existed at a meta level, or as if the development towards an independent state was inevitable.

By contrast, in this reader we make a conscious effort to avoid methodological nationalism.[128] Rather than essentializing Slovenians, we understand Slovenia as a borderland space shaped by post-imperial legacies, competing national projects, and transnational ideological flows. There are three central "spaces" through which to approach Slovenia, each with their own thematic and conceptual features. The first is to situate Slovenia as a Habsburg and post-Habsburg space, which persisted in legal, administrative, and intellectual forms well into the twentieth century. This context is particularly visible in the contributions relating to the city of Trieste, which was in the early twentieth century one of the centers of Slovenian national and Habsburg imperial political and intellectual life. The second is Slovenia as part of a broader South Slavic space, with its complex dynamics of state-building, collective identity-formation, and political centralization. The third space is Slovenia within the macro-regional space of East Central Europe, which here can be detected in the reception of the work of figures like Tomáš Masaryk or in shared regional debates on state form, democracy, social reform, or even the particular forms that Marxist thinking took on within this European semi-periphery marked by predominantly agrarian economic structures.

In this approach, we build on the work of historians who have problematized the approach to the national question from a non-nationalist perspective. Jernej Kosi and Rok Stergar argue that the Slovenian nation emerged in the same way and at the same time as other Central European nations and is therefore a modern phenomenon. In their opinion, the Slovenian ethnic community did not exist as a precursor to the nation. Belonging to the nation gradually spread among the population through the agitation of nationalist organizations, the mass politicization of the population and the classificatory activities of the Habsburg state (e.g., gathering statistics in schools or through the central bureaucracy). Kosi and Stergar criticize above all the generally accepted equation in Slovenian historiography that the Slovenian ethnic space equals the area of the Slovenian-speaking population. The modern concept of ethnicity is primarily concerned with self-identification; an ethnic group that does not see itself as an ethnic group does not

127 Anna Milioni, "What Is Wrong with Methodological Nationalism? An Argument About Discrimination," *Moral Philosophy and Politics* 12, no. 2 (2024, forthcoming), https://doi.org/10.1515/mopp-2024-0033. Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory* 8, no. 1 (1969): 3–53.

128 Stefan Berger, "Nationalism in Historiography: The Pitfalls of Methodology," in *Writing the History of Nationalism*, eds. Stefan Berger and Eric Storm (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 19–40.

exist. The authors argue that procedures for identifying ethnic groups based on "objective" characteristics (language, culture, phenotype, genotype, etc.) belong to the realm of the construction/invention of ethnic groups and are therefore a matter of politics rather than the science of ethnicity.[129] Kosi's and Stergar's approach is a part of recent historiography on Habsburg and post-Habsburg history, which historian Marco Bresciani has referred to as "transnational approaches to the transitions, imperial collapses, and legacies of post-World War I Europe." As he argued in his article on post-Habsburg Trieste, historiography has often uncritically accepted the divisions between national communities, mirroring the language of primary sources and thereby overlooking the complex dynamics of agency and self-identification.[130] After the collapse of the Habsburg empire, he continues, the northern Adriatic was "marked by multiple forms of local and regional loyalism, bilingualism, multiculturalism, and internationalism," and these complex dynamics and overlapping loyalties have to be taken into account.[131]

Framing his analysis of crisis discourses in interwar Europe, Balázs Trencsényi has reflected on the very framework of "European intellectual history," problematic for its Euro-centric approach and the overlooking of connectivities beyond what is usually considered 'Europe'. Yet, as Trencsényi emphasizes, "Europe remained a central point of reference in these conversations and for many participants had a pivotal historical and even 'historiographic' role in shaping the global crisis dynamic." He argues that 'Europe' should not be assumed but thoroughly historicized, as it did not represent a uniform or universally shared ideational construct.[132] Similarly, as mentioned earlier, many of the sources in the reader show that 'Slovenia' was often central in the discussions of the historical actors, therefore it remains highly relevant for analysis. Even so, as the contextualizations will make clear, the idea of Slovenia discussed and imagined by different actors was not a unified concept, and the ways Slovenia and the national question were discussed depended not only on the political allegiances of the political thinkers, but also on their location, age, gender, and life trajectories.

129 Jernej Kosi and Rok Stergar, "Kdaj so nastali 'lubi Slovenci'?: O identitetah v prednacionalni dobi in njihovi domnevni vlogi pri nastanku slovenskega naroda," *Zgodovinski časopis* 70, no. 3–4 (2016): 458–88. See also Kosi, *Kako je nastal slovenski narod*, 79–360; as well as Rok Stergar and Tamara Scheer, "Ethnic Boxes: The Unintended Consequences of Habsburg Bureaucratic Classification," *Nationalities Papers* 43, no. 4 (2018): 575–91.

130 Marco Bresciani, "The Battle for Post-Habsburg Trieste/Trst: State Transition, Social Unrest, and Political Radicalism (1918–23)," *Austrian History Yearbook* 52 (2021): 182–200. See also: Daša Ličen, *Meščanstvo v zalivu: društveno življenje v habsburškem Trstu* (Ljubljana: Studia humanitatis, Založba ZRC, 2023). Pieter Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018).

131 Ibid., 184.

132 Trencsényi, *Intellectuals and the Crisis of Politics*, 8.

Choosing the Sources: Diversifying Slovenian Political Thought

When it comes to our choice of the sources, the reader does not offer a comprehensive overview of Slovenian political thought, nor does it cover all streams of interwar political thought. Rather, it offers a cross-section of current research and aims in general at opening up space for further discussion and further research. The selection process was done in conversation with the contributors themselves rather than delegated to them. We asked the contributors to suggest the surveyed individuals and their source texts and to relate them to the topics of their current research. As a result, while addressing the overarching theme of the transformation of political thought, the sixteen sources included here also reflect an overview of the recent and current research in the field of intellectual history and the history of political thought in East Central Europe, particularly that of a younger generation of historians working on the history of the interwar period. This selection of sources reflects current trends in the history of political thought—namely, the expansion of the category of the political thinker, the broadening of the types of sources considered relevant, and the inclusion of themes that have so far been rarely explored within the national history of Slovenian political thought (or political thought more broadly).

First, the choice of sources expand the category of the political thinker and, through biographies, also our knowledge of the intellectual trajectories of these political thinkers. This is particularly relevant for Slovenian historiography, where, as outlined above, the focus has been largely restricted to the representatives of political parties and some important thinkers. This meant that the contributors went beyond only providing basic biographical facts such as an author's social and family background or their professional roles. While some entries cover canonical figures such as Josip Wilfan or Edvard Kocbek, the reader also introduces lesser-known thinkers. In some cases, the contributors even explicitly argue that certain figures should be seen as political thinkers. The best example for this is Viktor Murnik, who was primarily a physical educator and a gymnast active in the Sokol movement. However, as Lucija Balikić argues, he was also a prolific author and political thinker who articulated ideas about the relationship of body and mind by discussing the national question and civilizational hierarchies. Another example is Minka Govekar; while so far presented in historiography mainly as a feminist activist, her political thought has not been the focus of historical research. Some biographies, such as Manca G. Renko's biography of the communist activist Leopoldina Kos, appear here for the first time.

Second, the reader expands the range of sources typically used in the study of political thought in Slovenia. The sources included in this volume were mostly originally published as small treatises, booklets, or periodical articles. The first

category comprises published and self-published texts, which are among the most common types of sources in the history of political thought: these include Albin Prepeluh's *Why Are We Republicans?* and Josip Vilfan's *The Congress of European Nationalities and the Peace Problem* (presented here in its original English-language version). Also featured are Dragotin Godina's *Exchange Cooperatives Will Free Us from the Slavery of Money and Capital* and Viktor Murnik's *Culture and Physical Exercise*. Andrej Gosar's text "The Woman Question" is a subchapter of his extensive two-volume book *Za nov družabni red* (For a New Social Order), in which he attempted to address all social problems and propose solutions that would be in line with both Catholic social doctrine and modern democratic society.

Most of the sources originally appeared as articles in periodicals, which serve as an important layer of contextualization. Often aligned with specific political parties or ideological positions, periodicals help situate the author within a particular "periodical community"—what historian Lucy Delap called the "material, cultural, and intellectual milieu of a periodical"[133]—and provide insight into the intended audience of a given political intervention. Alongside well-known pieces such as Edvard Kocbek's "A Reflection on Spain," published in the periodical *Dom in svet* (Home and the World, presented here in translation), the volume also includes lesser-known texts, such as articles on the "woman question" by Angela Vode and Leopoldina Kos, published in the 1930s Marxist periodical *Književnost* (Literature). Aside from these two, other source texts are drawn from the Trieste-based Slovenian-language communist newspaper *Delo* (Labor); the eponymous Slovenian-language organ of the Organization of Yugoslav Nationalists, *Orjuna*; the main newspaper of Slovenian communists, *Glas svobode* (The Voice of Freedom); the independent political newspaper *Narodni dnevnik* (The National Journal); the May Day edition of the bilingual Slovenian- and English-language socialist paper *Proletarec* (The Proletarian) from Chicago, *Majski glas* (May Herald); and the liberal youth magazine *Naša misel* (Our Thought).

The reader also includes some less typical and generally underused types of sources. One such example is a text by Zofka Kveder, a pioneering Slovenian writer and a central figure of *fin-de-siècle* feminism in the Slovenian context. The source translated here is the afterword to a play she wrote in 1922 under the male pseudonym Dimitrije Gvozdenović. Translated into English by Isidora Grubački, the original text was written in what we refer to as the "Yugoslav" language—a non-standard, imperfect Serbo-Croatian shaped by Kveder's Slovenian background and her commitment to Yugoslavist ideology, which is also reflected in

133 Lucy Delap, "The Freewoman, Periodical Communities, and the Feminist Reading Public," *The Princeton University Library Chronicle* 61, no. 2 (2000): 233–76.

the content of the afterword. Another unusual source is the previously unpublished conference speech of communist Albert Hlebec, preserved in the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI) in Moscow and translated from Russian by Stefan Gužvica. A further noteworthy source is a 1935 radio address by interwar feminist Minka Govekar, delivered as part of "*Ženska ura*" (Women's Hour), a program regularly broadcast on Slovenian radio to extend the reach of the *Dravska* Section of the Yugoslav National Council of Women (*Jugoslovanska ženska zveza*), the central Slovenian women's organization. This and similar speeches, preserved in the Archive of the Republic of Slovenia, not only broaden the source base for analyzing feminist political thought but also offer insight into how interwar feminists communicated with wider audiences beyond traditional organizations and periodical communities.

Finally, the reader offers a variety of themes, some of which have rarely been explored within the history of Slovenian political thought. As elaborated earlier, we find in Slovenian historiography the metaphor of political camps as an undefined conceptual tool used to facilitate understanding of the complex political landscape of the past, often without precise distinctions between the category of historical practice and the category of analysis when using this term.[134] In our view, the use of the concept of political camps in historiography can be consistent with modern historical methodology, but only if its use is well defined.[135] Different political camps have different structures, some are more homogeneous, others are highly fragmented. While the use of the term 'camp' as a homogeneous structure makes sense in the case of Slovenian Catholic politics with its ramified but structured organization of political, cultural, and economic organizations,[136] by contrast the term 'camp' has a much looser character in the case of the liberal and Marxist milieux. As Oskar Mulej observes, the liberal camp was fundamentally characterized by the primacy of civil society over the party, a greater degree of internal autonomy within each sphere, and a looser connection between them. The result was a lower degree of internal uniformity, ideological and organizational unity, and discipline.[137] Slovenian historiography includes such diverse political organizations as the Yugoslav Democratic Party, the National Socialist Party, and even the National Radical Party in Slovenia among the liberal camp.[138]

134 Brubaker and Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity'"; the distinction expanded also in Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

135 As in Mulej, "Stanje in notranja razmerja v slovenskem naprednem (liberalnem) taboru."

136 Jure Gašparič, "Slovenska ljudska stranka in njena organizacija (1890–1941)," *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 57, no. 1 (2017): 25–48.

137 Mulej, "Stanje in notranja razmerja v slovenskem naprednem (liberalnem) taboru," 43.

138 Jurij Perovšek, *Programi slovenskih političnih strank, organizacij in združenj v letih 1918–1929: Pregled k slovenski politični zgodovini* (Ljubljana: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2018), electronic resource, http://hdl.handle.net/11686/38363.

In the Marxist camp, there is a clearer schism between communist and socialist organizations.[139] The use of the term 'camp' in academic historiography can furthermore be problematic if the concept becomes a marker for a "natural" division among transgenerational worldviews in political life. This perception of political camps fits nicely with methodological nationalism, which assumes that the nation-state is the natural basic unit of study and that this territorial unit should serve as a container for society, with political camps playing the role of compartments within this container.[140]

By contrast, we emphasize the complexities of the interwar era and the trajectories that fall outside the traditional tripartite camp division, shedding light on the many shifts and transformations that occurred. In thinking "outside of the 'political camps' box," we take a more comprehensive view of the ideological projects of the interwar period. Historicizing and pluralizing various ideologies—not only socialism, liberalism, or conservatism, but also feminism or republicanism—allows for a relational analysis and attention to be drawn to the genealogical and analogical links between them.[141] Not only were there many different liberalisms, socialisms, or feminisms, but these ideologies transformed and/or took on different meanings with changes within the Yugoslav context from the early 1920s to the late 1930s.

Several themes stand out in the reader. Notably, most of the contributions engage with leftist traditions, in ways that further complicate what the authors of *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe* have called "the many faces of leftism." This includes communist thinkers such as Jože Srebrnič, Dragotin Godina, and Albert Hlebec, but also the republican political thought of Albin Prepeluh and Etbin Kristan, or feminist interventions in communist political thought, such as those of Leopoldina Kos and Angela Vode. Some of these texts particularly enhance our understanding of the relationship between nationalism, socialism, and agrarianism.[142] Furthermore, the texts of Kos and Vode, together with those of Kveder and Govekar, showcase women's political thought, both feminist and non-feminist. On the other hand, the reader also brings a source of the Catholic thinker Andrej Gosar, and his elaboration on the woman question. Many of the texts from the 1930s, moreover, contribute to our understanding of the Popular Front. Besides Angela Vode, mentioned previously, whose source enhances our understanding of cooperation between the so-called bourgeois feminists and communist women, Edvard Kocbek's well-known "A

139 Perovšek, *Samoodločba in federacija*, 13.

140 Sebastian Conrad, *What Is Global History?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 3.

141 See, e.g., Trencsényi, *Intellectuals and the Crisis of Politics*, 11.

142 For a detailed discussion of earlier socialisms in the region, in the case of Bulgaria, see Maria Todorova, *The Lost World of Socialists at Europe's Margins* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020).

Reflection on Spain" offers a view into the leftist Catholic approach in the context of the Popular Front, both in its institutionalization in Spain (and France), but also internationally as a broader and contested political concept.

Unsurprisingly, the national question—whether Slovenian or Yugoslav—is present across various contributions. The national question is in many cases examined from fresh perspectives, showcasing a multiplicity of views on the national question cutting across diverse ideological streams and changing over time. The contributions here mostly address the Yugoslav question and contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between Slovenian and Yugoslav national questions. These texts can be read together in a complementary way. For example, Zofka Kveder's text on Yugoslavism hews close to the vision of the Organization of Yugoslav Nationalists (*Organizacija jugoslavenskih nacionalista*, Orjuna), thus framing the debate between Orjuna and the communists in 1924 as introduced by Marko Zajc as well as the discussion around Ljubomir Dušanov Jurković provided by Neja Blaj Hribar. Conversely, Jurković's text, which represents the view of a student from the University of Ljubljana on Yugoslavism in the early 1920s can be creatively read with the source by Andrej Uršič, likewise a student, but in the late 1930s, introduced by Oskar Mulej.

The contributors also made a deliberate effort to incorporate Yugoslav and transnational perspectives into the contextualizations wherever possible, with the aim of de-provincializing Slovenian political thought. As discussed above, this was achieved in part by situating Slovenian political thinkers within the broader framework of Yugoslav political discourse—highlighting their contributions to debates on the national question and other key issues of the time. Some sources also reveal the challenges of assigning certain political thinkers to a single national canon. A notable example is the case of communist thinkers Jože Srebrnič and Dragotin Godina, both members of the Italian Communist Party, whose work defies easy national categorization. Many of the texts additionally trace how Slovenian political thinkers engaged with contemporary European intellectual currents, particularly those in German- and French-language literature. This is evident in Viktor Murnik's reliance on contemporary physical education theorists such as Karl Gaulhofer and Margarete Streicher; or in Angela Vode's close engagement with Alice Rühle-Gerstel's *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart* (1932); as well as in Edvard Kocbek's intellectual affinity with the French journal *Esprit*.

The Sources

Overall, then, the sources in this reader offer more insight into the complex transformation of political thought from the pre-1914 Habsburg context to the interwar, post-Habsburg realities of Italy and Yugoslavia, and so provide a more nuanced view of the overlaps and shifts among different ideological currents, including the communist, socialist, liberal, Catholic, republican, feminist, and agrarian traditions. After considering several ways to present these sources thematically—both in this introduction and in the structure of the reader—we ultimately chose to present them in a chronological order. This decision allows readers greater freedom to draw their own connections and interpret the sources from multiple perspectives.

The reader starts with the discussion of the agrarian question, so relevant in the context of the Slovenian space encompassed in the reader. **Jože Srebrnič**, a farmer himself, stands out as an example of a Slovenian Marxist who addressed the relationship between communism and the agrarian question even before the First World War. Based in Solkan near Gorizia, he practiced his internationalist communist ideals as a member of the Yugoslav Social Democratic Party (*Jugoslovanska socialdemokratska stranka*, JSDS) before 1914 and later as a member of the Italian Communist Party after 1921. As Stefan Gužvica notes, Srebrnič advocated for an agrarian policy centered on the collectivization of agriculture during the interwar period, thereby challenging the prevailing Bolshevik approach, which prioritized land distribution before collectivization.

Manca G. Renko's selection of **Zofka Kveder's** text is a particularly compelling contribution to this reader, as it presents a feminist author engaging with a non-feminist theme. Such sources are often overlooked. They are either considered less relevant or avoided for fear of complicating the image of an "ideal" feminist figure. A key figure of *fin-de-siècle* Austro-Hungarian feminism, Kveder was active primarily in Prague, Ljubljana, and Zagreb. At the time, she identified as a socialist and maintained friendships with figures such as Etbin Kristan, though she never formally joined the Yugoslav Social Democratic Party.[143] Following the First World War, Yugoslav nationalism came to dominate her political thinking, gradually eclipsing her earlier feminist commitments. The afterword to Kveder's play *The Grandson of Prince Marko*—written under a male pseudonym and featured in this reader—represents this nationalist turn in her work. As Renko insightfully notes, even in her final collection of short stories, published in 1926 and focused primarily on themes of heartbreak, Kveder portrayed women from various parts of Yugoslavia who were abandoned by their husbands and lovers, subtly continuing her feminist critique.

143 Erna Muser, "Zofka Kvedrova," in Zofka Kveder, *Odsevi* (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1970), 163–71.

In many ways complementary to Renko's contribution, Marko Zajc's examination of the ideological struggle between the **Yugoslav nationalist paramilitary organization Orjuna and the communists** highlights how discourses of violence can distort political thought. The central event in this discussion is the violent clash between communist and Orjuna fighters in the mining town of Trbovlje on June 1, 1924. Rather than focusing on individual biographies, since the authors were largely anonymous, Zajc analyzes the press debate between the two opposing camps. On the communist side, he foregrounds the periodical *Glas svobode*, which played a significant role in shaping the Communist Party of Yugoslavia's approach to the national question. On the Orjuna side, he examines contributions from the nationalist newspaper *Orjuna*, initially edited by Ljubomir D. Jurković—whose writings are also included in this volume. Zajc's analysis reveals how the concept of "defense" was central to both sides: for the communists, it meant defending workers from Orjuna violence; for Orjuna, it meant defending the Yugoslav nation from perceived internal enemies.

In contrast to Srebrnič, **Albin Prepeluh's** text reflects a transformation from reformist socialism in the pre-1914 period to a political position that blended republicanism with agrarianism, socialism, and Masarykian ideals. Like Srebrnič, Prepeluh was a member of the Yugoslav Social Democratic Party, but he went further by explicitly challenging Karl Kautsky's emphasis on the proletarian core of the party over its agrarian concerns. In a 1902 letter, Prepeluh argued that building a mass socialist party in an agrarian society required direct engagement with the peasantry. After leaving the JSDS by the beginning of 1921, as Cody James Inglis shows, he continued to develop his ideas within a republican political language. Notably, this was framed through an emphasis on the inherent democratic character of the Slovenian people, but linked to European traditions. The program included here was co-authored by Prepeluh and the historian Dragotin Lončar, forming part of the broader emergence of republican discourses on the Left in the 1920s, similar to developments elsewhere in Yugoslavia and indeed in East Central Europe more broadly. As Inglis notes, however, the explicit concept 'republic' gradually lost its traction in the second half of the decade, giving way to the broader and more encompassing concept of 'democracy' within republican political thought.

Unlike Srebrnič and Prepeluh, **Dragotin Godina** was initially active in the Slovenian nationalist movement before the First World War. He became involved with the Marxist tradition and the labor movement only in 1916, during his time in Moscow. Prior to that, he had worked as a traveling salesman, bookkeeper, and accountant in various cities, including Trieste, Split, Zagreb, Kragujevac, Belgrade, and Sofia. Following his engagement with communism in Moscow

and later in Trieste between 1916 and 1923, Godina then broke with the Italian Communist Party due to his ultra-leftist positions. Nevertheless, he continued to develop theories advocating a moneyless society. As Stefan Gužvica argues, Godina's principal departure from orthodox Marxism lay in his belief that exploitation originates in the act of trade itself, rather than in the extraction of surplus labor. Because of his original contributions to ideas of a cooperative moneyless society, Gužvica considers him a significant figure within the landscape of non-communist, anti-capitalist political thought in the interwar period.

Albert Hlebec is another communist thinker featured in this reader. Unlike many others who had been involved with the Yugoslav Social Democratic Party before the First World War, little is known about Hlebec's early political affiliations beyond his activity within the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. A trade union organizer and journalist from Trbovlje, he remained a committed communist throughout the interwar period, ultimately dying by suicide in 1939 in response to the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact. Within the Communist Party, Hlebec represented a distinctly Slovenian independentist current and strongly opposed the ideology of Yugoslavism. The source included in this reader reflects this central theme. At the Sixth Comintern Congress in Moscow in 1928, where he served as a delegate, Hlebec proposed that Slovenia—situated on the border between Austria, Italy, and Yugoslavia—should become the "Macedonia of Europe." Notably, he employed the language of colonialism to describe Slovenia's position within Yugoslavia and supported his claims with specific examples of the unequal tax burden imposed on Slovenians.

Given **Ljubomir D. Jurković's** connection to *Orjuna*, it is unsurprising that his primary focus was on the national question and Yugoslavism. Like Zofka Kveder, who relocated from Ljubljana and Prague to Zagreb, Jurković moved from Dalmatia—where he had been active in the anti-Austrian Yugoslav youth movement *Preporod*—to Prague and later to Ljubljana after the First World War. This trajectory shaped his growing interest in Yugoslavism, particularly in the early 1920s, during his studies at the Faculty of Arts at the University of Ljubljana. In Ljubljana, Jurković was active in several student clubs as well as in the People's Radical Party, and he maintained close ties with the local Serbian community, within which he held a number of roles. He held the view that Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes were originally one nation, later divided artificially by external forces—a unity he believed could be revived in the form of a renewed Yugoslav nation, paying particular attention to the relationship between being Yugoslav and being Slovenian. As Neja Blaj Hribar notes, Jurković saw the newly established University of Ljubljana as a potential pioneer in promoting Yugoslavism. Both the contextualization of his work and the selected source provide a valuable insight into early 1920s approaches to the national question.

The source by **Viktor Murnik**, contextualized by Lucija Balikić, adds further depth to the reader's exploration of the national question. Murnik was active in the Sokol gymnastic movement, which Balikić describes as "one of the key loci of nation-building and the dissemination of national ideas." Within this context, Murnik undertook the development of a systematic, professional terminology related to gymnastics and movement in the Slovenian and Serbo-Croatian languages—thereby challenging the previous dominance of German and Czech in the movement. He also sought to conceptualize the relationship between bodily movement and national culture. The translated source is a booklet he self-published in 1929, offering a striking example of his ideological transformation. It reflects his shift from an optimistic, culturally Yugoslavist evolutionist to a culturally pessimistic thinker who increasingly biologized and essentialized cultural phenomena, a change shaped by his growing disillusionment with the turbulent politics of the 1920s. In her contextualization, Balikić also examines Murnik's perspective on the distinction between Western European competitive sports and the Swedish, German, and Sokol gymnastic systems, and further analyzes his political thought as reflecting an antimodernist and evolutionist approach to civilizational hierarchies.

The following two examples offer complementary yet distinct perspectives on feminism and the "woman question" by communist writers Angela Vode and Leopoldina Kos, published in the periodical *Književnost* in 1933 and 1934, respectively. As both authors were members of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, their writings complicate the commonly held view of the relationship between communism and feminism during this period. **Angela Vode's** article, written from a Marxist feminist perspective, presents a developed analysis of the "woman question" that draws primarily on German-language literature, including August Bebel's *Die Frau und der Sozialismus* (1879) and Alice Rühle-Gerstel's *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart* (1932), but also other contemporary socialist feminist works. According to Isidora Grubački, Vode's article constitutes an intervention against the dominant position among Slovenian communists in the early 1930s, which often rejected non-communist women's organizing. At the same time, Vode's contribution engages with the broader transnational debate on the "crisis of feminism" in the 1930s, involving figures such as Rühle-Gerstel, as well as Czechoslovak and Yugoslav feminist thinkers like Julka Chlapcová-Đorđević and Alojzija Štebi. Overall, the source may be understood as Vode's intellectual contribution—alongside her activism—toward bridging the divide between the women's movement and the workers' movement.

The source by **Leopoldina Kos** can be read as an implicit response to Angela Vode's article, appearing one year later in the same journal. Unlike the prolific

Vode, Kos published relatively little; her primary role was that of a political organizer, with a particular focus on rural communities, especially women. Her work reflects a more practical, grassroots engagement with communist and feminist politics. Kos's trajectory, like that of several other figures in this volume, highlights 1926 as a year of significant transformation—largely as a result of the tightening of the fascist regime in Italy. It was during this period that Kos, politically formed as a Slovenian and Yugoslav nationalist in the prewar Habsburg Empire, moved from the Italian-controlled town of Idrija to Ljubljana, which was then part of Yugoslavia. This relocation marked a turning point in Kos's political orientation and activism. In contrast to Vode's nuanced engagement with feminist thought, Kos's article presents a more direct and uncompromising critique of the "bourgeois feminist" movement. As Manca G. Renko notes in her contextualization, Kos appears to have had limited familiarity with the actual work of feminist thinkers. Renko insightfully argues that intellectual and political positions are often shaped by partial or limited information; this observation helps explain Kos's stance and sheds light on broader dynamics within leftist critiques of feminism at the time.

Besides Albin Prepeluh, another republican political thinker present in this reader is **Etbin Kristan**, a co-founder of the Yugoslav Social Democratic Party in the Habsburg Empire. On the eve of the First World War in 1914, Kristan moved to the United States of America, where he continued to develop his federal and republican political ideas in the framework of his Chicago-based organization, the Slovenian Republican Alliance (*Slovensko republičansko združenje*, SRZ), founded in 1917 out of the Yugoslav Socialist Federation, a member branch of the Socialist Party USA. He returned to Yugoslavia in autumn 1920 to advocate for the idea of a federal Yugoslav republic within the JSDS in the context of the Constituent Assembly. When the body opted for a centralist, monarchist constitution on Vidovdan (June 28) 1921, Kristan returned to the US, later opening a small diner in Michigan with his wife. Yet, as Cody James Inglis argues, he continuously advocated for socialist ideas even in his turn away from active politics in the rest of the 1920s. The translated source is his 1934 article "Un-American Socialism," one of his first texts published after rejoining the Slovenian-American socialist movement in the Midwest. There, Kristan argued that socialism was neither anti-national nor unpatriotic in American terms; while doing so, as Inglis argues, Kristan also rejected the Stalinist temptation on the American Left by reiterating his own vision of a republican socialist "federalism of nations" in the context of the international authoritarian developments of the 1930s.

Another important contribution to interwar feminist political thought is the work of **Minka Govekar**, a strong advocate for women's equal status in society.

She framed her arguments primarily within the contexts of family and nation, which in contrast to her close fellow activist Angela Vode, positions her feminist thought on the more conservative end of the political spectrum. Govekar focused in particular on what she referred to as "the housework question," which, as Isidora Grubački argues, was a central element of her political thought and a significant aspect of the broader history of Slovenian (feminist) political discourse. In addition to highlighting radio speeches as a rich source for understanding women's activism and political thought in this period, the text also reveals the continuity of Minka Govekar's engagement with the issue of housework, spanning from the early 1900s to the late 1930s. The analysis, however, notes an important development in her thinking during the 1930s: Govekar increasingly advocated for the professionalization of housework. While this was becoming a significant theme within the international women's movement at the time, the source also briefly suggests the potential significance of Slovenian women's contributions to these broader transnational debates.

The following source presents a text by **Josip Vilfan (Wilfan)**, one of the most significant European liberal theorists of the minority question in the interwar period. Born in Habsburg Trieste, in the border region of the Julian March, Vilfan's personal background deeply informed his lifelong engagement with issues of national identity and minority rights. He was a founding member of the Vienna-based Congress of European Nationalities (1925–1939), within which he produced his most influential work. Through this organization, Vilfan played a key role in articulating the modern concept of the national minority, consistently upholding liberal internationalist values and practices throughout his life. According to Lucija Balikić, the 1936 text included here—*The Congress of European Nationalities and the Peace Problem*—marks a shift in Vilfan's liberal internationalist rhetoric. Whereas earlier formulations projected an image of objectivity and universal order, this later text adopted a more explicitly defensive tone. Balikić argues that this shift reveals how closely linked the concepts of national minority, assimilation, and minority rights were to specific historical circumstances. More broadly, the source underscores the crucial role played by post-Habsburg liberal thinkers in shaping these conceptual frameworks.

The following two texts—by Edvard Kocbek and Andrej Gosar—represent the Catholic strand of political thought included in this reader. **Edvard Kocbek** is widely regarded as one of the most important Slovenian Christian socialist thinkers. The translated source is his canonical 1937 text "A Reflection on Spain," in which Kocbek famously took a public stance in support of the republican side in the Spanish Civil War. This marked a decisive break with the mainstream Catholic camp and brought him ideologically closer to the Yugoslav Left. Veljko

Stanić situates Kocbek within the transnational Catholic Left too, emphasizing the influence of the French journal *Esprit*, one of the few Catholic publications that did not respond to the Spanish Civil War with outright anti-communism. Stanić reads Kocbek's intervention in the context of his intellectual development, including his education in Romance languages and his time in France in the early 1930s, where he encountered emerging nonconformist left-wing Catholic circles around figures such as Emmanuel Mounier and Georges Izard, from which the ideas of personalism emerged, a sort of "third way" between capitalism and communism which emphasized both the individual and the community.

The source by **Andrej Gosar** offers a contrasting perspective on the "woman question" from that of a centrist Catholic political thinker. A prominent Catholic intellectual, Gosar was actively involved in the Slovenian People's Party and served as Minister of Social Affairs in the national government from 1927 to 1928. A critic of existing parliamentarism, he advocated for its reform and maintained a consistent social theory throughout the 1920s and 1930s, centered on democracy, reformed parliamentarism, and private property. The selected source is drawn from his major work *Za nov družabni red* (For a New Social Order), in which he addresses, among other topics, the role of women in society. When read in contrast to the writings of Angela Vode, Leopoldina Kos, and Minka Govekar, Gosar's position reveals a significant divergence: although he supported women's suffrage and participation in public life, his vision of a just social order assumed that men would earn enough to support their wives, making women's employment unnecessary. This position stood in direct opposition to the core feminist demand for women's economic independence.

The final source is a text by **Andrej Uršič**, whom Oskar Mulej situates within the "liberal" camp of interwar Slovenian politics, defined by its anti-clerical stance and support for Yugoslav nationalism. Most of Uršič's writings focused on the issue of Yugoslav national unity, which he defended as a member of the Yugoslav National Party (*Jugoslovenska nacionalna stranka*). His political thought reflects a persistent commitment to Yugoslav unity during the volatile period between the 1939 Cvetković–Maček Agreement and the onset of the Second World War in 1941. The text included here is a direct response to the Cvetković–Maček Agreement and offers a pragmatic, grounded defense of Yugoslavism, representative of a generation that had come to see Yugoslavia as a fully consolidated political reality.

Stefan Gužvica

JOŽE SREBRNIČ: On the Agrarian Theses

Author: Jože Srebrnič
Title: On the Agrarian Theses
Originally published: "O agrarnih tezah," *Delo: Glasilo Komunistične stranke Italije* 3, no. 122 (March 16, 1922): 3.
Language: Slovenian

About the author

Jože Srebrnič (1884, Solkan near Gorizia–the Soča river near Anhovo, 1944) was a Slovenian revolutionary, participant in the Russian Revolution, member of parliament for the Communist Party of Italy, and Yugoslav partisan during the Second World War. Coming from rural Gorizia within the Habsburg Empire, his career as an engaged intellectual was dedicated primarily to developing Marxist solutions to the agrarian question on the European semi-periphery.[1]

1 The biography is based on the following sources: Branko Marušič, "Srebrnič, Jože (1884–1944)," in *Slovenska biografija* (Ljubljana: ZRC SAZU, 2013), http://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi599084/#primorski-slovenski-biografski-leksikon, last accessed April 24, 2024, originally published in *Primorski slovenski biografski leksikon*, vol. 3/14, *Sedej–Suhadolc*, ed. Martin Jevnikar (Gorica: Goriška Mohorjeva družba, 1988). Branko Marušič and Milko Rener, eds., *Jože Srebrnič (1884–1944): narodni heroj* (Ljubljana: Jože Moškrič, 1986).

Srebrnič was born in the family of a carpenter and became a socialist already in his high school days in Gorizia. After regular military service, he attended an officers' school, but was denied a military rank for political reasons. In 1907, he joined the Yugoslav Social Democratic Party (*Jugoslovanska socialdemokratska stranka*, JSDS) and the Workers' Educational Society in his native Solkan. A year later, he moved to Graz to study law, but was soon forced to give up his studies due to poverty and returned to Solkan. He joined his father in working as a carpenter, but soon became a farmer instead, working in his own orchard. This started his interest, rare at the time, in the link between socialism, with its focus on the industrial proletariat, and the agrarian question. He was among the few Slovenian Marxists who had dealt with the peasantry before 1914 and made practical efforts at organizing them politically.[2] In February 1912, he was the delegate of Solkan for the Fourth Conference of the Yugoslav Social Democratic Party. At the Fifth Conference in May 1913, he explicitly proposed socialist political agitation in the countryside, saying that Marxists should organize the peasantry. His proposals included the establishment of peasant economic organizations, as well as laying the ground for their political and trade union education, preparing them for more extensive activities; he also proposed a special socialist newspaper to deal only with agrarian issues.

In 1914, Srebrnič was mobilized into the Austro-Hungarian Army. As an opponent of the war, he voluntarily surrendered himself to the Imperial Russian Army already at the end of August that year. He spent the next several years in captivity before being liberated by the February Revolution in 1917. He became a Bolshevik and was one of the founders of the Yugoslav Communist Group in Russia, gathering communists from both the former Austro-Hungarian Empire as well as Serbia and Bulgaria. He regularly wrote for the Yugoslav Bolsheviks' newspaper *Svetska Revolucija* (The World Revolution, 1918–1919), calling for the establishment of a Balkan Soviet Federative Socialist Republic as an alternative to the Yugoslav project. This was the result of his belief that Yugoslav unification would be subverted by the Karađorđević dynasty and the nationalist tendencies of the majority-Serb Radical Party led by Nikola Pašić (1845–1926). In March 1919, Srebrnič returned from Russia and settled in Solkan, which was by then occupied by Italian troops. He continued working as an agricultural smallholder and became an active communist. He joined the Socialist Party of Italy (PSI) and led agitation as part of its communist current. He was the head of the informal communist organization for the Gorizia region acting within the PSI, and led it into the new Italian Communist Party (PCI), established in January 1921 in

2 See the entry on Albin Prepeluh in this volume.

Livorno. He soon became a member of its Provincial Committee for the Julian March, headquartered in Trieste.

Starting from February 1920, Srebrnič was a regular contributor in the Trieste-based Slovenian-language communist newspaper *Delo* (Labor, 1920–1934). As a communist organizer, he established peasant cooperatives and developed cultural activities in the countryside. He supported the majority policy of "abstentionism" pushed by Amadeo Bordiga (1889–1970) within the newly established Communist Party, which opposed electoral participation. However, both Srebrnič and the party would soon reach a decision to take part in elections, a position endorsed by the Communist International. Thus, in January 1922, Srebrnič was elected deputy mayor of Solkan on a communist ticket. A month later he participated in the Second Congress of the PCI in Rome, where he opposed the party line on land redistribution and called for the collectivization of agriculture. In 1923, the local councils were dissolved by decree, to be appointed directly by the Prime Minister, and he thus lost the post of deputy mayor. In April 1924, he was elected to the Italian Parliament as the first Slovenian member from the ranks of the communists. He participated in anti-fascist actions and was under constant police surveillance. That same year, he was a PCI delegate at the Fifth Comintern Congress in Moscow and was deputy head of the party's peasant committee under Ruggero Grieco (1893–1955).

In November 1926, the fascist government revoked the immunity of MPs and outlawed all other political parties. Srebrnič was arrested and confined alongside his party comrades and other opposition politicians. He was sentenced to five years' confinement, which he spent, successively, on the islands of Lampedusa, Ustica, Ponza, and Ventotene. From December 1930 until March 1931, he was imprisoned in the Neapolitan jail of Poggioreale. He was released in February 1932 and allowed to return to Solkan, but only seven months later he was sentenced again and first sent to prison in Naples, then confined on the island of Ponza. In April 1939, Srebrnič was again released and almost immediately tried to emigrate to Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav police arrested him and extradited him back to Italy, resulting in another bout of imprisonment until the fall of Italy in September 1943.

After Italy capitulated, Srebrnič was released from the Renicci concentration camp. He immediately went to Slovenia and established ties with the partisan movement. By November 1943, he was already among the guerillas. He began writing propaganda for the partisan newspaper *Primorski poročevalec* (The Littoral Herald, 1943–1944). At the same time, he became a member of the Peoples' Liberation Council for the Slovenian Littoral, tasked specifically with the agrarian question. In February 1944, Srebrnič was the delegate of the Gorizia

region for the founding session of the Slovenian Peoples' Liberation Council, the representative body of the Liberation Front, which met in Črnomelj. He wrote articles on the peasantry and their role in the coming revolution. He participated in the electoral campaign for the parliamentary election on the liberated territory as the communist candidate. On July 11, 1944, on his way to the Third Party Conference for the Slovenian Littoral, he drowned while attempting to cross the river Soča.

As a veteran of the communist movement who died during the war, despite not having died in battle, he was posthumously awarded the Order of the People's Hero. He received a place in the memory politics of the People's (from 1963, Socialist) Republic of Slovenia, with schools and streets named after him, but was markedly less prominent at the federal level, as he was never particularly involved in Yugoslav affairs. Soon after his passing, his comrade Ivan Regent (1884–1967) wrote a brief biography and obituary of Srebrnič in the form of a pamphlet.[3] In 1946, his remains were transferred to Solkan, and a memorial plaque was erected in his honor.

Srebrnič considered his work on the history of the Ancient Slavs, written on Ponza in the 1930s, to be his magnum opus. Unfortunately, the manuscript was confiscated by the Yugoslav police in 1940 and is believed to have been lost forever. Most of his other theoretical works have been published on the pages of the Triestine *Delo* and various newspapers of the partisan movement in the Slovenian Littoral.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS: "Referat na V. goriški deželni konferenci JSDS" (1913), published in *Zgodovinski arhiv KPJ*, vol. 5 (Belgrade, 1951); "Sovjeti," *Delo*, no. 4 (Trieste, 1920); "Kmečke zadruge ali kmečke komune," *Delo*, no. 9, 10, 12, and 13 (Trieste, 1920); "Od bivšega vojnega ujetnika v Rusiji," *Delo*, no. 114 (Trieste, 1921); "O agrarnih tezah," *Delo*, no. 122 (Trieste, 1922); "O odpovedi kolonskih pogodb," *Delo*, no. 141 (Trieste, 1922); "Marksizem in vera," *Delo*, nos. 183–184 (Trieste, 1923); "Individualno in socijalno delo," *Delo*, no. 220 (Trieste, 1924); "Socijalizacija žena," *Delo*, nos. 273–275 (Trieste, 1925); "Kako mi kmetje podpremo osvobodilno fronto," *Primorski kmečki glas*, no. 1 (1944); "Kaj nam je dala nova narodna oblast," *Primorski kmečki glas*, no. 2 (1944); "Primorski poslanci na zasedanju prvega slov. parlamenta," *Primorski kmečki glas*, no. 3 (1944); "Naše nove občine," *Primorski kmečki glas*, no. 4 (1944); "Kako bomo volili?" *Primorski kmečki glas*, no. 5 (1944).

3 Ivan Regent, *Jože Srebrnič: junaški bojevnik za bratstvo med narodi in za pravice delovnega ljudstva* (Gorica: Primorski dnevnik, 1946).

Context

Despite being primarily an ideology centered around the industrial working class, Marxism in the twentieth century had to contend with the overwhelming numerical dominance of the peasantry. Although in most European countries at the time of the October Revolution the capitalist mode of production was already dominant, the majority of the population still lived in the countryside, making their plight particularly pertinent. The Second International rarely focused on this issue, however, a fact which Srebrnič criticized at the beginning of his 1922 article, translated below.

The standard view of the turn-of-the-century Social Democratic Party of Germany, developed by its leading theoretician Karl Kautsky (1854–1938), taken as the model for many organizations within the International, was that the only feasible socialist answer to the agrarian issue was the collectivization of land.[4] The Bolsheviks turned this proposition on its head, suggesting instead that, in underdeveloped countries, the peasants' request for individual land ownership should be heeded first. Contrary to stereotypes of Bolshevik dogmatism juxtaposed to social-democratic flexibility, it was the post-First World War social democrats who held onto the dogma from the previous period. Meanwhile, the Bolsheviks' support for a peasant revolution in the countryside, based on land redistribution, made the difference needed to win the civil war. In countries like Hungary, the revolution was defeated precisely because the agrarian question proved to be a stumbling block: in the eyes of the peasants, collectivization did not lead to any significant change of their situation on the ground.

By 1922, Srebrnič was ideologically and politically aligned to various communist "ultra-left" currents. The ultra-left was distinguished from the Bolsheviks by their consistent anti-parliamentarianism and disregard for communist tactical concessions on matters such as the national and peasant questions—a matter that the Russian communists considered indispensable to the success of the revolution in the periphery. In accordance with such views, Srebrnič believed in the immediate collectivization of agriculture as opposed to land redistribution. The Bolsheviks, too, believed that collectivization was the ultimate and optimal solution for agriculture, as individual land ownership effectively amounted to the development of capitalism in the countryside. However, their plan at the time was the gradual construction of collective agriculture upon the success of revolutions in more developed European states, with long-term incentives for joining collective farms and cooperatives. Around 1922, as the prospect of a European revolution seemed more and more dire, the Communist International introduced the

4 See Karl Kautsky, *The Agrarian Question* (London & Winchester, MA: Zwan Publications, 1988), 311–44.

United Front policy, based on communist cooperation with reformist socialist and agrarian parties. In the Soviet Union, the New Economic Policy (NEP, introduced in 1921) also favored the development of capitalist relations in the countryside. However, the left in the Communist Party of Italy (PCI) was skeptical of both internal and external developments coming from Soviet Russia.

As part of the ultra-left of the PCI, Srebrnič argued for the "traditional" socialist view of land collectivization as the appropriate policy for the Italian party, a view that was not shared by the party center around Amadeo Bordiga at the time (although considered one of the quintessential "ultra-leftists," Bordiga by and large shared Lenin's (1870–1924) views on tactical concessions on the national and peasant question). Considering that land collectivization was both a policy of the Second International, harshly criticized by the communists, and of the revolutionaries who surpassed the Bolsheviks in their radicalism, the policy could conceivably be accused of being a deviation on both the "left" and the "right." Italian socialists, however, could have argued that—given the relative economic development (at least) in the country's north—collectivization could make more sense as a policy than the creation of fully capitalist agriculture.

Given all these circumstances, the agrarian question was an ever-present stumbling block in the matter of the transition from capitalism to socialism. The ultra-left merely expressed the general anxiety of Marxists towards the peasantry. If the peasantry retained individual landholdings, this would be both an obstacle and a failure of constructing a socialist system. Srebrnič's article, therefore, is significant because he makes an explicit effort to define the future communist society, a rare occurrence among South Slavic communists of the day. The translation of pamphlets from German or Russian communists was quite common, but the articulation of one's own definitions markedly less so.

In this text, Srebrnič defines communism as a moneyless society without commodity production, based on a centrally planned industrial economy and collective agriculture. Explicitly following Marx's *Capital*, he prioritizes the transformation of "individual labor" into "social labor." Even more significantly, Srebrnič explicitly states that communism cannot be constructed "on the basis of commodity production." In other words, even a socialist society, prior to communism, cannot be constructed if commodity production and money still exist. The only major difference between socialism and communism is that the latter presumes the absence of the state. This is in contrast to a subsequent Soviet redefinition, according to which the existence of money as means of exchange was in fact a feature of socialism as much as of capitalism, and the abolition of money would have to wait the transition from socialism to communism, to take place at an undisclosed point in the future.

Srebrnič's definition of socialism as a moneyless society is not particularly original. In this, he merely followed Marxist orthodoxy, which can be found in the works of Kautsky, Lenin, Leon Trotsky (1879–1940), Rosa Luxemburg (1871–1919), and even the early writings of Joseph Stalin (1878–1953).[5] However, by the early 1930s, Stalin would backtrack on this and proclaim the "construction of socialism" based on commodity production, now merely renamed "socialist commodity production." Srebrnič's work is thus also significant for explicitly outlining a pre-Stalinist definition of socialism which had been a matter of consensus before the First Five-Year Plan, but was virtually forgotten in subsequent definitions and practices of socialism.[6]

Srebrnič's 1922 treatise begins with a footnote stating, "I would like to point out that the report is intended for the Party's supporters in general." In other words, it was part of the internal debate preceding the Second Congress of the PCI. There is a major feature of such argumentation, which Srebrnič frequently employs, which is important for a meta-analysis of communist theoretical debates in general. This feature should be kept in mind when reading Marxist intellectual works, as it was common in both the Second and Third Internationals, and has implications for subsequent development of "personality cults" in socialist regimes. The feature in question is the usage of Marx and Engels as a form of appeal to authority, a logical fallacy presented as an objective argument. In other words, a preposition is proven right or wrong not through empirical verification, but through reference to the works of the "founding fathers."

"On the Agrarian Theses" is a document significant for illustrating the maximalist political proposals of communists at the very beginnings of their movement. Considering Srebrnič's position between the Italian and Yugoslav contexts, his work not only represents a link connecting the two state contexts, but also serves as a paradigm of the aforementioned maximalism in a broader region encompassing both the Apennine and the Balkan Peninsulas. His theses offer a vision of socialism based on the expectation of a moneyless society, and also one assuming the possibility of immediate land collectivization. The opinion that peasants in the periphery should be turned into smallholders would become the dominant communist view over the 1920s, and Srebrnič's opinion would become anathema, one that he too would abandon by the 1940s. Nevertheless, this text

5 See in particular the unambiguous definition of socialism in Joseph Stalin, "The Agrarian Question," in *Works*, vol. 1, *1901–1907* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1954), 216–32. For the Stalin of 1905, socialism entails "abolishing commodity production, abolishing the money system, razing capitalism to its foundations and socialising all the means of production." (ibid., 221.)

6 One major exception was Boris Kidrič, who was profoundly concerned with the problem of "socialist" commodity production and wanted to resolve it. See Darko Suvin on Kidrič and problems of "socialist commodity production": Darko Suvin, *Splendour, Misery, and Possibilities. An X-Ray of Socialist Yugoslavia* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 86–95.

remains as an expression of the optimistic belief, still harbored by many Marxists in the 1920s, which presumed that the peasant masses who had just come out of feudalism were ready to become immediately part of the socialist mode of production.

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JOŽE SREBRNIČ
"On the Agrarian Theses"

The question of agricultural labor is of such paramount importance for the proletariat striving to transform the present economic order that it cannot address the issue of the socialist revolution unless it is first confident about the position it should take on the agrarian question. All of the propaganda and organizational work of the Second International has revolved mainly around industrial workers. This is actually not a mistake because capitalism has, in fact, mostly developed in the field of so-called industrial production, creating the industrial proletariat as its opponent, which, due to its accumulation in the factories, has had much more favorable conditions to get itself organized than the proletariat employed in agricultural labor. However, many errors have indeed been committed by conducting this propaganda and organization from an industrial point of view, in the sense that two proletariats exist that are not only superficially different but also have fundamentally opposed interests.

…

Let us focus on the purely economic aspect of the issue: in the Second International, there has been and still is considerable confusion as to the extent to which social production encompasses various economic sectors; in the Communist International, there has also been some uncertainty in this respect. It is not at all unreasonable to first ask whether it is possible for the proletarian revolution to immediately introduce at least the minimum of the communist economic order and whether future development will allow for any other economic system besides the communist one. The rejection of the

second part of the question is justified in *Capital* with irrefutable clarity: social labor and the social production framework cannot tolerate the economic peddling of small producers, whose final fate has been sealed without exception. This fact has already been confirmed by all the technological means of modern capitalist production: machines, railways, steamboats, the telegraph, and the telephone do not tolerate harmful profiteering by small producers. All the objective capitalist production data speak in favor of the immediate introduction of this minimum. Capitalism itself exists alongside other older economic remnants. As it meets its sad destiny, the open battlefield of its small-economy adherents will not be the first to succumb. Its entrenched positions in heavy industry and large estates will fail first, and from there, the proletariat will take over all the small producers' outposts.

What, then, are the elements of a communist economy? Individual labor must be replaced by social labor, while social labor must also be given a social material framework (factories, buildings, machinery, the power of water, electricity, warehouses, etc., collective land, cattle, machines, warehouses, means of communication: railways, steamboats, the telegraph, the telephone, automobiles, etc.). Furthermore, the social organization of labor will abolish the production of commodities and replace it with the production of necessities. With the elimination of commodity production, its corollary—money—will also be abolished in all its forms. "Any economy which produces commodities is also an economy that exploits labor, but only capitalist commodity production has developed exploitation on a gigantic scale." A communist who intends to introduce communism based on commodity production is doing the work of Sisyphus. Capitalist labor energy, which stems from the desire for profit, must be replaced with the awareness of work commitment.

Associated workers' relations are regulated by standard working hours, which is the simplest and most accurate measure of *social* labor, whether in factories or agriculture. Piecework should be discarded as a matter of principle and used only as a potential disciplinary means against sabotage, to maintain a normal work intensity (enthusiasm). Remuneration must be based on the workers' physical needs in the given situation (without monetary depreciation, of course). Obviously, communist production will be mass production because of its productive organisms (factories, collective land). Due to the communication organisms (railways, steamships, automobiles), this will be matched by the direct mass provision of supplies. Therefore, any small-scale production will represent mere economic peddling and small-scale distribution of meaningless contraband.

Social labor, the social awareness of work commitment, standard working

hours, the production of necessities (without depreciation), technology, mass production and direct distribution, and social hygiene through genuine exchange between industrial and agricultural labor—these are the main outlines of the communist economy, which represents the foundation for all social relations in communism.

…

The union of factories and land is a necessary precondition for a successful revolutionary struggle because it is through this union that the economic circle is completed. It is impossible to socialize a factory if we do not simultaneously socialize enough of the land. The endless Russian fields could not guarantee the supply of either food or raw materials for the few existing factories, and land fragmentation contributed significantly to this. It is true that in capitalism—which relies, above all, on modern technology—the industries dominated by constant capital (machines) have developed far more than agriculture dominated by variable capital (workers). However, it is by no means true that the division of even the most primitive estates represents technological progress. This claim is caused by an optical illusion; it is this statement that has won David his infamous laurels against Marxism. "By its very nature, a subdivided estate excludes the development of the social productive force of labor, the social framework of labor, the social pooling of capital (technological means), large-scale animal husbandry, or the progressive application of science. It implies an 'infinite fragmentation of the means of production', isolation of the producers themselves, and an immense waste of labor power." "Small estates create a class of farmers living half outside human society, combining all the brutality of a primitive social form with the torments and sufferings of civilized lands." "Ultimately, all the criticism of small estates is nothing but criticism of private property, which stifles and hinders the development of agriculture." These are Marx's eternally true theses on small estates.

…

Capitalist production also reveals that advanced capitalism organizes production in a new field, in the middle of a backward economy, directly based on the latest technological means, without first going through any craft production stages. Why should it be impossible for the proletariat to organize land in such a direct manner? Indeed, this could be rather questionable because a revolutionary movement inevitably leads to the stagnation of economic life due to sabotage by the capitalist-minded classes. The proletariat loses nothing because of this. Communism will indeed be based

on the existing technological achievements, but it will, first of all, solve its essential task by "establishing clear mutual relations between the people as workers (social laborers)". It will be able to achieve this in sabotaged factories as well as on collective land, despite people like Otto Bauer, who claim that this would be "more according to the rules of the order rather than the economic principles." If the anarchist Enrico Malatesta, when asked what will happen if cereals run out, answers that it will be necessary to pick up a shovel and sow it, then this is a very proletarian revolutionary method, and the proletariat, especially the communists, should only resort to it to defend the revolutionary gains against the sabotaging bourgeoisie. This is a simple, commonly understood move: communism knows no eminence. If we speak of "eminence" (the bourgeoisie likes to emphasize this and would like to create "eminence" everywhere, not realizing that, in this way, "eminences" level themselves out), Marx's eminence would stem precisely from his ability to analyze, with unprecedented perceptiveness, the complex capitalist mechanisms from a straightforward proletarian point of view by demonstrating clearly that all the glory and power of the capitalist potentates rests solely on the labor for which they have not paid the workers. Meanwhile, Lenin's "eminence" is based on how boldly he steers the Soviet Republic through the tides of global capitalism, and yet he also attends Communist Saturdays as a worker-proletarian. The bourgeoisie has transformed thought into handicraft; the proletariat must unite thought with labor, personify labor, and, as a truly revolutionary class, raise the hammer and sickle as the fundamental duty and right of free citizens.

Manca G. Renko

ZOFKA KVEDER (as Dimitrije Gvozdanović): The Grandson of Prince Marko

Author: Zofka Kveder Demetrović, under the pseudonym Dimitrije Gvozdanović
Title: The Grandson of Prince Marko
Originally published: *Unuk kraljevića Marka: drama u dva dela* (Zagreb: Hrvatski štamparski zavod, 1922)
Language: Yugoslav

About the author

Zofka Kveder, also **Zofka Kveder Demetrović** (1878, Ljubljana–1926, Zagreb), was a writer who holds a prominent place in the Slovenian and Yugoslav literary canon.[1] Her recognition has resulted in a prevailing perception of her life as a constant struggle, later awarded with pioneering achievements that paved her way into schoolbooks and public history.

1 Her life and work was researched by prominent Slovenian literary historians, most notably by Marja Boršnik (1906–1982), Erna Muser (1912–1991), and in the last two decades by Katja Mihurko.

Challenging the boundaries of what was deemed possible for a woman at the time, Kveder embodied the archetype of the "new woman" typical of the *fin-de-siècle* era: she boldly cut her hair short, wore pants, and traversed geographical boundaries through her travels and contacts.[2] Relying on her intellectual and artistic work, she became a symbol of what we today call women's empowerment, or, at least, financial independence. Residing at the time in urban or even metropolitan centers such as Ljubljana, Trieste, Zürich, Prague, and Zagreb, Kveder embraced an international lifestyle. She cultivated friendships with influential writers and political figures of her generation and emerged as an advocate for women's rights.

After the First World War, she became a proponent of the Yugoslav monarchy, with Yugoslavism being just as significant to her as royalism. Her political views, shaped by the complexities of her time, also reflected some attitudes common to her generation, including instances of antisemitism.[3] In the analysis of her overall work, it is crucial to consider all of these aspects, especially given that canonized authors tend to be remembered as one-dimensional heroes: the importance placed on canonization tends to outweigh the desire to fully comprehend the nuances and complexities of artists or historical figures.

Zofka Kveder had a difficult family background. Her upbringing was full of deprivation and violence, so she eagerly awaited emancipation and the chance to live independently. At nineteen, she first acquired a room of her own in rural Kočevje in Carniola, now in today's Slovenia, where she worked as an administrative technician. After her years in Kočevje, she returned to Ljubljana in 1897, where she found a full-time office job. In her spare time, she wrote stories, which, due to the conservative cultural and political environment, she had to publish under a male pseudonym. As this excerpt shows, she would again use a male pseudonym, Dimitrije Gvozdanović, for some of her writings in the interwar period.[4] This complexity challenges the notion of a linear narrative of emancipatory progress. She moved from her concealed identity as a young writer in Ljubljana to her empowered visibility in the first fourteen years of the twentieth century in Prague and Zagreb, only to find herself once again hidden in the final years of her life.

2 For the most comprehensive biography, see Katja Mihurko Poniž, *Drzno drugačna. Zofka Kveder in podobe ženskosti* (Ljubljana: Delta, 2003). For her identity formation as a new woman, see Katja Mihurko, "My Spirit is Reaching to You with Sympathy," in *Women, Nationalism and Social Networks in Habsburg Monarchy 1848–1918*, ed. Marta Verginella (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2023), 197–222.

3 Most notably in her novel *Hanka* (Zagreb: Hrvatski štamparski zavod, 1918), 147–51, but also in her journalistic work; see, for instance, Zofka Kveder, "Jugoslovenke i židovsko pitanje," *Jugoslavenska žena* 2, no. 3, March 1, 1918, 107–16. For further contextualization, see Natka Badurina, *Nezakonite kćeri Ilirije* (Zagreb: Centar za ženske studije, 2009), 173–95, or Mihurko Poniž, *Drzno drugačna*, 200.

4 Mihurko Poniž, *Drzno drugačna,* 166–67.

However, for Kveder, Ljubljana soon seemed too small and in 1899 she moved to Trieste, where she became close with the circle around the first Slovenian women's newspaper, *Slovenka* (Slovenian Woman, 1897–1902).[5] She wrote articles about topics that the Slovenian-language press had not previously addressed: abortion, prostitution, infanticide, sex education, and divorce. After a year of traveling, she settled in Prague in 1900, where she supported herself and her firstborn daughter Vladimira (1901–1920) solely with the money she earned herself from intellectual work. Both in her literature and in her life during this period, she was open-minded and progressive. After happy years in Prague, at the explicit request of her husband, Vladimir Jelovšek (1879–1934),[6] she moved to Zagreb with her family, where she worked as an editor for the newspaper *Agramer Tagblatt* and gave birth to two more daughters, all while continuously working. Her husband's manipulations and infidelity, the demands of motherhood, and endless work led her to a mental breakdown. During the First World War, she supported the three daughters herself and was exhausted from her work. However, at that time she managed to write her last work with a dominant female protagonist, *Hanka*, a strongly autobiographic epistolary novel.

After the war, her societal position in Zagreb underwent a dramatic shift. Her second husband, Juraj Demetrović (1885–1945), whom she married in 1914 (but with whom she had lived since 1912), became a Croatian politician of Yugoslav centralist views in the parliament in Belgrade. Both Kveder and her husband aligned themselves with the government and supported the Serbian royal Karađorđević family, a stance that was unpopular among intellectuals in both Zagreb and Ljubljana.[7] Consequently, she faced public ridicule,[8] and—as documented in the letters to her husband—their marriage became increasingly strained due to his absence and separate life in Belgrade.[9] From 1917 onward, she

5 Marta Verginella, ed., *Slovenka: Prvi ženski časopis (1897–1902)* (Ljubljana: Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete, 2017).

6 After completing his medical studies (1905) in Prague and further specialization in Prague, Vienna, and Zagreb, Vladimir Jelovšek worked as an ophthalmologist in Zagreb and Karlovac. As one of the ardent representatives of the younger generation in the Croatian modernist movement, he advocated for absolute freedom of artistic creation and high aesthetic standards. In Prague he published the collections of poems *Simfonije I* (Prague, 1898) and *Simfonije II* (Prague: E. Stívina, 1900).

7 Kveder's critical representation, among those of others, can be recognized in Miroslav Krleža's autobiographical article "Pijana novembarska noć 1918," in which he criticizes (not without gender-specific stereotypes) Yugoslav nationalism, including the women who took part in it. He describes them as "Yugoslav democratic women ... with the one and only ideal of the Karađorđević dynasty on their pasty pink lips." See Suzana Marjanić, *Glasovi* Davnih dana*: transgresije svjetova u Krležinim zapisima 1914–1921/22* (Zagreb: Naklada MD, 2005), 127.

8 See, for instance, her caricature in the humorous Croatian satirical newspaper *Koprive*, April 20, 1919, 4, where Kveder is represented as "Novinarska piljarica," a journalistic grocer who sells her ideas at the fruit market. The caption reads: "Prodajem članke o svim aktuelnim pitanjima na malo i veliko," that is, "Selling articles on all current questions, piecemeal or wholesale."

9 Mihurko Poniž, *Drzno drugačna,* 200.

served as the editor of the newspaper *Ženski svijet* (Women's World), which she founded and later renamed to *Jugoslavenska žena* (Yugoslav Woman) in 1918. The publication was both political and cultural, addressing Yugoslav issues and frequently featuring writings by her husband under the pseudonym Nikias. The predominant ideological position of the newspaper was Yugoslavism for women, with a special sensibility for border areas that after the First World War experienced Italian occupational tendencies (Rijeka, Sušak, Krk, Istria, Trieste). What started as a newspaper of liberal and socialist ideas soon transformed into a means of mobilizing women for the ideology of Yugoslavism.[10]

In 1920, her eldest daughter Vladimira, with whom she had a tumultuous relationship, died of the Spanish flu in Prague. This tragic loss was followed by her second divorce that she vehemently opposed, and from which she never fully recovered. During this period, she devoted herself entirely to the dramatic arts. As she stated on her response form to the Slovenian Biographic Lexicon in 1926: "I am conserving my strength solely for the theatre, aspiring to become for our Yugoslavia what Shakespeare was for the English."[11] The concept of "our Yugoslavia" took center stage in her writings signed under the pseudonym Dimitrije Gvozdanović. These texts are politically charged, aiming to serve as foundational theatrical pieces for the Yugoslav nation. Even in her final work, the collection of novellas titled *Po putevima života* (Along the Paths of Life, 1926)—signed again as Zofka Kveder Demetrović—she utilized 13 novellas depicting heartbreak, where all women are abandoned by their husbands and lovers. Through this very personal narrative, she aimed to illustrate how women from different parts of Yugoslavia, representing different nationalities, religions, and social classes, collectively endured suffering as one, as Yugoslavians.

Zofka Kveder was a highly political writer throughout her career, but it is particularly in the final years of her life that this aspect becomes impossible to ignore. Maybe this is the reason why many of her biographies tend to leave these years out or end with her divorce and heartbreak. She was, indeed, heartbroken, but her divorce was not solely a private matter. As her then-ex-husband Juraj Demetrović wrote to her: "Duty towards others, towards public work, was killing the life that we had together."[12] Embracing Kveder's public and private Yugoslavism also entails fully embracing the life and work of this remarkable writer, who was as much a political thinker as she was an artist.

10 Andrea Feldman, "Proričući gladnu godinu – žene i ideologija jugoslavenstva (1918-1939)," in *Žene u Hrvatskoj: Ženska i kulturna povijest*, ed. Andrea Feldman (Zagreb: Ženska infoteka, 2004), 240.

11 Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica, NUK Ms 1113, M 1.

12 NUK Ms 1113, M 13, D, Korespondenca, Juraj Demetrović, March 27, 1926.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS: *Misterij žene* (Prague, 1900); *Njeno življenje* (Ljubljana, 1914); *Hanka* (Zagreb, 1917); *Vladka, Mitka in Mirica* (Ljubljana, 1928); *Zbrana dela Zofke Kveder*, 5 vols. (Maribor and Ljubljana, 2005–2018).

Context

Zofka Kveder stopped writing fiction in the Slovenian language in 1915 and began using exclusively what we could call the "Yugoslav language," a mixture of Slovenian and Serbo-Croatian. She used this language to write six theatrical texts under the pseudonym Dimitrije Gvozdanović. *Arditi na otoku Krku* (Arditi on the Island of Krk, 1922) and *Unuk kraljevića Marka* (The Grandson of Prince Marko, 1922), the most complex works, were both published by the *Hrvatski štamparski zavod* (Croatian Printing Institute). In the same period, she also wrote the one-act play *Oluja* (Storm, 1923), which was published in *Jugoslavenska njiva*, edited by her husband Juraj Demetrović, and included in the repertoire of the National Theater in Zagreb but was never staged.[13] Additionally, she wrote *Sukob* (Conflict, published in *Jugoslovanska njiva* in 1922). Manuscripts of other plays, including *Prelazna generacija* (Transitional Generation, 1922), *Dječji dom u Crikvenici* (The Children's Home in Crikvenica, 1922), and *Mrtvi grad Karlobag* (The Dead City of Karlobag, 1923), have been preserved and are housed in the National and University Library in Ljubljana, but were never published.[14]

These extensive works, all dedicated to the theme of Yugoslavism and written with great fervor, can be considered her final ideological legacy. However, they are relatively under-researched in the Slovenian (and post-Yugoslav) context and largely unknown to the wider public compared to her other works.[15] None of Kveder's Yugoslav works have been translated into the Slovenian language, with the exception of one excerpt from *Arditi na otoku Krku* that was published in Kveder's reader *Odsevi* (Reflections, 1970), edited by Erna Muser.[16] This late legacy of Kveder challenges the prevailing public memory of her as a socialist,

13 Taras Kermauner, *Jugoslovanski nacionalizem*, vol. 1, *Sentimentalni heroizem* (Ljubljana: samozaložba GolKerKavč, 2002), 5.

14 NUK Ms 1113, M 3C-5C.

15 Aside from Katja Mihurko, who mentions the dramas and summarizes their Slovenian reception in volume 5 of Zofka Kveder's collected works—Zofka Kveder, *Zbrano delo*, vol. 5, *Dramatika / Članki / Feljtoni*, ed. Katja Mihurko Poniž (Ljubljana: ZRC SAZU, 2019)—only Taras Kermauner has addressed them in his self-published study *Sentimentalni heroizem*, cited above. Natka Badurina's study "*Od strepnje do autoritarnog subjekta: Zofka Kveder,*" in her *Nezakonite kćeri Ilirije*, 173–95, is the most comprehensive study devoted to Kveder's Yugoslav ideology. The same topic is also partly addressed in Andrea Feldman's study "Proričući gladnu godinu," in *Žene u Hrvatskoj*, 235–46, where the author analyzes the Yugoslav ideology of several Croatian intellectuals of the interwar period.

16 Zofka Kveder, *Odsevi: iz pripovednih in dramskih del*, ed. Erna Muser (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1970).

feminist, and religiously non-conforming woman of the *fin-de-siècle*. With her final writings, Natka Badurina claims, Kveder sacrificed her feminism, socialism, and even her identity as a female author for new political convictions.[17]

Kveder published plays in the early 1900s and then again in the early 1920s, with a long interruption between. A comparison of her plays from these two periods illustrates the shift in her political stance, transitioning from social democracy to Yugoslav nationalism. Her first play, *Pravica do življenja* (The Right to Live, 1901) tackles critiques of capitalism and the hypocrisy of the bourgeois family. Over the subsequent years, she authored several other plays—with perhaps her most intricate being *Amerikanci* (The Americans, 1908), about economic emigration and seductive lies of "American dream"—yet none of them made it to the stage. While her first dramatic endeavors fit well into the *fin-de-siècle* narrative with topics such as family, marriage, love, and gender, her work also has a strong social note that can be attributed to her social-democratic worldview. She writes about repressive forms of tradition, poverty, workers who cannot sustain themselves or their families with their profession, women who are forced to marry men they don't love for financial reasons, parents who sacrifice themselves for their children due to poverty. In short, she writes about unfair labor conditions and the failures of the capitalist system that forces so many people into poverty. Her second stage of dramatic writing, produced after the First World War, represents a complete shift in her writing style: she is no longer a sympathetic observer of people but an allegoric describer of ideas and ideologies. Her characters no longer feel real or human, but instead embody specific narrative roles in Yugoslav propaganda. Because Kveder was a very autobiographic writer—according to Mihurko, every one of her literary works at least partly addresses her experiences[18]—it is safe to read her political plays as her political beliefs.

"Our Yugoslavia is not without its faults—but I firmly assert that life is more beautiful and better for us in our country than for any other nation in theirs,"[19] wrote Kveder in the epilogue to *Unuk kraljevića Marka*. The premise of this extensive, 300-page-long allegoric text is straightforward: Yugoslavia is magnificent, yet its inhabitants remain unaware of the beauty it holds. Therefore, Kveder invites the reader to embark on the journey of Marko and Mihajlo. Marko Marković is an officer (*oficir*) and Mihajlo is his sergeant. Marko represents the ideal Yugoslav, a pure hero: honest, self-sacrificing, and intelligent, while Mihajlo symbolizes the Yugoslav people; he is simple but good and faithful, one who trusts Marko completely. In some ways, they resemble Don Quixote and Sancho

17 Badurina, *Nezakonite kćeri Ilirije*, 184.

18 Katja Mihurko Poniž, *Zapisano z njenim peresom: Prelomi zgodnjih slovenskih književnic s paradigmo nacionalne literature* (Nova Gorica: Založba Univerze v Novi Gorici, 2014), 136.

19 Dimitrije Gvozdanović, *Unuk kraljevića Marka* (Zagreb: Hrvatski štamparski zavod, 1922), 319.

Panza, but without a trace of author's irony. Marko is forgiving; he believes in the future potential of Yugoslavia and remains content by its current state. Or as he explained to Mihajlo: "There is much that is tragicomic in our young state! No matter, it will pass like childhood illnesses."[20] However, in order to cure the illness, traitors must be eradicated once and for all. This marks the culmination of the play, the final (fifth) act, where—alongside Marko and Mihajlo—different traitors emerge (for instance: a communist, a Montenegrin rebel, a dissatisfied Slovene, a German, Horthy's envoy, a Viennese Christian socialist, an Italian fascist, etc.). Kveder depicts these characters as enemies of the nation, driven by their own selfish interests to dismantle Yugoslavia. As each traitor unveils their plot to undermine Yugoslavia and they collectively agree to collaborate despite their ideological differences, Marko emerges. In the manner of contemporary superheroes, he detonates explosives, vanquishing the room filled with enemies of the nation. Marko sacrifices his (and most probably also Mihajlo's) life for Yugoslavia and his final wish being for God to always bless Yugoslavia with heroes who will defend it against anyone who dares to harm it.

The ending of the play can be interpreted as both radical and utopian. Radical in the sense that any measures and sacrifices are permitted for the preservation of the common interest, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Utopian in the sense that, given the number of "traitors" and the slim likelihood of a "grand finale" of redemption, it is hard to imagine that Yugoslavia could ever truly be safe from all those who wish it harm. However, the radicalism with the glimpse of utopianism can be understood as the peak of Kveder's Yugoslavism—in its artistic as well as in its political sense. One could also guess that she saw her own writing as a possibility for the Yugoslav nation's redemption. In 1926, not long before her death, she filled out the form for the Slovenian Biographic Lexicon. The edited and published form leaves out several of her statements,[21] including: "Genius of the Yugoslav nation! Grant me strength to fulfill the mission for which I hope I am called: to awaken faith and love in our Yugoslav nation for our homeland."[22] This wish is not very different from Marko's.

In the afterword to *Unuk kraljevića Marka*, Kveder elucidated that the author "did not merely write with ink, but also with blood,"[23] emphasizing how the text transcended the limitations of the dramatic form. She also acknowledged her awareness of "national propaganda in the second part"[24] and anticipated the

20 Ibid, 224.
21 Katja Mihurko Poniž, *Literarna ustvarjalka v očeh druge: Študije o recepciji, literarnih stikih in biografskem diskurzu* (Nova Gorica: Založba Univerze v Novi Gorici, 2017), 60.
22 NUK Ms 1113, M 1.
23 Gvozdanović, *Unuk kraljevića Marka*, 317.
24 Ibid, 319.

director's role in editing out numerous elements. "They will say: current issues are not art. That is not true," she wrote, further stating: "Let this book serve as a testament to our era, not just a play."[25] She stated on several occasions that the writer's work is not only to write for oneself but to address the public.[26] She was thinking beyond the Yugoslav public; in her correspondence we can find a letter from the Slovenian-American writer Louis Adamič/Adamic, explaining to her why *Arditi na otoku Krku* would be too complicated to translate into English: because the "Yugoslav language" and English are too dissimilar.[27] She never reached the global audience she wished for, but her politics had an impact. One of her correspondents from Serbia, Julka Božičković, for instance, wrote in a letter how Kveder convinced her not only to be a Serb, but also a Yugoslav.[28] For Kveder herself, being a Yugoslav was not only a political position, but also the only intimate possibility. As she wrote: "Slovenian women no longer want me, Croatian women do not fully recognize me as their own, nor do Serbian women. The truth is, sometimes it hurts, but it also gives me strength; I remain what I am: a Yugoslav woman."[29]

Acknowledgement

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25 Ibid.
26 See for instance Zofka Kveder, *Izbrano delo Zofke Kvedrove*, vol. 8, *Hanka*, eds. Marja Boršnik and Eleonora Kernc (Ljubljana: Ženska založba Belo-modra knjižnica, 1938), 7, or "Optožujem," *Jugoslovanska njiva*, no. 3 (1923), 113.
27 NUK Ms 1113, M 13, D, Korespondenca, Louis Adamič, February 9, 1922.
28 NUK Ms 1113, M 13, D, Korespondenca, Julka Božičković, November 1, 1922.
29 Kveder, "Jugoslovenke i židovsko pitanje," 112.

ZOFKA KVEDER DEMETROVIĆ AS DIMITRIJE GVOZDANOVIĆ
"Afterword for the reader" in *Unuk kraljevića Marka*

Perhaps it is good that these two or three blank pages remain, so that I can add a few words to my work. I know that the first part will move and captivate many, as truth often does. With an agitated heart and trembling hand, the author attempted to depict what he heard and what shook him to his core. Those were the great days of suffering and heroism, which we forget all too quickly. Even the heroes themselves who participated in these events are slowly forgetting the peaks of their lives, the times when they were most self-sacrificing, most unselfish, and strongest.

No one is granted the ability to spend their entire life at the highest peak of their own being. At the peaks, one either perishes or one must come down to earth, into normal life. Thus descended Garibaldi and Mazzini, who created Greater Italy; thus Napoleon, who had carried the glory of France on the wings of his army's eagles across all of Europe, fell; and thus Bismarck, whose shrewdness built and developed a strong Germany, died in the banality of everyday life. In a similar manner, the descendants of Marko have here, in our lands, appeased. They have been caught in the cycle of their everyday life, so much that even they themselves do not think much about what once was. But those days were not only the maximum of what they could give as individuals. Those days represented the maximum of what the entire Yugoslav nation could give in its heroism, sacrifice, endurance, and suffering. And that is why those days must not be forgotten! That is why it is necessary to honor them by preserving the memory of them through statues, books, as well as in the souls and hearts of younger generations.

It was this mission that was before the eyes of the author as he wrote the first part of this book. He did not write solely in dark tones, believe me! It appeared to him, often, that he was likewise covered in wounds, that he too suffered from terrible humiliation and immense bitterness, the bitterness that at the time made the hearts of the best of our nation tremble. And he hopes, therefore, that the readers' souls will be equally stirred, as had been his own soul; that a tear would occasionally glisten in the readers' eyes, that same teardrop of deep, heartfelt feeling that blurred the author's vision as he described

the greatness of Serbian mothers, the nobility of men young and old, who died for the land that had given them life.

Now comes the age of witty skepticism and criticism, of mockery and of scorn. But you should take my word that all of that is just empty thought gymnastics, a virtuosity of the mind that leaves the heart empty and which neither forms nor deepens character. Let us have the courage to possess a soul and a heart and to not be ashamed of our feelings! Let vain minds and shallow souls mock us freely, those who are numbed because it is considered fashionable and who are hyper-critical out of inner poverty.

I do not know what critics will say about this book, and their objections will not disrupt me much. And still, I do hope that some souls will be moved by this book. I do hope that some young man's heart will beat stronger, that his eyes will shine brighter, and that it will further deepen and strengthen the love that he feels for this hard-won state of ours and for this beautiful people, who have soaked its foundations with their blood and who hold their land dear, as the bird does its nest.

I know, moreover, that this youth will comprehend and understand the second part of my book. They will understand that even its bitterness against traitors and hypocrites stems from love, from love for our great and beautiful Yugoslavia. They will understand that this love is so great that it, almost against the author's own will, broke the narrow limitations which the dramatic form demands. There is a lot of national propaganda in the second part of my book, I know. If the second part is ever to be staged, the director's pen will have to do a lot to tighten the plot, as the author himself was not capable of doing that. He knows that in many places the fighter prevailed over the artist. He is not sorry and does not regret it! For we forget national sins all too quickly, and we move on to new agendas all too swiftly. Let this book therefore be a document of our times, rather than just a drama. And finally, if lengthy, kilometer-long dialogues are allowed in French marital dramas, why should a writer of a nationalist drama not be allowed to be more extensive?

They will say: current issues are not art! That is not true! The works of Homer and Dante, of Molière and Dostoevsky, as well as those of countless other renowned writers, are full of various allusions to contemporary relations and people, yet no one would dispute that they are artists.

…

Perhaps readers will be interested to hear the fact that it is not only the first part of the play that is historical, but this is the case also with at least one half of the second part; this is particularly the case with "Zagorske zablude"

(Misconceptions of Zagorje), although, of course, in reality not everything happened simultaneously in the same place. Someone will say that whips in literature is barbaric! And I respond: the Americans have lynching both in life and literature, yet they remain Americans! The English had, even under Victoria, whips in the army as a legally prescribed punishment. And during times of war and revolution, all nations resorted to even worse things than whippings.

Our Yugoslavia is not without its faults—but I firmly assert that life is more beautiful and better for us in our country than for any other nation in theirs.

The Author

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Marko Zajc

Newspaper Discussion in *Orjuna* and *Glas svobode* before the Confrontation in Trbovlje on 1 June 1924

Author: unknown
Title: "To the Red Apostles!"
Originally published: *Orjuna* 2, no. 16 (April 12, 1924): 2.
Title: "Against Orjuna!"
Originally published: *Glas svobode* 2, no. 21 (May 15, 1924): 2.
Title: "To Trbovlje!"
Originally published: *Orjuna* 2, no. 23 (May 31, 1924): 1.
Title: "Trbovlje."
Originally published: *Glas svobode* 2, no. 23–24 (May 30, 1924): 6.
Language: Slovenian

About the authors

The sources below deal with the fierce debate between *Orjuna*, the newsletter of the Yugoslav nationalist paramilitary organization Orjuna (*Organizacija jugoslavenskih nacionalista*, the Organization of Yugoslav Nationalists), and the

communist newspaper *Glas svobode* (The Voice of Freedom) before the clash between communist and Orjuna fighters in the mining town of Trbovlje on June 1, 1924. The selected examples of newspaper articles illustrate how political thought actively shapes discourses of violence. At the same time, they reveal how discourses of violence distort political thought, reducing it to a precursor for direct confrontations with opponents.

The Organization of Yugoslav Nationalists was founded in Split in March 1921 to counter Italian irredentism, extending its influence to Slovenia by 1923. Although claiming to be independent of party-political, religious, and class interests, it quickly aligned with the liberal Yugoslav Democratic Party (*Jugoslovanska demokratska stranka*, JDS) and later the Independent Democratic Party (*Samostojna demokratska stranka*, SDS). Orjuna became a paramilitary group advocating for a centralized Yugoslav state and suppression of the labor movement. It mainly attracted small craftsmen and lower-level civil servants.[1] In Slovenia, Orjuna emerged as early as 1922, with branches in over sixty locations by mid-1924, making Slovenia one of its strongest regions.[2] Slovenian emigrants from the areas annexed by Italy after the war were represented in larger numbers in the organization. While influenced by militant Yugoslavism, the Slovenian branch had an "authentic" local character. The organization adopted a fascist-like paramilitary structure and promoted a vision of Yugoslav national unity, anti-Catholicism, anti-communism, and eugenics. Violence, endorsed by its statutes, became a key strategy. Orjuna's anti-Italian stance mirrored Italian fascism despite opposing it. The organization had significant state backing, especially after March 27, 1924, when Svetozar Pribićević, an Orjuna supporter, and his SDS entered the new government led by Nikola Pašić, known as the P-P government. In Slovenia, Orjuna's greatest supporter was the liberal leader Gregor Žerjav.[3]

Historiography labels Orjuna as a proto-fascist terrorist group but offers limited analysis. Ervin Dolenc describes it as "fascist-like" for its nationalism, unitarianism, anti-communism, and violence but notes its defense of liberal democracy.[4] Boris Mlakar, using Roger Griffin's notion of the "fascist minimum," argues that Orjuna sought a new Yugoslav identity rather than the rebirth (palingenesis) of the Yugoslav nation.[5] Stevo Đurašković sees it as meeting minimal

1 Jurij Perovšek, "Slovenci in Jugoslovanska Skupnost 1918–1941," *Zgodovinski časopis* 59, no. 3–4 (2005): 452.

2 Branko Šuštar, "O razširjenosti Organizacije jugoslovanskih nacionalistov na Slovenskem do sredine leta 1924," *Kronika* 36, no. 3 (1988): 242.

3 Jurij Perovšek, *O demokraciji in jugoslovanstvu: Slovenski liberalizem v Kraljevini SHS/Jugoslaviji*, ed. Aleš Gabrič (Ljubljana: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2013), 166.

4 Ervin Dolenc, "Italijanski fašizem, Slovenci, slovenski fašizem," *Zgodovina v šoli* 10, no. 1 (2001): 25.

5 Boris Mlakar, "Zaton Organizacije jugoslovanskih nacionalistov – Orjune pod budnim očesom italjanskih fašističnih oblasti," *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 53, no. 2 (2013): 49.

fascist criteria but lacking autonomy, leadership, and revolutionary aims, serving instead as a tool of the Democratic Party.[6]

Although Orjuna was opposed by conservative and autonomist political groups, Orjuna's greatest opponent was the officially banned Communist Party of Yugoslavia. In spring 1920, the first communist group in Slovenia established itself as part of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. The background was the countrywide railway strike, which then escalated into a general strike in Slovenia. When the authorities attempted to suppress the strike by conscripting the railway workers into the army, the Slovenian communists nevertheless supported the strike activities, while the socialists called for an end to the strike.[7] On April 24, 1920, the striking workers organized a rally in Ljubljana, which was then banned by the authorities. The workers gathered in Zaloška Street in the suburbs and tried to reach the city center. They were prevented from entering the city center by gendarmes who fired into the crowd. They killed 14 people, including women and children, and injured more than 30 people. After the incident, the authorities arrested the leaders of the strike and the leaders of the young Communist Party. The labor movement and the communist organization suffered their first blow. In the years that followed, various political actors often accused each other of being responsible for the disaster on Zaloška Street.[8]

Nevertheless, the communists became an important political force in the newly founded kingdom. In the elections to the Constituent Assembly, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (*Komunistička partija Jugoslavije*, KPJ) came fourth in Slovenia and was the third-strongest parliamentary party at national level. However, this was short-lived. The authorities dissolved the KPJ with the "Obznana" decree of December 29, 1920. On August 2, 1921, they completely excluded the party from public life with the Law on the Protection of the State. This marked the beginning of a period of underground activity for the communists until they founded the legal Independent Workers' Party of Yugoslavia (*Nezavisna radnička partija Jugoslavije*, NRPJ) in Belgrade on January 14, 1923.

In the spring of 1923, the communists founded secret paramilitary groups called Proletarian Action Forces (*Proletarske akcijske čete*, PAČ). The main task of PAČ was to protect the headquarters of workers' organizations from attacks by the Orjuna. They also acted as security forces at various labor events. They were

6 Stevo Đurašković, "Ideologija Organizacije jugoslovenskih nacionalista (Orjuna)," *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 43, no. 1 (2011): 246.

7 France Klopčič, *Velika razmejitev: Študija o nastanku Komunistične stranke v Sloveniji aprila 1920 in o njeni dejavnosti od maja do septembra 1920* (Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1969), 54–72.

8 Tone Ferenc, *Kronologija naprednega delavskega gibanja na Slovenskem: (1868–1980)* (Ljubljana: Delavska enotnost, 1981), 65.

armed with rubber truncheons, batons, pistols, and grenades.[9] Between July 20 and September 17, 1923, there was a major strike led by the communist Miners' Union. With the support of the government, the company used strikebreakers and mass dismissals to break the strike. PAČ patrolled the factories alongside the Communist Youth League (*Savez komunističke omladine Jugoslavije*, SKOJ), fending off strikebreakers and opposing the anti-strike propaganda. A turning point came on August 30, 1923, when communist sabotage at the Trbovlje power plant led to the arrest of strike leaders and the dismissal of over 600 miners. Tensions between the communist workers and Orjuna were high, as some of the strikebreakers were members of Orjuna.[10]

In the spring of 1924, Orjuna launched a campaign to expand its influence in the working class and tried to exploit the weakened position of the communists after the failed strike. Using anti-capitalist and anti-Semitic rhetoric similar to Italian fascism, they attempted to establish a "labor Orjuna" in industrial areas. Despite its limited success, Orjuna planned a ceremonial flag-raising in Trbovlje on June 1, 1924.[11] The Communist Party planned armed resistance by PAČ and awaited Orjuna's arrival with weapons. Clashes broke out when a communist attempted to seize the Orjuna flag, leading to a shootout that left several dead on both sides.[12] Orjuna forces later captured and killed communist fighter Franc Fakin and set fire to the miners' hall. Three communist fighters, two bystanders, and three Orjuna leaders were killed and many others were injured. Both sides suffered the negative consequences, but the authorities mainly targeted the communists. Mass arrests followed, including the imprisonment of most Slovenian KPJ leaders. In a trial that took place in Celje from November 25 to 27, 1924, eight communists were sentenced to prison. However, the members of Orjuna accused of murdering Franc Fakin were released.[13] Although Orjuna was under state protection, its violent actions alienated much of the Slovenian public and the conservative and autonomist Slovenian People's Party (*Slovenska ljudska stranka*, SLS) capitalized on the situation. Orjuna's influence in Slovenia ended after a failed armed demonstration in Ljubljana on June 28, 1928, whereupon it was dissolved by the Minister of the Interior.[14]

9 France Klopčič, *Neravnodušni državljan: razčlembe in zamisli* (Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1974), 153.

10 Ferenc, *Kronologija naprednega delavskega gibanja*, 86.

11 Marko Zajc, "Orjuna in PAČ na poti v Trbovlje: K zgodovini fizičnega nasilja v političnem boju," *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 54, no. 2 (2014): 101–23.

12 France Klopčič, *Neravnodušni državljan: Razčlembe in zamisli* (Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1974), 157. Miha Marinko, *Moji spomini* (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1974), 53.

13 Dušan Kermavner, ed., *Prvi junij 1924 v Trbovljah: Stenografski zapisnik kazenske razprave v Celju dne 25., 26. in 27. novembra 1924* (Ljubljana–Trbovlje: Partizanska knjiga–Revirski muzej ljudske revolucije, 1974).

14 Perovšek, *O demokraciji in jugoslovanstvu*, 257.

The ideological struggle between Orjuna and communists in Slovenia took place in the publications of both groups, namely in the Yugoslav nationalist newspaper *Orjuna* (1923–1928) and the communist newspaper *Glas svobode* (1923–1924). *Glas svobode* was launched in April 1923 as the organ of the NRPJ for Slovenia and was published until May 30, 1924.[15] The newspaper played a decisive role in the debate on the national question within the KPJ. An important contributor to the newspaper was Dragotin Gustinčič, the leading Slovenian communist theorist who advocated a federalist (re)arrangement of the Yugoslav state. His ideas had significant influence on the discussion of the national question within the KPJ and ultimately led to the leadership adopting federalist principles.[16] The *Orjuna* newspaper, on the other hand, began publication on January 1, 1923. Initially, editorial duties were handled by Ljubomir D. Jurković, who also contributed most of the content.[17] However, due to his involvement with the National Radical Party (*Narodna radikalna stranka*, NRS), Jurković had a falling out with the leadership and left the movement in October 1923.[18] Although the newspaper featured contributions from Yugoslav leaders of the movement, most of its content was provided by members of the Slovenian section of Orjuna and their sympathizers, including the writers Vladimir Levstik[19] and Ivan Lah.[20]

Context

The newspaper debate between communists and Orjuna before the Trbovlje clash highlights how discourses of violence intertwined with political thought. It shows that violent discourse was central to political discussions, though each group used it differently. Both papers justified violence as a form of defense. However, we can see that they interpreted "defense" differently. For Orjuna, defense was central: the Yugoslav nation needed both renewal and protection from "enemies" like Italian fascism, separatists, "Jewish capitalism," and others. This "defense" often involved attacking these enemies, making violence integral to Orjuna's identity. By contrast, *Glas svobode*'s discourse on violence was more restrained. The communists viewed "defense" as protecting workers from immediate threats posed by Orjuna. They valued struggle, but did not glorify violence itself; rather, they saw it as a tactical method for achieving working-class goals.

15 Ferenc, *Kronologija naprednega delavskega gibanja*, 84.

16 Jurij Perovšek, *Samoodločba in federacija: Slovenski komunisti in nacionalno vprašanje 1920–1941* (Ljubljana: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2012), 72.

17 See the entry on Ljubomir Dušanov Jurković in this volume.

18 "Ljubo D. Jurkovič, Javnosti v pojasnilo," *Orjuna*, October 21, 1923, 2.

19 Vladimir Levstik, "1389–1924, Vidovdanske misli jugoslovenskega nacionalista," *Orjuna*, June 27, 1924, 1.

20 Ivan Lah, "Orjuna in Preporod," *Orjuna*, January 14, 1923, 1.

Unlike Orjuna, communists had other sources of identity—like Marxist theory and strikes—using revolutionary violence only when the conditions were right. In the early 1920s, the KPJ's leadership recognized that revolutionary conditions were not yet ripe.[21]

The question of the link between political thought and the discourse/practice of violence is not only important for political history but is also one of the most pressing questions in the humanities. Michel Foucault, for example, argued that discourse is a form of power that constructs social reality, including the legitimization of violence. Hannah Arendt argued that discourses of violence often emerge when political institutions or systems lose their legitimacy and power diminishes, allowing violence to fill the void.[22] For Marxists, violence is historically and structurally embedded in class relations and serves as an instrument of both oppression and liberation. Gramsci acknowledged the necessity of violent confrontation in certain contexts (war of maneuver) but argues that in complex modern states, success depends on winning the cultural and ideological battle (war of position) rather than relying solely on physical force.[23]

Organized violence played a crucial role in the post-war transition in the post-Habsburg northern Adriatic, as in other contested border regions of East Central Europe. Although the Italian borders were quickly formalized by the Treaty of Rapallo (November 1920), techniques and models of fascist action developed in the northern Adriatic, as Marco Bresciani notes. After the Trieste *Narodni Dom* attack on July 13, 1920, violence escalated, targeting socialists and prominent Slovenian activists.[24] Orjuna can also be seen as a reaction to and a reflection of Italian fascism. Orjuna and the communists clashed at a time when the fascist regime in Italy was still consolidating its power through violence on the streets. The clash in Trbovlje on June 1, 1924, took place one day after the famous speech by the socialist Giacomo Matteotti against fascist violence in the Italian parliament, which led to his abduction and murder by members of Mussolini's secret political police ten days later.[25]

Although there is no consensus in historiography regarding whether Orjuna was a fascist organization, an insight into the importance of violence for

21 Zajc, "Orjuna in PAČ," 17.

22 Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1970).

23 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971).

24 Marco Bresciani, "Conservative and Radical Dynamics of Italian Fascism: An (East) European Perspective (1918–1938)," in *Conservatives and Right Radicals in Interwar Europe* (Routledge, 2020), 68.

25 Emilio Gentile, "Paramilitary Violence in Italy: The Rationale of Fascism and the Origins of Totalitarianism," in *War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War*, ed. Robert Gerwarth and John Horne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 103.

fascist movements is essential to understand Orjuna's attitude towards violence. Analyses of fascism emphasize the centrality of violence both as a practice and as an ideological cornerstone. Walter Benjamin emphasized the aesthetic dimension of fascism, claiming that it transforms politics into a sensual experience in which violence becomes a fundamental aesthetic expression, culminating in war as its ultimate form. Benjamin noted that this approach enables the mobilization of resources without destroying existing social structures, thus reinforcing the fascist ethos of domination and unity.[26] Daniel Woodley has contrasted fascism with liberalism by emphasizing its aestheticization of struggle and glorification of violence as an inherent political value rather than a mere instrument of politics.[27] Sven Reichardt has identified three main functions of fascist violence: the suppression of opposing movements, the cultivation of solidarity and the experience of struggle among supporters, and the projection of power and order. He has further argued that unlike communist violence, which is often deeply rooted in proletarian social contexts, fascist violence occurs as organized brutality superficially justified by ideology.[28] Robert O. Paxton added that fascist violence is characterized by collective emotionality and lacks a coherent rationale or theoretical basis.[29]

In order to better understand the reasons for the conflict and the role of the discourse on violence, it is useful to take a closer look at Orjuna's ideology. In addition to integral Yugoslav nationalism and anti-Semitism, Orjuna was also committed to tackling the social question and reducing unemployment. They saw the solution in a ban on the employment of foreigners. In their view, the employment of highly skilled foreign labor was harmful because it left only the lower, unskilled jobs to Yugoslav workers, thus perpetuating the inequality of the domestic labor force. The communists were accused not only of serving the Soviet Union, but above all internationalism, which was seen as dangerous not only for the Yugoslav nation, but also for the situation of local workers. The communists and Orjuna were not just opponents, but also rivals in addressing the working class.[30]

Rather than simply classifying Orjuna as either a fascist or nationalist movement, comparing it to a related and partially contemporaneous phenomenon in Czechoslovakia—the Czech fascists—provides some deeper insights. The National Fascist Community (*Národní obec fašistická*, NOF) was founded in

26 Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 241.

27 Daniel Woodley, *Fascism and Political Theory: Critical Perspectives on Fascist Ideology* (London: Routledge, 2010), 241.

28 Sven Reichardt, *Faschistische Kampfbünde: Gewalt und Gemeinschaft im italienischen Squadrismus und in der deutschen SA* (Köln–Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 2009), 71.

29 Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (New York: Knopf Doubleday, 2007), 18.

30 "Rdečim Apostolom," *Orjuna*, April 12, 1924, 2.

March 1926, it was led from January 1927 by Radola Gajda, a prominent general and former legionnaire. Soon after its creation, the NOF emerged as the largest and most significant fascist organization in Czechoslovakia.[31] On an ideological level, Orjuna and NOF shared not only anti-German sentiment, anti-communism, and anti-Semitism but also a commitment to Pan-Slavic ideology. However, while the Czech fascists were contemplating a Pan-Slavic alliance with Poland and Yugoslavia in order to smash communism in the Soviet Union and create an obstacle to the German advance eastwards, the ideologists of Orjuna preferred to deal with the problem of the unity of the Yugoslav nation. For Orjuna, the big problem with NOF was the fascist name and its imitation of Italian fascism. In April 1927, Orjuna recommended that the Czech fascists should leave Mussolini, fascism, and its methods behind and instead internalize true Slavic democratic and social nationalism. Fascism, Orjuna argued, means violence, imperialism, and anti-Slavism. The violent culture of the Italian fascists does not fit in with the democratic psyche of the Slavs, although, the writer admitted, sometimes a healthy temporary dictatorship is necessary.[32]

In our case, the relationship between the political thought of the two sides involved and the discourse of violence is entangled. Political thought constructs the framework that justifies violence. The discourse of violence, in turn, gives political thought the "flesh" of violent political practice. In contrast to political thought, which uses general concepts, the discourse of violence tells the audience concrete details: who is "threatening us," what we need to do to eliminate the threat, etc. In this way, political thought literally touches physical bodies through the discourse of violence, but at the same time the discourse of violence reduces political thought to mere action-orientated justifications.

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31 Jakub Drábik, "The History of Czech Fascism: A Reappraisal," in *Beyond the Fascist Century: Essays in Honour of Roger Griffin*, ed. Constantin Iordachi and Aristotle Kallis (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020), 151.

32 Janez Poharc, "Češki fašisti. Nekaj mislo o češkem fašizmu," *Orjuna*, April 2, 1927, 2.

"To the Red Apostles!" *Orjuna* 2, no. 16 (April 12, 1924): 2.

The red stateless apostles gathered around the *Glas svobode* gazette and other less bloodthirsty proletarian journals published by various highbrows cannot possibly believe that a man without any disgustingly selfish intentions could also be a friend to suffering workers. Out of the fear that we will remove them from their comfortable positions, acquired in various socialist institutions through demagogy, they constantly attack us and summon fire and brimstone upon our movement.

…

The poor Slovenian nation, counting but a handful of people—why should you, in the name of internationalism, provide bread for all who are hungry and cannot be fed by their homeland? We have shared our table with everyone, no matter where they come from, for long enough. Italian bricklayers and German and Hungarian workers have lived comfortably here with us, whether skilled or not. Meanwhile, the natives have perpetually remained toilers, day laborers, and their masters' robots. This system must end at some point. Aliens have benefitted from our country long enough, but now it is our turn. We want our people to learn professions that require higher qualifications and adorn themselves with the mantel of the skilled worker, held in such high esteem these days. We will achieve this regardless of the various views and perspectives, however sentimentally internationalist they may be. The powerful and wealthy nations may experiment with them as they wish, but we will not.

By all means, keep raging and fuming, you red apostles and advocates, but we tell you truthfully that you do not know the hour or the day when the proletariat united in the Orjuna labor organizations will settle the score with you.

"Against Orjuna!" *Glas svobode* 2, no. 21 (May 15, 1924): 2.

Fascism is an international phenomenon in the era of capitalist collapse. Capitalism is organizing its special armed gangs everywhere, alongside the rest of the repressive apparatus. Because such gangs were first formed in Italy, where they called themselves fascists, their little brothers are now called fascists in all countries.

After its ascent to power, fascism in Italy has revealed itself as the worst enemy of the working class. That is why fascists in other countries avoid calling themselves that—because they know that the vast majority of working people are against fascism. In Germany, they are called Hakenkreuzlers and Hitlerites; in Slovenia, they are called Orjuna supporters. Orjuna followers become enraged when I call them Yugo-fascists because they know this word says it all. A fascist is a capitalist minion armed to the teeth, and workers have no choice but to smash the fascists' heads in. As much as the members of Orjuna may reject the fascist name, people are judged by their actions, not their words.

The politics of the Orjuna organization is entirely fascist: their main slogan is a strictly centralized monarchy ruled by an iron hand—this means militarism, the gendarmerie, and Orjuna's actions. They vocally opposed corruption in the state, but as soon as their paragon Pribićević came to power, they forgot about corruption and started singing praises to the fraternal corruption of the Radicals and Orjuna as well as the restrictive anti-popular regime. They turned all their might against the working class. Of course, they once again use words to deceive. On the one hand, they are constantly pouring their bile on the revolutionary workers' organizations, knowing that, by destroying these, they can tear apart the workers' ranks altogether. While they threaten the most active workers with revolvers, they address the working class in general in their gazette, claiming that Orjuna supporters are not against the working class but only against the revolutionary workers' organizations and leaders. However, in their fascist hot-headedness, they forget that they stormed the Workers' Centre in Ljubljana, which does not belong to Lemež[33] and his associates but to the proletariat of Ljubljana—or, we could

33 Milan Lemež (1891–1971), politician and lawyer, became a supporter of social democracy in 1912. In 1919–1920 he served as Commissioner for Social Welfare in the Provincial Government for Slovenia under Albin Prepeluh. In 1920 he was elected on the Communist Party's list to the Constituent Assembly of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, as well as to the Ljubljana City Council.

say, to the proletariat of Slovenia. Orjuna members thus follow the example of the Italian fascists, who have been burning down workers' centers, killing workers' leaders, etc., while, on the other hand, attempting especially to recruit unemployed workers into their ranks to shoot at their brothers: other workers. Orjuna members attempted the same thing here, and as soon as unemployment increased, they wanted to use it to create a base for their criminal movement. However, the world's proletariat has learned much from the Italian experience. The proletariat stands vigilantly against fascism. And the proletariat prevented the first Yugo-fascist attempt to fish among the unemployed in our country.

Orjuna members focused on Slovenia's industrial district, Trbovlje—just as Italian fascism tried its luck in the industrial city of Milan. However, the miners broke up the Orjuna rally and taught the Orjuna pests that they should not challenge the miners. Nevertheless, Orjuna members still want to challenge the mining proletariat by unfurling their banners and so on. The miners will not lose their confidence: they know how to respond to a challenge despite the Law on the Protection of the State. In its gazette, Orjuna has opened fire on the revolutionary workers' organizations, threatening and provoking them ever more aggressively.

The working class should know its enemies and be able to repel their attacks until they are decisively crushed. The proletariat must secure its outposts from all sides, for if the enemy penetrates one flank of the front, the entire army must usually withdraw.

The proletariat must also protect itself with a united workers' defense, especially against the Yugoslav fascists: Orjuna members. Social-patriotic leaders do not want a united workers' defense. We must not let ourselves be distracted by this, and we must nevertheless mount a united workers' defense in the factories where the workers understand the need to stand together for their common interests. The work of the proletariat in this respect is deficient everywhere. This fault needs to be corrected. The political and professional organization must never lose sight of the fascist enemy and must be constantly prepared to fight it.

The cry "**Down with Orjuna!**" must be taken seriously, not as a mere slogan, but as a call to the workers to organize and disable Orjuna—that is to say, to prevent a new deterioration of their economic and political situation.

"To Trbovlje!"
Orjuna 2, no. 23 (May 31, 1924): 1.

"Workers have no choice but to smash the fascists' heads in!"
(*Glas svobode*, May 15)

With its purposeful actions and determined performance, Orjuna has aroused enormous envy in all its opponents. Our communists are the ones who particularly stand out, as they blame our organization for the disintegration of their party, although their leadership's corruption and demagogy in particular have brought one worker after another to their senses. Week after week, they keep dragging our movement through the mud in their gazette. Once they realized that we ironically despise all these press attacks, they started looking for direct confrontations with our members at any cost. They wanted to create victims artificially, by any means possible, to repair their declining reputation among the workers. The May Day celebration was a provocation of Orjuna from the first word to the last, and their appearance at our public rallies entailed nothing but insults. Thanks to the sobriety of our membership, who knows all too well where to look for the real culprits, no serious confrontation took place, and Lemež's followers were left even more shamed than before.

In their frustrated anger, they played their last card in their gazette from May 15. In the article "Against Orjuna!" they call for an outright slaughter of our membership due to the unfurling of the banner of our noble Orjuna workers' organization in Trbovlje on June 1. The words quoted in the introduction are actually among the gentlest.

We are glad that the state judiciary did not carry out its duty and confiscate this call for public murder because it at least allows the workers to see that the communist leaders have no other aim but to take power at any cost. In their greed, they are pitting workers against Orjuna—**the only organization that has successfully stood up for the miners after the failed strike.**

We are not in the least afraid of these threats. And no matter how strongly the *Glas svobode* (The Voice of Freedom) gazette—which would more rightly be called "The Voice of the Soviet Bribe-Takers"—incites the massacre of our people, we shall celebrate the unfurling of the banner of our first Orjuna workers' organisation in Trbovlje in the most solemn manner.

However, the seducers and the seduced should know that no attack on us has gone unpunished. Whoever, in their blind passion, dares to raise a hand against one of ours should be aware that we will respond immediately in such a way that not only Trbovlje but also the red fortress on the Turjaški Square in Ljubljana[34] will tremble, along with the golden spectacles of the "proletarian" Dr. Lemež.

If they do not stop, we will thoroughly settle the score with people like him, Žorga, Sedej, and others. If they believe that the day of our celebration in Trbovlje is the best day for this, we are all for it.

However, when nursing their swollen heads, they should not blame others; instead, they should read what they themselves wrote in the article mentioned above.

.....

Glas svobode 2, no. 23–24 (May 30, 1924): 6.

Trbovlje. Our answer to the correspondent of the *Jutro* newspaper, who disliked the performance of the red gymnasts because there were too many of them and frowned upon their homemade white linen clothes, is that we cannot afford better ones. We are fighting against your supporters, you Orjuna minions. We are well aware of our rights and strive to better ourselves physically and mentally. We will also win the struggle against the Yugo-fascists, the loyal servants of the modern robber knights, the capitalists. The Yugo-fascists have not seen the Trbovlje gymnasts because they are too stupid to know them, as it is obvious from their letter in which they clench their fists and promise a beating. These simpletons should come a little closer to the workers' fists if they want their empty heads smashed. The workers of Trbovlje will follow their own path, sweeping away everything that tries to stand in their way, including the Yugo-fascists, and they will never allow themselves to be challenged, least of all by the Orjuna minions.

.....

34 The Workers' Home (*Delavski dom*) in Ljubljana operated from 1920 to 1929 in the building of today's Scientific Research Center of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (ZRC SAZU) at Novi trg 2. During this period, the building served as the headquarters of Social Democratic and Communist professional, trade union, and cultural organizations.

Cody James Inglis

ALBIN PREPELUH: Why Are We Republicans?

Authors: Albin Prepeluh with Dragotin Lončar as Slovenski republikanci (Slovenian Republicans)
Title: Why Are We Republicans?
Originally published: *Mala politična šola za slovenske kmete in delavce*, vol. 1, *Zakaj smo republikanci?* (Ljubljana: Avtonomist, 1924)[1]
Language: Slovenian

About the author

Albin Prepeluh – Abditus (1880, Ljubljana–1937, Ljubljana) was a publicist and political theorist.[2] Before and during the First World War, Prepeluh was

1 First advertised in *Avtonomist* 4, no. 14, April 5, 1924, 2.

2 This biographic sketch was derived from the following sources: Dragotin Lončar, "Abditus (Albin Prepeluh)," *Sodobnost* 5, no. 11–12 (1937), 481–87. Dušan Kermavner, "Albin Prepeluh – Abditus. Njegov idejni razvoj in delo," in Albin Prepeluh, *Pripombe k naši prevratni dobi* (Ljubljana: J. Blaznik, 1938), 293–362. "Politični ideolog Albin Prepeluh – Abditus," *Kronika slovenskih mest* 6, no. 4 (1939), 256. Dušan Kermavner, "Prepeluh, Albin (1880–1937)," in *Slovenski biografski leksikon*, vol. 8, *Pregelj Ivan–Qualle*, ed. Franc Ksaver Lukman (Ljubljana: Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti, 1952), online at https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi460965/, last accessed December 12, 2024. Jasna Fischer, *Idejni razvoj Albina Prepeluha v letih 1899–1918* (Ljubljana: Filozofska fakulteta, Oddelek za zgodovino, 1968). Nada Gspan, "Prepeluh, Albin," in *Österreichisches Biographisches Lexikon 1815–1950*, vol. 8 (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1981), 264. See also Albin Prepeluh's personal collection at the Archive of the Republic of Slovenia in Ljubljana: Arhiv Republike Slovenije, SI AS 2077 Zbirka Albina Prepeluha.

a leading Slovenian socialist intellectual, representing the 'revisionist' Marxist stream within the Yugoslav Social Democratic Party (*Jugoslovanska socialdemokratska stranka*, JSDS), and one of the key theorists of the agrarian question among Marxists in the Habsburg Empire. During the interwar period, he underwent an intellectual transformation and developed a republican peasantist political language with strong socialist and Slovenian autonomist intonations.

Born into an impoverished working-class family in Ljubljana, Prepeluh first studied to be a carpenter as a teenager. As a young adult in 1898, he changed careers and entered public service, first as a clerk in the court system in Carniola and then as an expert in land registries. On November 14, 1918, almost immediately after the end of the First World War, Prepeluh was appointed temporary commissar for "war casualties and bereft relatives" at the Commission for Social Welfare (*Poverjeništvo za socialno skrbstvo*) of the provisional Regional Government for Slovenia (*Deželna vlada za Slovenijo*).[3] The Commission was initially led by his comrade from the social democratic movement, Anton Kristan (1881–1930). Prepeluh was promoted to a permanent commissarial position and made Kristan's deputy a month later, on December 23, 1918.[4] (In the same announcement, Alojzija Štebi (1883–1956) was appointed superintendent of the Department of Youth Welfare within the Commission.) From March 1919, Prepeluh led the Commission,[5] and soon after was appointed as member of the Slovenian delegation to the Paris Peace Conference. He left the state administration in 1920, when he was 40 years old, and in the years following became the majority shareholder of the Jožef Blaznik Printing House (*Blaznikova tiskarna*) and assumed the company's directorship until his death in 1937.

Originally, Prepeluh entered the social democratic movement in his youth through the Workers' Educational Society (*Delavsko izobraževalno društvo*) in Ljubljana alongside his circle of friends, particularly Karel Linhart (1882–1918) and Ivan Kocmur (1881–1942). He began to publish political articles in the social democratic press starting in 1899, when he was 19 years old,[6] using the pen name 'Abditus' (Latin for 'hidden', 'withdrawn', or 'concealed'). The pseudonym would remain with him for the rest of his life. From 1899 until 1920, he was a member of the JSDS. In 1902, he came into conflict with the party's orthodox leadership over the agrarian question. Prepeluh argued that it was necessary to entice peasants in the countryside to join the social democratic movement as

3 *Uradni list deželne vlade za Slovenijo* 1, no. 9, November 18, 1918, 17. See also entry on Andrej Gosar in this volume.

4 *Uradni list deželne vlade za Slovenijo* 1, no. 27, December 23, 1918, 58.

5 *Uradni list deželne vlade za Slovenijo* 1, no. 62, March 13, 1919, 189.

6 Abditus, "Socijalizem in Jugoslovani," *Delavec–Rdeči prapor* 2, no. 30, November 1, 1899; no. 33, December 1, 1899.

a means of guaranteeing parliamentary successes and maintaining extra-parliamentary pressure.[7] The orthodox leadership of the JSDS rather viewed the party as exclusively proletarian, siding in large part with Karl Kautsky's analysis in *Die Agrarfrage* (1899; see Context below for more details). Searching for an independent line, Prepeluh co-founded the journal *Naši zapiski* (Our Notes, 1902–1914; 1920–1922), aiming to create a broad progressive platform. During the 1900s and early 1910s, *Naši zapiski* drew into its orbit heterodox socialists like Anton Kristan and Alojzija Štebi, as well as Slovenian Masarykians (*masarykovci*) like Dragotin Lončar (1876–1954).[8] Within the JSDS, Prepeluh was part of the "Socialist Youth" (*socialistična omladina*) who represented reformism against the leadership's (*inter alia* **Etbin Kristan**'s, 1867–1953) orthodoxy.[9] By the end of the First World War, Prepeluh had created a language of socialist reformism and a commitment to democratic norms, and so became an opponent of the left wing of JSDS from which the Slovenian communists emerged. Prepeluh was voted out of the party leadership in 1919 and voluntarily exited in 1920.

After the First World War, Prepeluh turned his attention to addressing the intertwined problems of authoritarian governance in Yugoslavia, oppressive capitalism in the city and countryside, and the negotiation of an autonomous Slovenian identity within a broader Yugoslav identity. This would guide his political orientation throughout the interwar period. His postwar work was first published in Štebi's *Demokracija* (1918–19) as well as the revival of *Naši zapiski* (1920–22), and the short-lived *Novi zapiski* (New Notes, 1922), all of which were continuations of the Socialist Youth orientation in the new, independent Yugoslav context.

In 1921, Prepeluh and Lončar launched the weekly newspaper *Avtonomist* (1921–24), representing an eclectic mix of democratic, peasantist, republican, socialist, federalist, and Slovenian autonomist political languages. (There were far-reaching consequences: as a child, Edvard Kardelj (1910–1979) was a delivery boy for the paper, and credited it with instilling left-wing republican and federalist ideas in him from an early age.[10]) While the Slovenian Republican Party (*Slovenska republikanska stranka*), founded by Anton Novačan (1887–1951), had

7 See the entry on Jože Srebrnič in this volume.

8 See Irena Gantar Godina, *T. G. Masaryk in masarykovstvo na Slovenskem (1895–1914)* (Ljubljana: Slovenska matica, 1987). On Lončar, see Avgust Pirjevec, "Lončar, Dragotin (1876–1954)," in *Slovenski biografski leksikon*, vol. 4, *Kocen–Lužar*, eds. Franc Ksaver Lukam et al. (Ljubljana: Zadružna gospodarska banka, 1932). Branko Marušič, "Lončar, Dragotin (1876–1954)," in *Primorski slovenski leksikon*, vol. 2/9, *Križnič–Martelanc*, ed. Martin Jevnikar (Gorizia: Goriška Mohorjeva družba, 1983), both online at https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi333776/, last accessed December 12, 2024. Fran Zwitter, "Dragotin Lončar," *Zgodovinski časopis* 8 (1954): 181–91.

9 See the entry on Etbin Kristan in this volume.

10 "Dosledni put revolucionara," *Mladost: List Narodne omladine Jugoslavije* 4, no. 131, April 16, 1959, 2.

existed during the early 1920s, it collapsed after its failure at the 1923 elections. Many of its left-wing members then regrouped around Prepeluh, Lončar, and *Avtonomist*.[11] The source text below, "Why Are We Republicans?" (*Zakaj smo republikanci?*), was composed in this intellectual context—more on this in the next section—where the political language which had been developed by Prepeluh and Lončar since the turn of the twentieth century began to be met with a growing (but still meagre) popular interest in the republican state form.

Out of this more informal group, Prepeluh and Lončar founded the Slovenian Republican Party of Peasants and Workers (*Slovenska republikanska stranka kmetov in delavcev*, SRS) in October 1924. *Avtonomist* was retitled as *Slovenski republikanec* (The Slovenian Republican) and became the party's organ.[12] At the same time, the party entered into an agreement with the Croatian Republican Peasant Party (*Hrvatska republikanska seljačka stranka*, HRSS), headed by Stjepan Radić (1871–1928). SRS became a federal branch of HRSS in the Ljubljana and Maribor *oblasti*.[13] On New Year's Eve 1924, Tomasz Dąbal (1890–1937) and Nikolai Meshcheryakov (pseud. Orlov, 1865–1942) wrote directly to Prepeluh to have SRS join the Krestintern, likely because HRSS was at that time a member party.[14] However, Prepeluh never responded to the invitation.[15]

For the February 1925 parliamentary elections, Prepeluh stood as the leader of the HRSS–SRS list in the Ljubljana and Maribor *oblasti*. (He was not elected.) The same year, however, the 'Republican' label was dropped from Radić's party's name, allowing the Croatian peasantists to enter a national coalition government with Nikola Pašić's People's Radical Party (*Narodna radikalna stranka*) in Belgrade. Around this time, SRS became an independent party once more. However, in 1926, Prepeluh and Lončar led the SRS into a new political formation composed of other Slovenian peasantist groups, including Ivan Pucelj's (1877–1945) Independent Agrarian Party (*Samostojna kmetijska stranka*). The Slovenian Peasant Party (*Slovenska kmetska stranka*, SKS) was founded as a result. The following year, the Radić–Pašić coalition fell apart, and SKS realigned

11 See Igor Grdina, "Kratka zgodovina Slovenske zemljoradniške in Slovenske republikanske stranke Antona Novačana," *Zgodovinski časopis* 43, no. 1 (1989): 77–95.

12 See "Temeljni nauk Slovenske republikanske stranke kmetov in delavcev," document no. 36 in *Programi slovenskih političnih strank, organizacij in združenj v letih 1918-1929: Pregled k slovenski politični zgodovini*, ed. Jurij Perovšek (Ljubljana: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2018), electronic resource, https://www.sistory.si/cdn/publikacije/38001-39000/38399/doc036.html.

13 "Naša SRS je edino prava!," *Slovenski republikanec* 4, no. 47, November 21, 1924, 2–3. *Oblast* was the highest-level regional administrative unit in Yugoslavia between 1922 and 1929.

14 SI AS 2077, Box 1/9, Letter from Dąbal and Orlov (N. Meshcheryakov) to Prepeluh, March 8, 1925. See George D. Jackson, *Comintern and Peasant in East Europe, 1919–1930* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), 103–12. Luiza Revjakina, *Коминтернът и селските партии на Балканите 1923–1931* (Sofia: Академично издателство "Проф. Марин Дринов," 2003), 77–111, on Radić and the HRSS in the Krestintern.

15 Revjakina, *Коминтернът и селските партии*, 106.

with the Peasant-Democratic Coalition (*Seljačko-demokratska koalicija*) for the 1927 elections. Prepeluh once more stood as a candidate, this time for SKS, but was not elected this time either.

As 1927 passed into 1928, Prepeluh turned his attention away from party politics and toward the question of land reform. Through his studies, he concluded that the seizure and parcellation of large agricultural estates and forest holdings was the only way out of peasant misery and poverty in the countryside. This problem primarily held his attention from 1928 to 1933, resulting in the foundation of the Union of Agrarian Interests (*Zveza agrarnih interesov*) and the 1933 publication of his capstone text on the question of land reform, *Agrarna reforma: naš veliki socialni problem* (Agrarian Reform: Our Big Social Problem).

In the meantime, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes had collapsed, and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was erected in its place. Puniša Račić had shot Stjepan Radić, Ivan Pernar, Ivan Granđa, Đuro Basariček, and Pavle Radić in parliament on June 20, 1928. Basariček and Pavle Radić were killed on the spot, while Stjepan Radić and died some weeks later, on August 8, 1928. In response, King Aleksandar Karađorđević declared a royal dictatorship (January 6, 1929), sanctified the ideology of integral Yugoslavism and the infallibility of the monarch, and dissolved all 'partisan' political parties and organizations. However, Prepeluh maintained his international political contacts through the late 1920s and early 1930s, among others with Karel Mečíř (1876–1947) and the International Agrarian Bureau ("Green International") in Prague, still representing himself officially as one of the leaders of the Slovenian Peasant Party.[16] From 1934 to 1937, Prepeluh wrote his autobiographic memoirs on the period around the collapse of the Habsburg Empire. "Remarks on Our Revolutionary Age," in a Masarykian nod, was first published serially in the progressive journal *Sodobnost* (Contemporaneity) in Ljubljana.

However, the series remained unfinished, and the monographic version of the articles appeared posthumously in 1938, edited by Dušan Kermavner with an extensive intellectual biography of Prepeluh.[17] Prepeluh passed on November 20, 1937. He was 57 years old.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS: "Socijalizem in Jugoslovani," *Delavec–Rdeči prapor* 2, no. 30 (November 1, 1899)–no. 33 (December 1, 1899); "O ženi in njeni ravnopravnosti," *Slovenka* 5, no. 4 (1901): 82–85; "Kautsky o agrarnem vprašanju pri nas," *Naši zapiski* 1, no. 2 (August 1902): 17–20; *Občina in socializem* (Ljubljana, 1903); *Reformacija in socialni boji slovenskih kmetov* (Ljubljana, 1908);

16 See correspondence in SI AS 2077, Box 2/17.

17 Albin Prepeluh, *Pripombe k naši prevratni dobi*, ed. Dušan Kermavner (Ljubljana: J. Blaznik, 1938).

Socialni problemi (Ljubljana, 1912); *Problemi malega naroda* (Ljubljana, 1918); trans., Niccolò Machiavelli, *Vladar* (Ljubljana, 1920); with Dragotin Lončar as Slovenski republikanci (Slovenian Republicans), *Mala politična šola za slovenske kmete in delavce*, vol. 1, *Zakaj smo republikanci?* (Ljubljana, 1924); *Idejni predhodniki današnjega socijalzma in komunizma* (Ljubljana, 1925); *V boju za zemljo in državo* (Ljubljana, 1928); *Kmetski pokret med Slovenci po prvi svetovni vojni* (Ljubljana, 1928); *Agrarna reforma: naš veliki socijalni problem* (Ljubljana, 1933); *Pripombe k naši prevratni dobi*, ed. Dušan Kermavner (Ljubljana, 1938).

Context

In 1928, the writer and historian Fran Erjavec (1893–1960) estimated that roughly 63% of the 1.06 million people living in the Ljubljana and Maribor *oblasti* labored in agriculture by 1925 (671,000).[18] Erjavec observed that, compared with the Austrian statistics from 1910, this percentage had not significantly changed, neither in absolute nor in comparative terms, after fifteen years and dramatic political changes in Central and Southeastern Europe. Certainly, compared with the numbers from over four decades before, some of the population had moved from agriculture to industry and other professions. In Carniola alone, roughly 70% of the crownland's population in 1880 was engaged in agricultural work in some form, either as smallholding farmers or as day laborers (336,700); about 30% worked among all other professions, including in industry (144,300).[19] However, the transition was not fundamental, and in no way could the Slovenian lands be labelled industrialized before the second half of the twentieth century.

Yet, already at the turn of the twentieth century, Prepeluh recognized clearly that the overwhelmingly agrarian economic structure of the Slovenian lands meant that the orthodox Marxist strategy of building mass socialist parties only on the basis of industrial workers would not be enough. In a letter to Ivan Kocmur from 1901, Prepeluh wrote with only a hint of hyperbole that "our nation is three quarters agrarian."[20] In preparation for the 1902 JSDS congress in Celje, where he was slated to give the report on the agrarian question, Prepeluh approached none other than Karl Kautsky (1854–1938), asking for some clarity on the issue. Prepeluh informed Kautsky that the economic conditions in Austria-Hungary did not favor industrialization in territories inhabited by South Slavs; the peasantry continued to predominate numerically in the economy and would

18 Fran Erjavec, *Kmetiško vprašanje v Sloveniji: Gospodarska in socialna slika* (Ljubljana: Jugoslovanska kmetska zveza, 1928), 12.

19 *Österreichische Statistik*, vol. 1/3 (Vienna: K.k. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1882), 87.

20 Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica, NUK Ms 1962, IV. 1. Članki in razprave, Folder 9, Prepeluh Albin, f. 1., Albin Prepeluh to Ivan Kocmur, March 6, 1901.

do so well into the future. Shouldn't socialists then go to the countryside and attempt to bring the impoverished rural population into the ranks of the party? To that end, Prepeluh asked whether Kautsky had written *On the Agrarian Question* (*Die Agrarfrage*, 1899) "especially for Germany, or also for Austria [meaning Cisleithania—CJI], or in general?"[21]

Kautsky's reply was less than cordial: "Said precisely, you have misunderstood my book."[22] He argued that while the "rural proletariat" and even smallholders may be won over by a socialist program, it was an "illusion" to think that "rich peasants" may be. "Our party is a proletarian party, the party of class struggle, [and] this must be maintained in Carniola and Istria just as in Northern Bohemia and in Belgium. Our agrarian propaganda must never go so far as to obscure the proletarian content."[23] Kautsky ended with the critical observation that "the Slovenian socialists … have set for themselves the impossible task to win over a part of the propertied classes for socialism," meaning the landed peasantry.[24] Soon enough, Kautsky thought, the Slovenian socialists would have to turn back exclusively to the proletariat as its base.

There is no doubt that Prepeluh chafed at this reply. He republished Kautsky's letter in *Naši zapiski* in August 1902, along with his own commentary: "In Russia, India, and among the South Slavs," Prepeluh wrote, "the conditions are the same. The inhabitants of these lands are on the way to industrial society. … [However,] the idea of socialism develops much quicker than the economic conditions, which—there's no denying it—are the foundations of the socialist outlook."[25] He then republished key parts of Kautsky's letter in Slovenian translation, followed by another brief commentary. In sum, Prepeluh, argued, "[p]ractical life will finally decide the agrarian question, and the relevant theories will certainly bow to this verdict."[26]

Across the period of large-scale geopolitical transformations in Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe from 1917 to 1923—the end of the First World War, the collapse of empires and postimperial transitions, the construction of new international institutions and transnational governance—it appeared that the agrarian question was still largely rooted in its old conditions. The creation of a new Yugoslav state seems to have rather entrenched the inert agrarian economic

21 Prepeluh to Kautsky, March 14, 1902, letter no. 86 in *Karl Kautsky und die Sozialdemokratie Südosteuropas: Korrespondenz 1883–1938*, eds. Georges Haupt, János Jemnitz, and Leo van Rossum (Frankfurt–New York: Campus, 1986), 222.

22 Kautsky to Prepeluh, April 9, 1902, letter no. 87 in ibid., 223.

23 Ibid., 224.

24 Ibid.

25 Abditus (Albin Prepeluh), "Kautsky o agrarnem vprašanju pri nas," *Naši zapiski* 1, no. 2, August 1902, 17.

26 Ibid., 20.

conditions in that part of Central and Southeastern Europe. Industrialization, and so socialism, had its development arrested, its pathway closed off by a variety of factors, among others the maintenance of large, low-yield estates owned by the high bourgeoisie and nobility, foreign and domestic alike. At a personal level, there is no doubt that Prepeluh's gradual turn from orthodox Marxism in the early twentieth century was completed with his exit from the JSDS in autumn 1920. And yet, Prepeluh never gave up on socialism—or, at least, his own socialist outlook.

From early 1921, Prepeluh attempted—with the energetic and constant help of his friend and intellectual collaborator, Dragotin Lončar—to clearly define a progressive pathway into the future for the Slovenian nation. (Yet, this was myopic, as they failed to address the political condition of the German-speaking minority in the Slovenian lands.) At first, they had attempted to reframe their reformist socialist and Masarykian realist viewpoints into a common political language in the short-lived *Demokracija*, briefly in the second series of *Naši zapiski*, and the likewise short-lived *Novi zapiski*. More sustained was their paper *Avtonomist*, which began publication in spring 1921. Through this outlet, Prepeluh and Lončar developed a new and innovative mixture of Slovenian national autonomism from the Left, arguing that the Slovenian nation must maintain its own cultural identity, but could only exist, survive, and thrive within a larger state structure. From this, they argued for a quasi-federal reformatting of the Yugoslav state and the development of autonomous administrative units. (However, this became increasingly unlikely after the passage of the centralist 1921 *Vidovdan* Constitution.) Interestingly, Prepeluh and Lončar identified the people (*ljudstvo*) in part with the nation, but under certain class reservations. For them, it was the peasantry, the majority of the population, who was the primary bearer of sovereignty, a role which was shared with laborers in non-agricultural sectors. And yet, this did not mean exclusive class rule for them. This would have been anathema to Prepeluh's and especially Lončar's view that democracy and democratic norms needed to be preserved above all else. However, they did not see democracy only within a liberal or bourgeois frame, and not at all in an illiberal, authoritarian sense. Rather, they argued for—and openly used the labels—a *republican*, agrarian socialist democracy.

There is no doubt that Prepeluh was familiar with the early modern European civic humanist tradition: he translated one of the key texts of that movement—Machiavelli's *Il principe*—into Slovenian in 1920.[27] Likewise, Lončar and Prepeluh

27 Niccolò Machiavelli, *Vladar*, trans. Albin Prepeluh (Ljubljana: Zvezna tiskarna, 1920). On the early modern republican intellectual tradition—albeit generally to the exclusion of East Central European variations—see in particular Hans Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance: Civic Humanism and Republican Liberty in an Age of Classicism and Tyranny*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University

were both deeply inspired by the French revolutionary and American republican traditions, as demonstrated in the full text of *Why Are We Republicans?* translated below. The text grew out of local Slovenian intellectual conditions around the mid-1920s, written by political theorists looking for a political language to express their radical vision without giving up their intellectual flexibility or creativity. The text was also composed within a broader republican debate which had been raging from the final phases of the First World War and the collapse and transitions out of empire, under the twin republican models of the United States and Soviet Russia. Within Yugoslavia, republicanisms of all kinds were being articulated actively in the early 1920s: in Belgrade, by the intellectuals around the Yugoslav Republican Party of Jaša Prodanović (1867–1948) and Ljubomir Stojanović (1860–1930); in Croatia-Slavonia and Dalmatia, by Radić's HRSS—of which Prepeluh and Lončar's SRS had been a branch party in 1924–25—as well as by the radical socialist and communist literary Left in Zagreb around Miroslav Krleža (1893–1981) and August Cesarec (1893–1941). However, the republican language lost its purchase in the second half of the 1920s, and certainly following the royal dictatorship and through the authoritarian 1930s, former Yugoslav partisans of the concept 'republic' rather began to use the more general concept 'democracy'.[28]

Why Are We Republicans? is an extremely interesting document of Yugoslav (and so Central and Southeastern European) republican political languages in the first half of the twentieth century. In the text, ideas of radical popular sovereignty ("government … is only the *executor* of the popular will") mix with references to an agrarian, classless society ("the people rule their homeland just as farmers manage and 'rule' their land"), as well as a semantic preference for the people (*ljudstvo*) as a wider political community over the narrower cultural community expressed in nation (*narod*). Likewise, at the end of the text, Prepeluh and Lončar summarize their ideas, stating that any "modern democracy" among the Slovenians cannot be based only on a narrow idea of "Slovenianness" (*slovenstvo*) but rather had to be open to the wider idea of 'the people', located firmly within and inseparable from "humanity" as a higher-order level of social, cultural, and ultimately political organization. To that end, only particular political forms would allow for the autonomous political, moral, and spiritual development of

Press, 1955). J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975). Martin van Gelderen and Quentin Skinner, eds., *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

28 As detailed in Cody James Inglis, "Between Freedom and Constraint: The Republican Left in Hungary and Yugoslavia, 1918–1948," doctoral dissertation to be defended at Central European University, Vienna, Austria, in 2026.

the people: the civic equality of a republic, the economic democracy of (agrarian) socialism, and the decentralized self-governance of a federation. *Why Are We Republicans*, then, is not merely a marginal or obscure political pamphlet, but a representative text of European republicanism in a new key and in a new setting: a modern republicanism mixed with agrarianism, socialism, and Masarykian democratic and realist ideals, adjusted to the particular conditions of East Central Europe—and within it, of Yugoslavia—during the postimperial transition and, in tragic retrospect, the interwar period.

Slovenian Republicans (ALBIN PREPELUH with DRAGOTIN LONČAR) "Why Are We Republicans?"

Introduction

We, the united Slovenian republicans and federalists, have decided to present the Slovenian republican farmers and workers with various booklets containing some explanations about the most crucial political matters that should be known by everyone who does not want to be misled by racial political agitators or fooled by various political leaders. We adhere to the principle that the Slovenian people (especially farmers and workers, who do not have and have not had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with various political matters in detail) should learn the truth and acquire—in an approachable and easily understandable way—enough general knowledge about different political issues that they will be able to judge for themselves everything they read in the newspapers or hear at rallies or elsewhere.

The purpose and aim of these lines is, therefore, to inform people about various political issues to such an extent **that they can think independently** and no longer have to believe blindly everything that is shouted in their ears by those who care about nothing else but political power, which they then exploit and use for their own ends while paying no heed to the welfare of the people. Until the Slovenian people, or at least the majority of them, acquire a sufficient political education to be able to judge for themselves the importance or unimportance of all possible events at home and abroad, they will forever remain but a toy in the hands of those who always only focus on themselves alone and pay attention to the people only during elections.

That is why we will write our lines, aimed at Slovenian farmers and workers, in a completely calm and factual manner, without any personal attacks or insults, and let the people judge for themselves whether we are right or wrong.

…

What does the word "democracy" mean?

The most important question currently preoccupying all of Central Europe is the issue of **democracy** or people's government. We hear this word day after day, we read it in all the papers, entire parties call themselves "democratic," and yet few people know what it actually means.

The word "democracy" is derived from ancient Greek. It consists of two ancient Greek words: "demos" and "kratéo." The word "demos" means "**people**," and the word "kratéo" means "**to rule**." "Democracy" therefore means "**the rule of the people**"; a "democratic" state is one in which "the people govern," either in their entirety or through their elected representatives, while "democratic" parties are those that strive to ensure that **all the people** assume power.

…

Democracy and the Slovenes

For many centuries, we Slovenes lived under foreign rule. However, in the old days, this had not been the case. History tells us how independent Slovenian princes were enthroned in the *Gosposvetsko* plain in Carinthia. **Slovenian peasants** played an essential role in these ceremonies, and it was from **their** hands that the prince accepted his authority. This is ample proof that, in the old days, Slovenes already had some idea that **the people**—then mostly peasants, of course—**were the origin and holder of all state power**.

However, **bellicose German noblemen** gradually established their dominion over us, **and the Slovenian lands became the private property or "fiefs" of the German princes**. Slovenians remained under German or Austro-German rule for almost seven hundred years. This is a very long time, and it is no wonder that Slovenes have completely forgotten that they were once the masters of their land… **The idea that the Slovenian people could also independently fight for their rights never managed to take hold among Slovenes as much as among Slovenian leaders and "bigwigs."** … We were still brought up in such a shameful servile spirit even when Austria started to appear at least somewhat democratic, and we were convinced of this by **all Slovenian "leaders and bigwigs" without exception**! Every last

one of them kept repeating the motto "everything for faith, homeland, and **Emperor**"—and so they spoke and taught us in the sweet hope that a ray of "imperial **grace**" would shine on at least one of them! **In the last century, the history of the Slovenes has been nothing but the history of Slovenian "leaders and bigwigs" begging for "imperial" grace in Vienna!** …

With such an upbringing, it is no wonder that so little of the true **democratic** spirit—that is, the spirit demanding that **the people rule their homeland** just as farmers manage and "rule" their land—has emerged among Slovenians.

Daybreak

It is well known to all of us who followed the course and development of the World War that it was won by—**America**! …

The **teachings of US President Wilson** represented the greatest force that intervened in the World War.

President Wilson was not only a president but also a great **scholar** and, most importantly, a **man with a noble heart**. … He said: "Just as every free **citizen** in a country ruled by **the people** has a full right to live freely as a human being under the protection of **laws and regulations**, so every nation has its full right **to decide its destiny and be the ruler of its homeland**. The government should not be something **"above" the people but is and must only be the agent of the people's will**. And just as **courts** that separate right from wrong have been set up to ensure that **people** have **peace** and safeguard them from hoodlums and troublemakers, so must **nations** unite to protect and secure their **peace** through an **international court**."

Understandably, such lessons caused a **fierce change** in the hearts of peace-seeking European nations. **The rule of the people – peace – courts – each the ruler of their homeland**: these words shook all of Europe, and, thank God, some seeds of these teachings have also spread among **the Slovenes**.

…

Conclusions

From all that we have written so far, it is clear that modern democracy rests on the following foundations:

1. We are **all** human beings. Every **human has the right to live as a free person** whom no one can oppress, while everyone is entitled to their **rights** according to the **law**.

2. Every human being wants to have **peace** to **develop freely**. The free development of human beings is limited only insofar as the **common interest of human society** requires it.

3. Just as everyone wants to live as a **human being** and has the **right** to do so, **nations** have the right to live freely and **peacefully** and **govern their homeland**. Thus, the best way for several nations to live together is as **a federal state or federation**.

4. In every country, **the people**, i.e. **all** people **equally**, should rule and decide on all their affairs. The government is not **above** the people; it is only **the executor of the people's will**. And because all people are **equal**, modern democracy recognizes no family lineage and no person who can stand **above** the people. Instead, it requires that the people also elect even their highest representative. For Slovenes, the principles of modern democracy can thus be expressed in four words:

Humanity – Slovenianness – Federation – Republic

.....

Stefan Gužvica

DRAGOTIN GODINA: Exchange Cooperatives Will Free Us from the Slavery of Money and Capital

Author: Dragotin Godina
Title: Exchange Cooperatives Will Free Us from the Slavery of Money and Capital
Originally published: Drago Godina, *Menjalne zadruge nas rešijo iz suženjstva denarja in kapitala* (Trieste: self-published, 1925)
Language: Slovenian

About the author

Dragotin Godina (1876, Škedenj near Trieste–1965, Trieste) was a Slovenian nationalist who became a communist under the influence of the October Revolution, and, following his break with the Communist Party in the early 1920s, began developing idiosyncratic theories on creating a moneyless economy based on cooperatives. In the period after the Second World War, he continued to be an active participant in the social life of his native city of Trieste, a leader of

the cooperative movement, and a prominent exponent of pro-Yugoslav politics.[1]

Although he was born into a working-class family, he managed to enroll in the German high school in Trieste, which opened the door to further education, graduating from teacher training schools in Ljubljana and Koper. He was a very active participant in social life in Škedenj and Trieste, in organizations closely affiliated with the Slovenian national movement: he was the founder and president of the Slovenian reading room (*čitalnica*)[2] and the Economic Society in Škedenj (*Gospodarsko društvo v Škednju*), the oldest Slovenian cooperative on the coast. In addition, he was the leader of a local tambourine orchestra, the town's drama society and the local Sokol, a nationalist and pan-Slavic physical education organization. In 1905, he started working as a traveling salesman, and lived in Split, Zagreb, Kragujevac, and Belgrade. He then moved to Sofia, where he spent the longest period of time, working as a bookkeeper in several banks. After almost a decade there, in October 1915 he moved to Bucharest, and in August 1916 to Moscow. It seems that it was only in Moscow that he encountered the labor movement for the first time. There, he was the accountant of a factory for the production of military tents. After the revolution, the workers elected him as the manager of the factory, and then as a member of the Moscow Soviet.

In 1918, Godina completed the Bolshevik course for agitators and received a theoretical education, becoming a propagandist in the Red Army. He was a member of the Central Committee and deputy president of the newly founded Yugoslav Communist Group under the Bolshevik Party and one of the editors of their newspaper *Revolucija* (Revolution, 1918–1919). His wife Amalija and his daughter Milena[3] also participated in the revolution, but as agitators and organizers of the Italian Communist Group in Moscow. In the summer of 1919, Drago Godina returned to Trieste via Northern and Western Europe, where he lived as a bookkeeper, but was also an active agitator. Returning via France probably saved him from prison, because he was already on the arrest list of the Yugoslav police as a dangerous Bolshevik agitator. He joined the Italian Socialist

1 This text was prepared within the framework of the Higher School of Economics University Basic Research Program. The biography is based on the following sources: Martin Jevnikar, "Godina, Drago (1876–1965)," *Slovenska biografija* (Ljubljana: ZRC SAZU, 2013), http://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi1010100/#primorski-slovenski-biografski-leksikon (accessed April 24, 2024). Originally published in *Primorski slovenski biografski leksikon*, vol. 5/1, *Fogar–Grabrijan* (Gorica: Goriška Mohorjeva družba, 1978).

2 Reading rooms or reading halls were a particular type of a national cultural institution in the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the turn of the twentieth century. These were in effect the first public libraries, although generally founded at the private initiative of local notables and organized along ethnic lines. It was one of many types of such "institutions presenting national discourse," alongside worker and farmer cooperatives, theater and sports associations, etc. See Catherine Horel, *Multicultural Cities of the Habsburg Empire: Imagined Communities and Conflictual Encounters* (Budapest–Vienna–New York: Central European University Press, 2023), 229–34.

3 No relation to the famous actress of the same name.

Party and advocated that it join the Third International and make a complete political break with the reformists. As an author in the Trieste newspaper *Delo* (Labor, 1920–1934), he became a harsh critic of Henrik Tuma (1858–1935), one of the most famous Slovenian pre-war Marxists and a leader of the Yugoslav Social Democratic Party (*Jugoslovanska socialdemokratska stranka*, JSDS) in the Habsburg Empire. In addition, he led a group that called itself the "Communist-abstentionist current,"[4] which meant that, as communists, they completely rejected parliamentarism, considering it an outmoded bourgeois form of legislative power. Out of principle, they refused to participate in bourgeois elections and believed that the communists should encourage the workers to establish workers' soviets as supreme legislative and executive organs, taking into account the revolutionary situation at the time.

Godina attended the Congress in Livorno in January 1921, at which the Communist Party of Italy (PCI) was founded. He was the representative of the communists of Trieste. In the PCI he was close to Amadeo Bordiga (1889–1970), the party leader who articulated the anti-electoralist line and who would later become one of the leading anti-parliamentarian "left-wing communists" globally. However, while Bordiga accepted electoral participation as a tactical concession already in the summer of 1920, Godina persevered in his rejection of parliamentary politics. Due to internal party conflicts, he did not remain active in the PCI for a long time, and was probably expelled or resigned from the party not long after its Second Congress in 1922. According to the historian Ivan Očak, Godina was even a member of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, but at the end of 1922 or at the beginning of 1923 he was expelled as an "ultra-leftist."

Following his expulsion from the Italian and Yugoslav communist parties, Godina dedicated himself to economic theory. He wanted to create a blueprint for a future society on a socialist but non-Marxist basis. Above all, he advocated the introduction of commodity money, that is, the use of goods with a clearly defined value as a means of payment, eventually moving onto completely moneyless exchange. He even founded a cooperative that functioned according to the principle of commodity money and exchange, but the fascist authorities forced him to close it. In 1926, he was the editor of the newspaper *Preporod* (Rebirth), although the fascists soon banned it as well. However, in 1927, Godina was one of the signatories (and alleged initiators) of a proclamation of the Slovenes of Trieste which called for the acceptance of new borders and integration of Slovenes within the Italian state. This proclamation led to the communists accusing Godina of collaborating with the fascist regime.[5]

4 Ivan Očak, *U borbi za ideje Oktobra: Jugoslavenski povratnici iz Sovjetske Rusije 1918–1921* (Zagreb: Stvarnost, 1976), 365.

5 "Slovenski komunistični fašizem," *Jutro* 8, no. 216, September 15, 1927, 2.

Regardless of what his relationship to the fascist authorities may have been after the 1927 proclamation, at some point not long after, he was forced to flee to Vienna for political reasons. He would stay there until the end of the Second World War, again engaging in journalistic activities, and wrote another book on commodity money in German. Upon his return to Trieste in 1945, Godina became a member of the Slovenian-Italian Anti-Fascist Union (SIAU), the front organization of the Communist Party of the Free Territory of Trieste. He continued to propagate the idea of commodity money, primarily through his newly founded General Professional Association (*Jugoslovanska strokovna zveza*). Moreover, Godina was one of the founders of the Independent Socialist Union in 1953. This was an Italian anti-Stalinist Communist Party founded under the patronage of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia as an attempt by Josip Broz Tito (1892–1980) to extend his influence over the labor movement in Western Europe. The party was dissolved in 1957, its members being dispersed between the PCI and the Italian Socialist Party. It is not known whether Godina joined one of those two parties. In 1963, he renewed his newspaper *Preporod*, but it was published for only one year. In the last years of his life, he wrote about economic issues in the Trieste magazine *Gospodarstvo* (Economy, 1947–1991), dealt with local history, and published his memories of the October Revolution. He died in Trieste in 1965, at the age of ninety.

Although Godina was the subject of some research in Yugoslav historiography, he appeared almost exclusively in the context of the participation of Slovenes in the October Revolution, and his later political views were dismissed as "sectarian." His activity in pro-Yugoslav communist circles after the Tito-Stalin Split of 1948 has never been examined. However, he is significant as a representative of non-communist anti-capitalist political thought in the interwar period. He was an original thinker with grandiose designs for total social transformation, a thinker whose plans undoubtedly transcended the peripheral social context of the Italo-Slovenian borderland that he was politically active in for most of his adult life.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS: *Kako pridejo kmetje in delavci do svobode in blagostanja: poljudno razlaganje povodov in posledic današnjega gospodarskega poloma* (Idrija: Federacija rudarjev in gozdarjev, 1921); *Idealizem: temeljna načela politične in gospodarske borbe s kapitalizmom* (Trieste: self-published, 1924); *Menjalne zadruge nas rešijo suženjstva denarja in kapitala* (Trieste: self-published, 1925); *Proglas Slovencem v Italiji* (Trieste: self-published, 1927); *Mir ali nova vojna?* (Trieste: self-published, 1947); "Spomini Tržačana iz oktobrske revolucije," article series in *Primorski dnevnik*, October 2, 1955–February 2, 1956 (signed as Brežan).

Context

Following his break with the Communist Party of Yugoslavia around 1922/23, Dragotin Godina embarked on an ambitious task of developing his own system of philosophic and social thought, one that he thought should be, in opposition to Marxism, based on idealism rather than materialism. He believed that thought—although a material phenomenon—was able to develop independently of matter, a reversal of the famous Marxist dictum that social being determines consciousness. He concluded that a struggle for a better society was synonymous with a struggle for higher spiritual values. From these premises he proposed cooperatives as a form of competition with capitalist trade, and presumed that exchange cooperatives would, if given the chance, eventually push out the capitalist mode of production over time.

After being part of the abstentionist current within the PCI, Godina was expelled from the Communist Party, by some accounts already in 1921, or a bit later in 1922/23. In any case, he was considered "ultra-left," meaning he did not share the mainstream Comintern tactics on electoralism and the question of revolutionary retreat in the early 1920s, in the face of the ebbing of the revolutionary tide. The communists announced a tactical retreat at the time, starting with the New Economic Policy in 1921, allowing for capitalist agriculture based on petty commodity production in the countryside. In parallel, the Third International developed a platform of limited collaboration with reformist parties. This entailed joint political and economic actions with the social democratic parties in Western Europe and with the agrarians in East Central Europe, what was called the United Front policy. Godina, who already opposed electoralism in general, appears to have also opposed this tactical shift. While even Lenin explicitly spoke of the NEP as "state capitalism" and considered it a temporary retreat, Godina saw in it an abandonment of revolutionary ideals and a degeneration of the Soviet workers' state from which there was to be no return.

Once outside of the Communist Party, Godina began developing his own variant of socialism. He still held the Russian Revolution of October 1917 in high regard, but eclectically believed it also opened the space for a spiritual transformation. While upholding a belief in socialism, he also expressed that such a society can only come about through the struggle of superior "Eastern" peoples as opposed the "Western" ones already irreparably corrupted by capitalism. Presumably due to his background in trade, Godina was particularly focused on the need to abolish monetary exchange altogether, which formed the basis of his vision for a new society.

To this end, after the completion of his work *Idealism, the Fundamental Principles of the Political and Economic Struggle against Capitalism* (1924), he

wrote a shorter pamphlet cumbersomely titled *Exchange Cooperatives Will Free Us from the Slavery of Money and Capital*, republished in translation below. In it, he briefly outlined his vision of how to actually overcome capitalism as an alternative to Soviet socialism, which he no longer considered socialist, saying explicitly that the Russian people too were "enslaved by the international big capitalists." Instead of a capitalist Russia masquerading as socialist, Godina proposed an economic system based around exchange cooperatives, which he also attempted to start in Trieste. It appears that he was influenced by both his background in the Slovenian nationalist movement before First World War, and the Slavophile populist traditions with which he was well-acquainted.

Godina's major departure from Marxism is his belief that exploitation arises not out of expropriation of surplus labor, but out of the act of trade itself—the intermediary, the merchant, is the one who appropriates surplus value, a process he describes as "horribly costly." Trade is, in his view, a completely unnecessary part of the economy. Instead, he essentially proposes a form of bartering mediated through cooperatives, a process which he describes in detail in the text below. The local cooperatives would connect with other cooperatives at national and international levels to exchange various goods and services: trade between capitalists and merchants would be replaced by barter between cooperatives. These would be established already within capitalism and could and would outcompete existing forms of trade with their low prices, which should arise out of the absence of intermediaries in the form of merchants and money. Ideally, these institutions would also be as cost-effective as possible, with minimal staff and facilities in order to avoid accumulation of additional unnecessary expenses.

In Godina's vision, payment according to labor would still exist, but would eventually be replaced by payment in kind as cooperatives become dominant in economic life. Withdrawal of money would, in his view, eliminate unemployment, which he believes is caused primarily by "a shortage of money." The fear of unemployment, which is in fact a fear of not having money to survive, would disappear as people would receive goods and services from cooperatives, further incentivizing them to perform productive work of their own free will and in new cooperation with others around them, creating a form of naturally arising collectivism.

The obvious implication of Godina's writing is that, for a system of cooperatives to work, the economic order must be built upon compact, economically rational borders. From the perspective of Trieste, once a mighty Austrian port, this meant the absolute necessity of political and thus economic unity with its hinterland, which had traditionally supplied it with agricultural products. However, this "organic" unity had been broken by the postwar settlement and the loss of territory to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. Godina found another

solution for this problem, as eclectic as all his other solutions, but certainly the most controversial one: he expressed critical support for the Italian fascist regime and some of its expansionist goals. His 1927 *Proclamation*, while stating irredentism was obsolete, also justified Italian expansionism in the Triestine hinterland by the need for a functioning system of exchange cooperatives in the Greater Trieste area. His ambitions to create what he saw as an economically rational system of cooperatives able to compete with capitalism resulted in embracing a form of civic nationalism within the existent status quo and led the outraged communists to accuse him of collaborating with the fascist regime.

The precise details of his compromise with the fascists in 1927, as well as his post-Second World War turn to Tito's variant of communism remain under-researched. Nevertheless, his intense intellectual activity in the mid-1920s, eclectic and ambitious, was a rare attempt by a Slovenian Triestine thinker to make a concise theory of overarching social transformation and propose a completely new socio-economic system for the world. While at times inconsistent and certainly overly optimistic, Godina's thought warrants merit and the attention of historians of ideas.

DRAGOTIN GODINA
Exchange Cooperatives Will Free Us from the Slavery of Money and Capital

"The Organization of Barter Cooperatives"

The main purpose of economic cooperatives is to organize a direct exchange of goods without using money. When members of an economic cooperative have a crop or a finished product, they do not have to look for a buyer with money, which is usually difficult and sometimes even impossible, but instead take their goods straight to the cooperative, hand them over, and receive in return a certificate confirming the delivery of goods of a certain value (e.g. worth 270 lire). With this certificate, the members may withdraw, at any time, any other goods from the cooperative stock in the value of 270 lire.

If the members wish to obtain goods that might not be stored in the warehouses of the relevant cooperative, the latter can supply them through the cooperative's central office. However, the cooperative members do not receive a single certificate in the amount of 270 lire, but rather two certificates for 100

lire each, one for 50 lire, and one for 20 lire. Thus, for example, they can immediately take 120 lire worth of goods out of the warehouse while saving the other two 150-lire certificates for another occasion.

Economic cooperatives are not based on capital and do not aim to accumulate or increase capital. Instead, they are merely intermediaries for the exchange of goods between their members. That is why economic cooperatives sell goods to their members at the same prices as they buy them without making the slightest profit.

When purchasing goods from their members, cooperatives collect a percentage determined by their respective committees to cover the administrative expenses. For example, a cooperative committee decides that certain goods should be subject to a 3% administrative charge. If the cooperative takes over 670 lire worth of such goods from its member, it does not issue a certificate for 670 lire, but 3 per cent less, i.e. 650 lire, while one certificate for 20 lire is handed over to the cashier for administrative expenses.

"Cooperative Reciprocity"

Given its purpose of exchanging goods, it is clear that a single, completely independent cooperative located in a village or town would make no sense. What goods could be exchanged between the members of a village cooperative? None or almost none because farmers in the same village usually grow similar crops. Even in a fairly large town, such a cooperative would be incomplete, lacking mainly farm produce.

Therefore, an entire network of such cooperatives must be set up in towns and villages to facilitate the exchange of a wide variety of crops and products. The greater the number of such cooperatives, the more independent they will be from the rest of the economic world.

However, each cooperative must be an economic unit independent from the others, with its own administrative and supervisory committees. This is the only way to ensure that its members can take a keen interest in it and keep it under constant supervision, which is indispensable for it to operate regularly and fairly and to enjoy the confidence of its members.

Individual cooperatives must be federated, with central management at the helm, looking after common affairs and ensuring that all members collaborate harmoniously.

The central management receives reports from each cooperative about the types and quantities of the goods that the relevant cooperative can supply to the other cooperatives, as well as about what types of goods it needs

to acquire. Based on these reports, the central management can schedule the exchange of goods between the individual cooperatives.

The central management also manages the exchange of goods with other cooperative organizations. The central management sends those amounts of its cooperatives' products that are not consumed within the cooperative federation to other cooperative organizations in exchange for goods not produced by the federation. In case of necessity, central management is also involved in wholesale. Naturally, it sells the goods the cooperatives produce in excess of the internal demand and purchases the goods that the cooperatives do not produce or are short of.

To maximize the benefits of their members, cooperatives must keep their costs as low as possible. Therefore, their business and administration must be as simple as possible. Cooperatives must not even dream of setting up luxurious stores with many assistants and commercially-styled offices at the very onset of their business operations. It is understandable that merchants do this because they want to outdo their competitors and lure people into their shops.

Economic cooperatives, however, do not need such publicity, as they will be best recommended by their low prices, which make it impossible for any merchant to compete with them. Merchants cannot sell goods at the same price as they buy them, as this can only be achieved by economic cooperatives whose only aim is not to accumulate capital but instead ensure benefits for their members.

In the beginning, it will be sufficient for each cooperative to find suitable facilities (a dry cellar, cottage, barn, or similar) for storing the goods. Initially, hiring and paying a dedicated employee to receive and deliver the goods is also unnecessary. As long as the turnover is low, this work can be done by the cooperative members themselves during their free evening hours, and perhaps not even every day—for reasonable compensation, of course, because any useful work deserves to be paid.

For the sake of a more straightforward and swifter business and to facilitate supervision, goods should not be weighed and measured when they are delivered to the cooperatives. Instead, they should be weighed or measured beforehand and packaged in appropriate quantities in sealed packages marked with the quantity and price, as is the case with tobacco, chicory, candles, etc.

Apart from the central management, economic cooperatives must also have central warehouses, where they send the products they do not consume and obtain whatever they do not produce on their own.

The business between the cooperatives and the central warehouse is the same as between the cooperative members and the warehouse. The cooperatives receive certificates for the goods handed over to the central warehouse, indicating the value of the delivered goods, and obtain the goods they need from the central warehouse in return for these certificates. The certificates issued by the central warehouses also enable the cooperatives to obtain goods directly from the fraternal cooperatives without any intervention from the central warehouse.

Neja Blaj Hribar

LJUBOMIR DUŠANOV JURKOVIĆ: The Question of Yugoslavism

Author: Ljubomir Dušanov Jurković
Title: Life and Work at the University of Ljubljana
Originally published: *Narodni dnevnik* 4, nos. 40–41, 42–46, 50–56, 58 (February 19–March 12, 1927); specifically "The Question of Yugoslavism," ibid., nos. 53–54 (March 7–8, 1927).
Language: Slovenian

About the author

Ljubomir Dušanov Jurković (1898, Benkovac–1982, Ljubljana) was an active writer, translator, teacher, and politician.[1] He published articles and translations in various newspapers and magazines throughout Yugoslavia. During the interwar period, he was publicly active, especially in Ljubljana and Dalmatia, where he even ran for parliament. He was a member of the People's Radical Party (*Narodna radikalna stranka*, NRS), supported its social policies, and campaigned

1 Jurković's detailed biography has not yet been written. A sketchy biography is available in the Hrvatski biografski leksikon: "JURKOVIĆ, Ljubo," *Hrvatski biografski leksikon (1983–2024)*, online version. (Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 2024), accessed August 21, 2024, https://hbl.lzmk.hr/clanak/jurkovic-ljubo. Kosta Milutinović, "JURKOVIĆ, Ljubo," in *Leksikon pisaca Jugoslavije*, vol. 2 (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 1979), 686–87. This biography focuses on the interwar period and is mainly based on material from his archival fond at the Archive of the Republic of Slovenia in Ljubljana (Arhiv Republike Slovenije, SI AS 2070 Jurković Dušan Ljubomir) as well as his published works.

for a strong nation-state. The main topics of his writing, both popular and scholarly, were the national question and Yugoslavism.

Jurković was born in Benkovac, Dalmatia, in 1898. After the Italian occupation of northern Dalmatia following the First World War, he was sent into exile and consequently moved to Split, where he finished high school. After two semesters at the Technical College in Prague (1920–1921), he moved to Ljubljana. He initially enrolled at the University of Ljubljana's technical faculty to study architecture,[2] but transferred to the Faculty of Arts, majoring in philosophy. In 1926, he became a high school teacher for the Serbo-Croatian language. Simultaneously, he continued his studies and received a PhD in 1940 with the dissertation "Psihologija patriotskog osećanja" (The Psychology of Patriotic Sentiment), supervised by the philosopher France Veber.[3] After the dissertation's evaluation by the doctoral defense committee and his supervisor, Jurković's work was selected to be published.[4] However, during the printing process the Italian occupying forces destroyed it.

In addition to his studies and his work as a teacher, Jurković was also very active in Ljubljana's associational life. As a student, he was involved in various societies and clubs, such as the Council of University Attendees in Ljubljana (*Svet slušateljev ljubljanske univerze*) and the Club of the Slavic South (*Slovenski Jug*). Later, he was involved in the Yugoslav Translators' Association, the Yugoslav Professors' Association, the People's University of Ljubljana, and the Dalmatian Academic Society. He was connected to the Serbian community in Ljubljana primarily through the Orthodox municipality in Ljubljana, where he was active from 1927 to 1952 (as secretary, vice president, and from 1935 as president).[5] Due to his functions in the municipality, he was instrumental in the construction of the first Orthodox church in Ljubljana, the Church of Saints Cyril and Methodius

2 In some articles, he is presented as an architect. Together with his brother Boris he designed the Narodni dom in Benkovac in 1934. Jelena Cvetko, "Temeljita rekonstrukcija i obnova Doma kulture Benkovac: Važan projekt za kulturni život grada," *Jutranji list,* April 4, 2021, accessed August 30, 2024, https://www.jutarnji.hr/domidizajn/interijeri/temeljita-rekonstrukcija-i-obnova-doma-kulture-benkovac-vazan-projekt-za-kulturni-zivot-grada-15063136.

3 France Veber was a Slovenian philosopher, the first professor at the university and one with an almost complete philosophical system. He was a pupil of Alexius Meinong. See Tomo Virk, *Trojka s filozofske. Spisi o Vebru, Bartolu in Jugu* (Ljubljana: Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete Univerze v Ljubljani, 2017), 11–12. He had a great influence on Jurković's scientific work and his political stance. In philosophy, Jurković followed Veber's theory of objects (phenomenology) and psychology and, like Veber, he opposed both capitalist materialism and socialist collectivism and saw cooperativism as the solution to the agrarian question.

4 Alojz Cindrič, *Od imatrikulacije do promocije. Doktorandi profesorja Franceta Vebra na Oddelku za filozofijo Filozofske fakultete Univerze v Ljubljani v luči arhivskega gradiva 1919–1945* (Ljubljana: Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete Univerze v Ljubljani, 2020), 188–89.

5 SI AS 2070, Box 1/2, Začasna vprašalna pola, Priloga A, B, C.

(built 1932–1936).[6] On behalf of the Serbs living in Ljubljana, and as the president of the Orthodox municipality, he signed the "Deklaracija predsedniku SNOS-a, tov. Jopisu Vidmarju" (Declaration to the President of the Slovenian National Liberation Committee, Comrade Josip Vidmar) in May 1945, expressing their gratitude for liberation and their firm belief that the Democratic Federal Yugoslavia would ensure freedom and independence for all its peoples.[7]

Jurković was politically active from a young age. In Dalmatia, he belonged to the revolutionary Yugoslav (anti-Austrian) youth movement and was closely associated with the Slovenian *Preporod* movement (*preporodovci*).[8] Jurković wrote many articles about the revolutionary youth movement (especially in Dalmatia) later in life and it is clear that this period was significant for him personally and foundational for his stance on Yugoslavism. He joined NRS before moving to Ljubljana. After establishing a local branch of the party in Ljubljana (October 1921), he began to participate actively in the party's activities as the branch's general secretary.

Like many others from the pre-war Yugoslav nationalist youth movement (especially from Dalmatia),[9] he joined Orjuna (*Organizacija jugoslovenskih nacionalista*, the Organisation of Yugoslav Nationalists). He became editor of the organization's magazine, *Orjuna*, and was a deputy of the regional committee (Oblastni odbor za Slovenjo). However, he left Orjuna already in autumn 1923 after disagreements with the leadership.[10] According to Jurković, the problem became his membership in the NRS. Orjuna was too attached to the Independent Democratic Party (*Samostalna demokratska stranka*, SDS) and attacked the NRS. He also disagreed with some of Orjuna's tactics and actions, but not with their stance on the national question.[11]

6 See Bojan Cvelfar, *Srbska pravoslavna cerkev na Slovenskem med svetovnima vojnama* (Ljubljana: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2017).

7 SI AS 2070, Box 2/11, Deklaracija predsedniku SNOS-a, tov. Josipu Vidmarju, *Ljudska pravica*, May 27, 1945.

8 Revolutionary Yugoslav youth movements had close relations with each other. Preporod was a Slovenian-Yugoslav youth organization that gathered around the monthly magazine *Preporod* (after the politically oriented magazine of the same name from Belgrade) and saw the solution to the Slovenian national question in the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Jurković is listed as a member (described as the author of historical articles in *Preporod*). Evgen Lovšin, "Seznam Preporodovcev 1912–1914," in *Preporodovci proti Avstriji*, ed. Adolf Ponikvar (Ljubljana: Borec, 1970), 191. He also had a personal relationship with Ivan Endlicher.

9 Ivan Bošković, "Splitski orjunaški list *Pobeda* i Stjepan Radić," *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 39, no. 1 (2007): 119. Vasilije Dragosavljević, "Irredentist Actions of the Slovenian Organisation of Yugoslav Nationalists (the ORJUNA) in Italy and Austria (1922–1930)," *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 59, no. 3 (2019): 33.

10 "II. redna skupščina oblastnega odbora Oriuna za Slovenijo. V Celju dne 2. februarja 1924. Tajniško poročilo," *Orjuna* 2, no. 6, February 9, 1924, 1. Between summer and autumn 1923, some visible members left the organisation, which indicates there were disagreement within.

11 Ljubo D. Jurković, "Obračun," *Radikalski glasnik* 1, no. 1, October 21, 1923, 1. For Orjuna's side, see "Ljubo D. Jurković," *Orjuna* 1, no. 48, October 21, 1923, 2–3. "Taktika," *Orjuna* 1, no. 49, October 27, 1923, 1.

From 1923, he wrote several articles in *Radikalski glasnik*, the organ of the NRS for the Slovenian-speaking territories of the SHS Kingdom. There, he wrote about his political convictions: he disagreed that the party had a Greater Serbian agenda or that it rejected national unity. He rather saw the NRS as a socialist party for all classes without internationalism. Jurković held the view that the solution to the national question should not be a matter of political parties, for they would only trigger a struggle between people for political gains. Instead, it was up to cultural and scientific organizations as well as private individuals to take up the task.[12]

In Jurković's postwar description of his political involvement in the interwar period, he wrote that the members of the radical student club Slovenski Jug considered him a supporter of Ljubomir Jovanović's politics.[13] In the same text, he described the influence of the Slovenian section of the NRS as more or less a political bystander, without much influence, adding that the party was full of opportunists.[14] He ran for parliament in his hometown of Benkovac in 1935 and 1938. Both times, the Yugoslav Radical Union (*Jugoslovanska radikalna zajdenica*, JRZ) put up a candidate against him.[15] Jurković described how his supporters were harassed and incapacitated even more than a Croatian challenger from the Croatian Peasant Party (*Hrvatska seljačka stranka*, HSS). After his second candidacy, Jurković was disappointed by the NRS (both the central party organization and the Slovenian section) and by the politics itself. He withdrew from all political activities, explaining that he was seen in political circles as a person without a sense of "*Realpolitik*," and was too much of a "professor."[16]

The national question was at the center of Jurković's political thought as expressed in his scholarly, popular, and literary writings.[17] During the interwar period, his view of the nation changed only in minor details. He believed that the

12 Lj. D. Jurković, "Narodno edinstvo," *Radikalski glasnik* 1, no. 7, December 1, 1923, 1. See also Ljubo D. Jurković, "Zdravom politikom – boljoj budućnosti," *Radikalski glasnik* 1, no. 3, November 4–25, 1923, 1. Ljubo D. Jurković, "Za pošten in bratski sporazum," *Radikalski glasnik* 2, no. 28, July 9, 1924, 3.

13 Slovenski Jug was a student club associated with the Radical Party, although the party didn't support it, as other Slovenian political parties had other clubs. (SI AS 2070, Box 2/9, AD 1, Studentski radikalski klub »Slovenski Jug«, 2.) Ljubomir Jovanović was a politician and historian. He was a member of the Radical Party, a member of parliament, and a minister in the Kingdom of Serbia and the SHS Kingdom. After a disagreement with Nikola Pašić, he was expelled from the party. Jurković did not describe the policies on which they agreed, but only stated that they were in close contact in Dalmatia, where Jovanović campaigned for the NRS.

14 Ibid., 4.

15 Union of the NRS, the Slovenian People's Party (*Slovenska ljudska stranka*, SLS), and the Yugoslav Muslim Organization (*Jugoslovenska muslimanska organizacija*, JMO).

16 Ibid., 9.

17 In the review of Jurković's poetry book *Kotarke: pesme za narod*, Josip Prezelj wrote: "The poet is above all an enthusiastic patriot." – Josip Prezelj, review of *Kotarke: pesme za narod* by Ljuba D. Jurković, in *The Slavonic Review* 3, no. 7 (1924): 226.

Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes were once a nation with a common origin and a common national character, which was then divided by external forces (Germans, Turks, etc.).[18] After the division of the nation, Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes began to drift apart both culturally and mentally. The Slovenes drifted away from the national character the most and moved closer to Western culture (also the Croats, but to a lesser extent).[19] He never used the term "tribe" (*pleme*) and wrote only about separate Slovenian, Croatian, or Serbian nations, nevertheless believing that a Yugoslav nation would be reborn.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS: Literature: *Kotarke. Pesme za narod* (Ljubljana: Zvezna knjigarna, 1927); *Mala kraljica noči* (Ljubljana: Pobratimstvo, 1934). Professional Works: *Komuniste i nacionalno pitanje* (Ljubljana: Studentski radikalni klub "Slovenski jug", 1928); "Genetička psihologija mladosti," *Misao* 32, no. 7–8 (1930): 499–503; "Borba za klasičnu kulturu u Sloveniji," *Misao* 33, no. 1–4 (1930): 179–81; *Osnovi Jugoslovesnkog nacionalizma. Psihološka študija* (Ljubljana: Pobratimstvo, 1934); "Uloga naše omladine u oblikovanju kolektivne duše našega naroda," *Slobodna misao* 15, no. 6 (February 9, 1936): 3; *O našim individualitetima* (Šibenik: Tipografija, 1940); with Kosta Milutinović, "Jugoslavenski nacionalnorevolucionarni omladinski pokret u Zadru (1910–1914)," *Zadarska revija* 14, no. 1 (1965): 1–26.

Context

In 1927, Ljubomir Dušan Jurković wrote the article "Življenje in delo na ljubljanski univerzi" (Life and Work at the University of Ljubljana) in support of the University of Ljubljana, which was founded in 1919 and threatened with abolition in the second half of the 1920s due to a lack of funds.[20] As the youngest university in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, the University of Ljubljana had fewer students and professors than the universities in Zagreb or Belgrade, which put it in a particularly precarious position. However, the proposals to close the university did not go down well with the Slovenian public. Ljubomir D. Jurković, a student at the university at the time, responded to this danger by writing a detailed article about life and work at the university and its significance.

At the beginning of the article, Jurković recognized the problems of a young university: insufficient staff, space, and equipment. On the other hand, he saw the

18 Ljuba D. Jurković, *Osnovi jugoslovenskog nacionalizma: psihološko-sociološka studija* (Ljubljana: Pobratimstvo, 1934), 7, 19–20.

19 Ibid., 9.

20 Ljuba D. Jurković, "Življenje in delo na ljubljanski univerzi," *Narodni dnevnik* 4, nos. 40–58, February 19–March 12, 1927.

youth as an advantage. The professors were mostly young and full of enthusiasm; the whole university was full of vigor. Jurković cited the alleged promotion of Slovenian separatism, which he strictly rejected, as the second reason for the attacks on the University of Ljubljana. For him, the few separatist elements had no real influence at the university. The professors and students came from all over the Kingdom and spoke the language of their choice, Serbo-Croatian or Slovenian, or both, and yet they all understood each other. Jurković believed that the university would become a pioneer of Yugoslavism. In the article, he described the work of the student councils as well as the social, cultural, and political aspects of student life: problems with scholarships, the canteens, student health, and so on.

Jurković returned to the topic of Yugoslavism in the section "The Yugoslav Question," in which he described the students' views on this topic. He mentioned that although most of the students had already decided in favor of or against Yugoslavism, this was still one of the most discussed issues. Jurković's description of the students' views on Yugoslavism shows that it was never a homogeneous ideology. The Yugoslav idea existed even before the country was founded, and it had never been unified.[21] The state's official stance on Yugoslavism can also be divided into three (or four) periods, which collided with external political changes.[22] However, official state policy on the issue of Yugoslavism did not agree with all political factions and varied depending on the region and time. Apart from day-to-day political issues such as taxation and the lack of a central administration, the organization of the state and dissatisfaction with centralism were probably the most important issues that influenced the perception of the Yugoslav state and thus of Yugoslavism. Dejan Djokić likewise pointed out that similar problems and debates occurred around the Yugoslav state and the ideology of Yugoslavism during Aleksandar Karađorđević's royal dictatorship, and that the idea ultimately failed because it was seen as part of the regime.[23]

21 Marko Zajc, "Slovenian Intellectuals and Yugoslavism in the 1980s: Propositions, Theses, Questions," *Südosteuropäische Hefte* 4, no. 1 (2015): 48.

22 These can be divided into the (1) parliamentary era, 1918–1929, when the unitary Yugoslav state was compromised, followed by (2) the royal dictatorship, 1929–1935, with the prominence of integral Yugoslavism, then (3) the end of the dictatorship, 1935–1941, the period of so-called real Yugoslavism, as a permanent synthesis of the tribes. See Pieter Troch, "Yugoslavism between the World Wars. Indecisive Nation Building," *Nationalities Papers* 38, no. 2 (2010): 229. Dušan Fundić proposes a fourth period between 1939 and 1941, known as "minimal Yugoslavism," which begins with the Cvetković-Maček Agreement, when 'Yugoslav' only referred to citizenship. Dušan Fundič, "'Being capable or incapable of governing a great Yugoslavia': The Serbian Right Wing and the Ideologies of Yugoslavism (1934–1941)," in *The Serbian Right-Wing Parties and Intellectuals in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, 1934–1941*, ed. Dušan Bakić (Belgrade: Institute for Balkan Studies, 2022), 282.

23 Dejan Djokić, "(Dis)integrating Yugoslavia: King Alexsander and interwar Yugoslavism," in *Yugoslavism: History of a Failed Idea 1918–1992*, ed. Dejan Djokić (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2003), 151.

Second, national identity was fluid and hardly tangible, especially given the confusion surrounding Yugoslavism and other sub- or non-national identities. As Lojze Ude, a Slovenian publicist, jurist, and historian, wrote in 1932, the problem lay in different understandings of the word 'nation' and the subjective perceptions of what a nation is.[24] Although he probably believed that there was a "precise" definition of nations, it is true that different perceptions of what a nation is led to even more confusion.

In order to understand Jurković's description of the students' position on Yugoslavism, it is necessary to take a closer look at his point of view. Unlike many others, Jurković's idea of a nation was quite elaborate, as he specialized in this issue. As already mentioned, he believed in the national unity of Slovenes, Serbs, and Croats. When it came to the question of how a Yugoslav nation would be (re) born, it is crucial to understand his concept of national character, which Jurković called the "national soul."[25] For him, national character was a spiritual reality that unites all individuals who are bound together by tradition, a common language and literature, as well as familial-social, cultural-economic, and other links of interest. Although general national character is static, the mentality of youth is not. The task of a nation's youth is to produce new individuals who will become new bearers of a new national character. The general national character has a great influence on the character of youth, but youth gives it new impulses and dynamics.[26] It is safe to say that, for Jurković, the Yugoslav youth would generate a new Yugoslav national character and thus a Yugoslav nation.

In the article below, Jurković uses the term "practical Yugoslavism." This term appeared before the First World War in connection with the gradual unification of South Slavic cultures and languages through familiarization.[27] Jurković also used the term in his text on revolutionary Yugoslav youth, describing it as the creation of Yugoslav literature through the publication of all South Slavic literary works in youth magazines.[28] Jurković understood his public work in the same way. Not only as a translator, but also because of his public engagement. At the end of 1923, he wrote that he worked among Serbs and Croats to make them get to know and love "their Slovenian brothers" and their homeland, and vice

24 Lojze Ude, "Josip Vidmar: Kulturni problemi slovenstva," in *Kriza Ljubljanskega zvona*, ed. Fran Albreht (Ljubljana: Kritika, 1932), 41.

25 National characterology was present in practically every European culture. In the interwar period, it occupied a central position in the cultural-political debates in East Central Europe, as there was no "other institutional framework of identification." See Balázs Trencsényi, *The Politics of "National Character". A Study in Interwar East European Thought* (London: Routledge, 2012), 17.

26 SI AS 2070, Box 2/9, Jugoslovenski revolucionarni nacionalizam. Psihološka analiza omladinskog jugoslovenskog nacionalističkog pokreta, 24–25.

27 For comparison, see Bogumil Vošnjak, "Praktično jugoslovanstvo," *Veda* 2, no. 3 (1912), 209–14. Iv. D., "Naše jugoslovanstvo v praksi," *Učiteljski tovariš* 61, no. 17, April 21, 1921, 1.

28 SI AS 2070, Box 2/9, Jugoslovenski revolucionarni nacionalizam, 49.

versa, that he wanted to familiarize Slovenes with their brothers of "Serbian and Croatian name" by living together with the them.[29] Practical Yugoslavism would best describe Jurković's idea of creating a Yugoslav nation: a new national character would be formed by getting to know each other and living together.

In "The Question of Yugoslavism," Jurković ascribed support for Yugoslavism to almost all students; the differences lay in the details. It is interesting to note that the Catholic/clerical students, as Jurković states, were sincere Yugoslavs. He believed that they listened to their political leaders, but did not follow their party-political tactics. Jurković astutely observed that the Slovenian People's Party (*Slovenska ljudska stranka*, SLS), although propagating an autonomist policy when it was in opposition, agreed that eventually a new Yugoslav national type would be constructed as a mixture of all national spirits.[30] The Catholic students, according to Jurković, worked to ensure that the best parts of Slovenianness would be incorporated into the Yugoslav nation. As historian Mateja Ratej has pointed out, although the SLS and the NRS had different political views on the national question, they were actually quite similar in terms of the concept of the nation. Especially in that not only language, culture, and character make up a nation, but also the will of the people (in the sense of Ernest Renan).[31] Despite claims to Slovenian autonomy, the SLS based its concept of the nation-state on Yugoslavia and not on an independent Slovenia.[32]

The Slovenian liberal parties (and some others) in the interwar period favored the idea of unitarism and centralism and considered the Yugoslav nation to be the logical conclusion of the historical process of the (re)unification of the Yugoslav tribes.[33] In this sense, Jurković's account is not surprising. However, he believed that the usurpation of the issue by the Democrats (liberals) and Orjuna was detrimental to Yugoslavism and the perception of the Radicals, Agrarians, and other supporters of the Yugoslav idea. Jurković did not use the word "unitary" or "integral," however. He only expressed that they agreed with the quoted saying that only a good Slovene (Croat, Serb) can be a good Yugoslav. This motto was widespread at the time and was associated with King Alexander I's vision

29 Ljubo D. Jurković, "Iz naroda za narod!" *Radikalski glasnik* 1, no. 8, December 8, 1923, 1.

30 It is important to emphasize that the SLS and the NRS began to converge after 1926 and that they signed the "Bled Agreement" only a few months after the publication of the article (July 11, 1927).

31 Mateja Ratej, "(Nevralgična) stičišča političnega sodelovanja Slovenske ljudske in Narodne radikalne stranke med obema svetovnima vojnama," *Zgodovinski časopis* 62, no. 3–4 (2008): 416.

32 Mateja Ratej, "Jugoslovani iz zadrege ali iz prepričanja in veselja? Razumevanje patriotizma in odnos do kraljeve dinastije Karađorđević pri Slovenski ljudski in Narodni radikalni stranki v letih 1918–1941," in *Evropski vplivi na slovensko družbo*, ed. Nevenka Troha, Mojca Šorn, and Bojan Balkovec (Ljubljana: Zveza zgodovinskih društev Slovenije, 2008), 184.

33 Jurij Perovšek, "Slovenci in jugoslovanska skupnost med svetovnima vojnama," in *Preteklost sodobnosti. Izbrana poglavja slovenske novejše zgodovine*, ed. Zdenko Čepič (Ljubljana: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 1999), 68.

of (integral) Yugoslavism.[34] The Slovenian "liberal" political camp was divided throughout the interwar period, but they were united on Yugoslavism. This repelled some liberal-minded people. Jurković mentions some left-wing students—"free academics," that is, students who did not belong to any of the existing clubs—who mostly sided with the Catholics on the issue of Yugoslavism.

The only ones who were against Yugoslavism were the Marxists. They claimed that the Slovenes had nothing in common with the Serbs and Croats and propagated complete autonomy on the basis of the right to self-determination. Jurković's remark that they had only said this for election campaign purposes and because they had no other idea was probably one of the reasons why Jurković's article provoked an indignant reaction from Ludvik Mrzel and other Marxists which led to a long dispute between them in the newspaper *Narodni dnevnik* (The National Journal).[35] This prompted Jurković to write a series of articles on Marxism and nationalism, which he later transformed into a book.[36] Mrzel accused him of Serbian radicalism and hegemonism, labelled him a guest in Slovenia, and even threatened him.[37] The Marxists saw Jurković as a national enemy because he was a Serb and a member of the NRS, whom the public perceived as an advocate of the idea of a Greater Serbia. Jurković replied to Mrzel that it would be interesting to know whether Slovenian ministers felt like guests in Belgrade, adding that he and other Serbs and Croats had never felt like guests in Slovenia and were always warmly welcomed.[38]

However, going beyond the direct insults is necessary to analyze their political thought. Jurković's response to Mrzel's arguments on the fiscal inequality of Slovenes in Yugoslavia even more clearly presents the previously discussed problem of the influence of politics on the idea of Yugoslavism. Jurković succinctly replied to Mrzel that this way of writing gave the impression that taxes were only paid in Slovenia. He conceded that taxes were uneven, but in Vojvodina taxes were even higher, and yet there were no efforts to culturally and politically free themselves from the state.[39] Jurković took offence that, instead of working togeth-

34 "VI redovni sastanak senata Kraljevine Jugoslavije držan 19 marta 1936 godine u Beogradu," in *Stenografske beleške senata kraljevine Jugoslavije: Redovan saziv za 1935 i 1936 godinu* 5, no. 1 (Belgrade: Štamparija Drag. Popovića, 1936), 64.

35 Ludvik Mrzel, "Slovenski akademiki in sepatarizem," *Narodni dnevnik* 4, no. 64 (March 21, 1927), 3. See also Ivan Grohar, "Življenje in delo na univerzi. (odgovor marksistov)," *Narodni dnevnik* 4, no. 113, May 19, 1927, 3–4.

36 Ljubomir D. Jurković, *Komuniste i nacionalno pitanje* (Ljubljana: Studentski radikalni klub "Slovenski jug", 1928).

37 Mrzel, "Slovenski akademiki," 3.

38 Ljuba D. Jurković, "Separatistični nacionalizem slovenskih marksistov," *Narodni dnevnik* 4, nos. 73–76, April 1–5, 1927.

39 Jurković, "Separatistični nacionalizem," *Narodni dnevnik* 4, no. 76, April 5, 1927, 4.

er to stabilize the state and strengthen it socially, they were spreading separatist ideas.[40]

In the article below, Jurković described the students' opinion on Yugoslavism.[41] Although he analyzed their views based on political preferences, he added some internal insights and clearly showed how heterogeneous Yugoslavism was. He even accused the Democrats and Orjuna of harming other ideas by monopolizing Yugoslavism. In his view, the youth was of great importance for the formation of the national character, so his interest in the ideas of the students was not accidental. This article and the later dispute between "separatists" and a Yugoslav show how different factors influenced the varieties of Yugoslavism: politics, state organization, political ideology, and the understanding of what a nation is.

It is fair to say that Jurković simplified the view, but to better understand the students' ideas of Yugoslavism, their published works should be analyzed in the same way as Jurković's.

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LJUBA D. JURKOVIĆ
"Life and Work at the University of Ljubljana" The Question of Yugoslavism

This question continues to fascinate all students, and its definition and solution are still being sought. Although all the groups have addressed this issue in principle in their written programs and either advocated for or against it, it remains of keen interest to all young students and is almost always a subject of discussion and debate. In Slovenia, Yugoslavism finds itself in a more difficult position than elsewhere because it still has to settle its relationship with Slovenianness, which is a more difficult and complicated matter than its

40 "We, the Radicals, demand the elimination of all national problems in order to remove them from the agenda as quickly as possible so that we can then begin to solve our social problems," in Jurković, "Separatistični," *Narodni dnevnik* 4, no. 73, April 1, 1927, 5.

41 For a detailed study of the student movement and also about student clubs, see Slavko Klemenšek, *Slovensko študentovsko gibanje 1919–1941* (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1972).

relationship with Serbianness or Croatianness. Nevertheless, at least according to my personal understanding of this problem, the students in Ljubljana have solved this problem positively, and the practical results of our common life and work will soon become apparent, with the University of Ljubljana playing a particular role in this regard.

Here is proof. A few months ago, a congress was organized in Ljubljana for all the engineering students in the country. With regard to the technical-scientific questions and lecture notes, the congress decided that these should be published by a federal publishing house for all our engineers in the Ekavian dialect of the Serbian or Croatian language and in the Latin alphabet! Is this not practically Yugoslavism? (I should also mention that the Slovenian cinema audience has also practically solved the issue of subtitles in the theatres. Today, Slovenians can read Serbo-Croatian subtitles and laugh, cry, and understand everything easily, without an interpreter, just as the Latin script can be easily read in Serbia, Bosnia, and elsewhere!) Yugoslavism is paving its own way…

It is interesting to note that the so-called **Catholic** (clericalist) **students are Yugoslav-oriented**; the best of them are particularly distinguished by this feature. The youth have accepted what their leaders (Dr. Krek and Dr. Korošec) have been telling them and proving to them for so many years. Understandably, from a psychological viewpoint, the youth have not been discouraged by the poor performance of our central administration, the inequality of taxes, the struggle for an autonomous Slovenian administration, etc. Instead, they became aware of **this idea, adopted it enthusiastically, and became sincere Yugoslavs!**

The Catholic students recognize **the need for a national community with us Serbs and with our Croat brothers. They are even convinced that a common Yugoslav nation will arise from our common life, and they strive to contribute the maximum of their positive elements as Slovenians, which is the only way their notion of Yugoslavism should be interpreted.**

…

To be Yugoslav does not mean to stop being Slovenian. On the contrary, it means being a good Slovenian. All good Slovenians are simultaneously good Yugoslavs because if they are not, they are not good Slovenians, just as being a good Serb or Croat is also to be a good Yugoslav; one is a precondition for the other.

Such a *mutatis mutandis* understanding of Yugoslavism does not correspond to how this notion is understood by the Democrats and the members of Orjuna (who would like to monopolize this question for themselves

without realizing how much they are thus undermining the very idea) or by the Radicals, the members of the Agrarian Party, and others.

It is crucial that the Marxists (communists) and left-leaning students are very interested in this question. Although, as Marxists, they would have to deny the existence of any **special national question**, they consider that this question exists and, despite the late Marx, they attach particular importance to it. However, what is especially strange for these internationalists and cosmopolitans is that they have taken a stand **against Yugoslavism while proving the existence of a separate Slovenian nation that has no connections with Serbs and Croats, represents a separate cultural unity and is, as such, entitled to seek its political and economic "liberation" based on the nation's right to self-determination!**

It may be that our communists did not mean and say this sincerely and that these are just election slogans. However, such statements have been repeated many times, and they should be registered, underlined, and emphasized as one of the causes of their steady decline. **It is also possible that they have resorted to these offensively separatist and chauvinist means due to a lack of other ideas for the youth. However, they have made a mistake because no one supports them in this regard.**

The second left-oriented group, the so-called "free academics," does not yet have a definite position on Yugoslavism because they are an "ad hoc" group, of which it would be appropriate to say that it was formed as a sign of protest against the excessive integral Yugoslavism of the Orjuna organization and the evils of our poor administration with all their consequences. However, it seems that in this respect, they will also come closer to how the Catholics (**the special role of Slovenians in Yugoslavism**), as well as the Democrats (the *Jadran*, *Triglav*, and *Orjuna* organizations), the Radicals (the *Slovenski Jug* magazine) and the Agrarian Party (the *Njiva* magazine) understand this notion in general.

Finally, let me underline that **all students, regardless of their political orientation, are united in the question regarding our non-liberated brothers and that this question also strongly influences a profound sense of national unity—of Yugoslavism!**

.....

Stefan Gužvica

ALBERT HLEBEC: On the Slovenian National Question

Author: Albert Hlebec, under the pseudonym Lidin
Title: Address to the Eighth Balkan Communist Conference in 1928
Originally published: Unpublished, the original is held at the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI), 509-1-106, f. 241–244.
Language: Russian (The minutes however state that he spoke in Croatian)

About the author

Albert Hlebec (1899, Trbovlje–1939, Pittsburgh) was a trade union organizer and communist revolutionary from the miner's town of Trbovlje. He was an active organizer of Slovenian economic and political émigrés across several countries, including France, Germany, Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, and the United States.[1]

Nothing is known about Hlebec's life before the age of twenty-one, when, in March 1920, he led a left-wing split of the Yugoslav Social Democratic Party

1 This text was prepared within the framework of the Higher School of Economics University Basic Research Program. The biography is based on the following sources: Aleš Bebler, *Kako sam hitao: sećanja* (Beograd: Četvrti jul, 1982). France Klopčič, *Desetletja preizkušenj: Spomini* (Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1980). Arhiv Republike Slovenije, SI AS 1546, Hlebec Albert.

(*Jugoslovanska socialdemokratska stranka*, JSDS) in Trbovlje. The splitters, headed by Hlebec, established a new organization called the Socialist Workers' Party for Slovenia, which would almost immediately merge with the communists. In April that same year, Hlebec was one of the leaders of the takeover of the town, being at the helm of the so-called "Trbovlje Republic" that lasted for two days, during which the workers took over the mine, the municipal building, the post office, and the railway station. When the army bloodily suppressed the uprising, he was arrested as one of the instigators of revolt. As the Communist Party went underground in 1921, he rose to become one of its leading members in Slovenia. Most likely, Hlebec was a member of the Communist Party's Provincial Committee already in April 1920. In 1922, he moved to Ljubljana and began working as a union organizer and a journalist. He was the secretary of the League of Independent Trade Unions of Slovenia (*Zveza neodvisnih strokovnih organizacij za Slovenijo*, ZNSOS) and was the editor of their newspaper, *Strokovna borba* (Trade Union Struggle, 1922–1924). In 1923, he was elected a member of the Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ) for Slovenia. After another stint in jail in 1924, he became the editor and a permanent contributor to *Delavsko-kmetski list* (The Worker-Peasant Newspaper, 1924–1926) and *Enotnost* (Unity, 1926–1929).

Writing in party newspapers throughout the 1920s, Hlebec argued that the main criticism of the communists should be aimed against the regime in Belgrade rather than the clerical conservative Slovenian People's Party (*Slovenska ljudska stranka*, SLS). His reasoning was that attacking the latter enabled the largest Slovenian party to frame the communists successfully as collaborationists of the central government in Belgrade. In the period between 1926 and 1928, he was among the Slovenian communists calling for a slogan of an independent worker-peasant republic of Slovenia within a Balkan Communist Federation. Consequently, he was broadly identified with the "left faction" of the party, which generally pushed for a more revolutionary policy and for understanding ethnic tension as an expression of the class dissatisfaction of the peasantry. This contrasted with the "right faction," which believed capitalism had stabilized and the party should focus on long-term trade union organizing instead of collaboration with the peasantry and its adjacent national organizations. At the Slovenian party conference in March 1928, Hlebec was elected the secretary of the Provincial Committee, thus becoming the leader of the Slovenian party organization.

In the summer of 1928, Hlebec was the party's delegate at the Sixth Comintern Congress and the Eighth Balkan Communist Conference in Moscow (see Context below). After the end of the Congress, he moved to Vienna in order to avoid another arrest in Yugoslavia. He was briefly expelled from the party for factionalism

in 1929, and after his reinstatement he would spend several years organizing party émigrés in France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Belgium. Arriving in Paris in 1929, Hlebec began collaborating with Aleš Bebler (1907–1981) on the newspaper *Borbeni radnik/Borbeni delavec* (Fighting Worker, 1929–1930). The two would develop a close political relationship over the coming years, insisting on the need for an autonomous Slovenian party within the KPJ, which would bring them into conflict with the central party leadership several times. In 1931, Hlebec and Bebler were editors of the newspaper *Slovenska delavsko-kmečka republika* (Slovenian Worker-Peasant Republic, 1931–1933), based in Heerlen, in the Netherlands (although Hlebec actually resided in Aachen, just across the border). In a newspaper aimed at the numerous Slovenian miners' community in the Netherlands, they openly called for the creation of an autonomous Slovenian communist party independent of the KPJ, for which they were promptly expelled. The Hlebec-Bebler group actively opposed all Yugoslavism and pushed for broader internationalism based on Balkan federalism. They came into conflict with the KPJ not because of their federalist stance, but because they questioned the authority of the Central Committee and Bolshevik organizational norms on party centralism in the process.

During the Popular Front era, Hlebec was reinstated into the party again and even attended Politburo meetings in Paris under the leadership of Milan Gorkić (1904–1937), apparently as a member of the Émigré Committee, in charge of overseeing the work of all Yugoslav economic émigrés abroad. In April 1937, he was sent from France to the United States of America, and he became the editor of the Slovenian pro-communist and anti-fascist newspaper *Naprej* (Forward, 1935–1941). In October 1939, he was found hanged in the newspaper's offices in Pittsburgh, having committed suicide in response to the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Hlebec was largely forgotten in socialist Yugoslavia and was not part of the country's official memory politics, despite attempts by historian and comrade France Klopčič (1903–1986), who tried to spark interest in him in the 1960s and 1970s.[2]

Context

Albert Hlebec is a paradigmatic representative of a Slovenian independentist current within the Yugoslav communist movement. Given that the Yugoslav socialist state had eventually been formed on a federal basis, the independentist

2 See France Klopčič, *Velika razmejitev: Študija o nastanku komunistične stranke v Sloveniji aprila 1920 in o njeni dejavnosti od maja do septembra 1920* (Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1969). France Klopčič, *Desetletja preizkušenj: Spomini* (Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1980).

currents within various local sections of the party withered away after the introduction of the Popular Front policy in 1935. The Popular Front aimed to preserve the territorial unity of the Yugoslav state, fearing that any other outcome would benefit fascist expansionism. However, until that moment, for most of its history, the KPJ had been decidedly anti-Yugoslav: it sought to break up Yugoslavia to create a Balkan Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, with Slovenia (among others) as an administrative unit. While it may seem counter-intuitive at first, given their internationalism, the communist support for secessionism made sense within the overall theoretical framework that was dominant in the movement during the 1920s and 1930s.

This theoretical framework was based on the classical Marxist philosophy of history, broadly divided into successive epochs, known in Marxist jargon as "stages." These would be, respectively, the feudal stage, the bourgeois-democratic or capitalist stage, and the socialist stage, on the path to the end of history which would be communism—a stateless, moneyless, global planned economy. The division, however, was not always clear-cut, as periods tended to intermingle and overlap with one another. The phenomenon was already observed by Marx and Engels themselves, since, at the beginning of their political lives, the messianic class of the future, the proletariat, only made up about three percent of the population of the German Confederation, from which they both hailed. The problem became more acute by the late nineteenth century, when Germany had already become an industrial powerhouse, but Marxism began to gain currency in the agrarian European periphery, east of Vienna, Berlin, or Stockholm—including among Slovenian-speakers.

The Marxists in the Balkans, Central Europe, and Russia noted that their countries, which were supposed to undergo a "bourgeois-democratic" transformation, had not fully gotten there: often, their capitalist systems were far from purely capitalist, interspersed with feudal remnants and underdeveloped, often oligarchic or even de facto aristocratic, systems of government. Therefore, the idea that progress through stages was not linear quickly became evident. Likewise, this meant that underdeveloped countries could go on the path of socialist revolution even without becoming full, "proper" capitalist democracies first. Some thinkers and revolutionaries, most notably Alexander Parvus and Leon Trotsky, picked up the idea of "permanent revolution," as introduced by Marx and Engels when discussing the role of the proletarian minority in a German bourgeois revolution in the 1840s and 1850s. In other words, the liberation of peasants from feudalism and national emancipation of oppressed minorities, seen as hallmarks of bourgeois revolutions, could happen alongside a socialist revolution ushering in a moneyless urban economy and rule of workplace councils. It was along these

lines of thinking that the Bolsheviks (although, with the exception of Lenin, initially skeptical) embarked on a seizure of power in 1917, calling for a seemingly paradoxical universalization of a workers' state across the Eurasian landmass combined with self-determination for national minorities everywhere.

By the early 1920s, as the revolutions in Germany, Austria, Hungary, and Italy suffered defeats, and the Red Army had been stopped at Warsaw, the "bourgeois-democratic" tasks of the revolution in Central Europe regained their importance. In some ways, the Communist International began to use the national and peasant questions as a surrogate for declining class struggle in urban centers following the stabilization of postwar regimes. National and peasant emancipation were not quite proletarian revolutionary tasks, but they did correspond to the demands of the peasant absolute majority of underdeveloped peripheral countries.

The Balkan Communist Federation (BCF) therefore made these two poles their central point of agitation, giving them precedence over workplace organizing in the urban areas (while maintaining the need for working-class political domination over the peasant and national movements in order to ensure the revolution did not remain merely democratic). Land redistribution and national self-determination thus became the fighting slogans of the communists in the Balkans, in stark contrast to the "traditional" Marxist program of collective land ownership and centralized internationalist state-building. The rhetoric of ethnic secessionism in particular was toned down between 1925 and 1928, in parallel with the triumph of Bukharin's and Stalin's theory of "socialism in one country." The Soviet Union was gradually attempting to carve out a place for itself within the global capitalist system and normalize relations with countries previously unequivocally described as "imperialist." By 1928, however, this approach had clearly failed. A series of offensive acts against the USSR, such as the attack of the Kuomintang on the Chinese communists in 1927, the breakdown in Anglo-Soviet relations, and the intelligence information on a possible Polish invasion of the Soviet Union, marked the bankruptcy and abandonment of the policy of co-existence with the capitalist powers. Moreover, the looming new economic crisis, culminating in the 1929 Wall Street Crash, had convinced the communists that a new revolutionary wave was coming, one that may also involve a preemptive attack by a coalition of capitalist countries against the workers' state.

The Eighth Balkan Communist Conference in 1928 followed the Sixth Comintern Congress in proclaiming the "class against class" line. While in the early 1920s the communists were open to collaboration with reformist socialist and agrarian parties, they now chose to work only with those who, like themselves, wanted to radically abolish the European order established at Versailles. Those were usually radical nationalist organizations in Central Europe and the

Balkans, in which communists sought out those with left-wing sympathies to create a joint revolutionary platform. These "national-revolutionary organizations," as they were known to the communists, often framed their national oppression in colonial terms. Communists such as Albert Hlebec argued (and national revolutionaries agreed) that policies of countries such as Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia resembled colonialism applied to Europe. Specifically, Hlebec illustrated this by pointing out the uneven tax burden on Slovenia, the relocation of industry from the administrative periphery (Slovenia) to the center (central Serbia), and even policies of population resettlement, which the Yugoslav state had practiced in Kosovo. Consequently, the communists tried to draw national revolutionary organizations into their anti-colonial front organization, the League Against Imperialism, where Balkan independence fighters found themselves together with the African and Asian anti-colonial revolutionaries.[3]

The "national-revolutionary" collaboration was not without precedent either, not just in post-imperial Russia, but also in the Balkans. As early as the 1890s, Balkan Marxists had actively collaborated with the nationalists from the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO); Young Bosnia, whose Gavrilo Princip assassinated Franz Ferdinand in 1914, had extensive ties to anarchists and socialists, both in the Balkans, but also in the Russian-language émigré community in France and Switzerland; and most leading young Yugoslav nationalist revolutionary radicals from Slovenia and Croatia of 1910 became the country's leading communist cadres by 1920. This tradition was picked up in the era of the Communist International, starting in 1919. In 1924–25, the communists managed to move a considerable number of Macedonian revolutionaries to the left with the creation of IMRO (United), and the young Albanian revolutionary exiles from the circle of Fan Noli became that country's first-ever organized communists. The Croatian Republican Peasant Party briefly entered the communist-controlled Peasant International, and Hlebec saw the Slovenian People's Party, with its support base in the countryside, as the Slovenian equivalent. The Eighth Balkan Communist Conference of 1928 thus tried to once again fan this revolutionary flame among the "oppressed nations" of the Balkans.

Starting from these premises, Albert Hlebec (under the pseudonym Lidin) proposed to the BCF that Slovenia had become the "Macedonia of Europe" and that its division between Austria, Italy, and Yugoslavia made it the perfect springboard for a new national-revolutionary movement. His somewhat eclectic proposal often mixed up the Marxist revolutionary stages, considering national

3 Fredrik Petersson, "'We Are Neither Visionaries nor Utopian Dreamers.' Willi Münzenberg, the League Against Imperialism, and the Comintern, 1925–1933," doctoral dissertation (Åbo Akademi University, 2013), 348, 354, 381–86.

emancipation as part of the "proletarian" rather than the "bourgeois-democratic" stage. He does, however, employ the language of colonialism to explain the Slovenian position within Yugoslavia, and explicitly sees national unification as part of the socialist revolution. Themes of the coming danger of counterrevolutionary war are also present, as well as his own (unique but superficial) definition of what constitutes colonial oppression.

Hlebec's intervention at the Conference went largely unacknowledged, as the event was used to bring up a wide variety of issues rather than spark debates on the spot. However, the points he made were most certainly taken to other forums and further elaborated there, as the communists did, among other things, attempt to establish collaboration with Slovenian national revolutionaries between 1928 and 1934, as well as establish their own pro-communist nationalist organization. The Slovenian organization in question was *TIGR* (*Trst, Istra, Gorica, Reka*) which was, like the Macedonian IMRO in the 1920s, torn between a pro-government wing (in this case, pro-Belgrade rather than pro-Sofia), and a pro-communist wing. After 1935, and the switch to the Popular Front policy of the Comintern, the communist cooperation with TIGR would continue on an antifascist basis. Slovenian secessionism within a framework of Balkan federalism, laid out by Hlebec, eventually resulted in the articulation of Slovenian antifascism. Thus, ironically, an anti-Yugoslav Slovenian communist political language became part of the process of laying the ideological grounds for the future political integration of Slovenia into a Yugoslav socialist federation.

ALBERT HLEBEC
"Address to the Eighth Balkan Communist Conference in 1928"

Session Three of the Balkan Conference, August 31, 1928

Lidin (in Croatian):

The comrade first states that Slovenia, which the Balkan Conference has not yet discussed, is in fact a kind of European Macedonia. It was divided by the Versailles Treaty between Italy, Yugoslavia, and Austria. One-third of Slovenes lives under Italian rule. Slovenia is significant not only for Yugoslavia, but for the Balkans as a whole, which is why this conference ought to deal with it. In Yugoslavia, Slovenia is its most industrialized province, and

it is also located on the Italian-Yugoslav border, meaning it would have immense significance in the case of a war between the two countries.

The Serbian bourgeoisie has given up on the task of liberating the Slavs living under Italian control, and effectively abandoned the project of uniting all the South Slav nationalities. This should instead become the task of our party and the Balkan Federation. The Serbian bourgeoisie has no interest in liberating Slovenia, because it has other priorities, namely Thessaloniki. Moreover, any expansion of Yugoslavia means an increase in the amount of non-Serb populations, and, therefore, the decrease of the share of the Serbian population within Yugoslavia.

Slovenia, despite being the most industrialized province of Yugoslavia, currently finds itself in a colonized position. The comrade points out that one person in Slovenia has to pay an average of 1200 dinars of tax per year, while that same person in Serbia would have to pay an average of 450 dinars. However, the issue of colonialism does not concern only the economic development of Slovenia, but also the political exploitation of the Slovenian population. On the other hand, not only does the Serbian bourgeoisie ignore the possibilities of Slovenia's industrial development, even though the province has excellent objective conditions for its development, but moreover, they actively obstruct Slovenia's industrial development and attempt to diminish its industrial capacity by moving its heavy industry to Serbia.

This clearly shows the colonial position that Slovenia has found itself in. The comrade points out the position of the working class in Slovenia, saying that it has become markedly worse than under the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. They have dropped to the level of the Serbian workers. Social welfare legislation is also much worse than it was under Austria-Hungary. All of this data points to the colonial position of Slovenia.

Due to deindustrialization, there is a land shortage and, as a result, large emigration to America, Germany, France, Belgium, to the mines, where masses of Slovenian workers go. The question of emigration is extremely significant, and the Balkan Conference and the Federation must take greater interest in it.

The comrade notes that the Slovenian people do not recognize today's state and those who rule over them. The Slovenian people has had no opportunity to exercise its self-determination. The party of Korošec,[4] the largest in Slovenia, has used the slogan of autonomy to gain the majority of votes. Yet, now, when they entered the government, they betrayed their people and forgot the slogans under which they contested the elections.

4 *Slovenska ljudska stranka* (Slovenian People's Party).

By its social composition, the Slovenian People's Party is akin to the party of Radić:[5] it influences, and enjoys the support of, the broad layers of the peasantry. However, there is one major difference between the two: the Korošec party is run by the clergy. The impact they have on the peasantry can be explained by their network of cooperatives, which they use to maintain their influence over the countryside. In Slovenia, both the Serbian and the Slovenian bourgeoisie agitate for a war against Italy, even under the slogan of liberating the Slavs under Italian yoke.[6] The communists fight against an imperialist war between Yugoslavia and Italy under the slogan of a free and independent Slovenia.[7]

The comrade further points out that a left wing is being formed within the party of Korošec due to its treacherous policy. According to the comrade, this left wing of the Slovenian party has had greater success and influence than the left wing within the party of Radić. In the case of a war between Italy and Yugoslavia, Slovenia would become the central battlefield. Therefore, its significance for the Balkan Peninsula and all of its communist parties is crucial. The comrade concludes by saying that this and all the other questions that have been raised today clearly prove the necessity of the organization of a Balkan Federation, and that all our parties should be bound to work towards strengthening its activity.

.....

5 *Hrvatska seljačka stranka* (Croatian Peasant Party).

6 This sentence is clearly in contradiction to the statement Hlebec made at the beginning of his speech, and is most likely a mistake by the person who was transcribing or translating his speech. Alternatively, Hlebec may be implying that while the ruling classes of Yugoslavia have begun agitating for a war against Italy as a national liberation war, this would not be the case, in the same way that 1918 did not result in national liberation.

7 Likewise, this sentence begins with "They" without specifying the subject, but the author clearly means that the communists are fighting against "imperialist war," and not that "the Serbian and the Slovenian bourgeoisie" are doing so.

Lucija Balikić

VIKTOR MURNIK: Culture and Physical Exercise

Author: Viktor Murnik
Title: Culture and Physical Exercise
Originally published: Viktor Murnik, *Kultura in telovadba* (Ljubljana: self-published, 1929).
Language: Slovenian

About the author

Viktor Murnik (1874, Ljubljana–1964, Ljubljana) was a physical educator, gymnast, publicist, and editor of a number of publications. Murnik is not traditionally seen as a political thinker, but primarily as a theoretician and practitioner of gymnastics as well as a Sokol activist. However, because he left behind numerous publications on various tropics, including that of the national economy, the relationship between body and mind,[1] and civilizational hierarchies, the analysis of his political thought can provide an insight into the way his gymnastics-related practice and experience influenced his understanding of relevant issues. This is especially true because he regularly reflected on numerous contemporaneous

1 Jonathan Westphal, *The Mind–Body Problem* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2016).

transnational—mainly German-language and Western European—pedagogical and physical education-related debates in a sophisticated manner.

Murnik was born in Ljubljana into a well-off family. He graduated from the Classical Gymnasium in Ljubljana and later the University of Graz, where he studied law, in 1892 and 1898 respectively. After his studies, he briefly served at the Ljubljana court and subsequently worked at the Ljubljana Chamber of Commerce and Crafts, of which he became the general secretary in 1901, maintaining this position until 1925. He was the one to put forward the initial proposal for the foundation of the Slovenian Academy of Commerce and Trade in Ljubljana in 1901. In parallel, Murnik also acted as a member of the Executive Committee of the Craft Fair (which acquired its recurring character due to his advocacy), as well as a committee member of the Slovenian Mercury Market Association, within which he also developed and improved the associational journal.

Murnik is mostly known in historiography, however, for his activism in the Sokol gymnastics movement. Within Sokol, he published most of his booklets and articles on a wide array of issues. Sokol was founded in the 1860s in the Bohemian lands as a physical culture-centered Czech national and Slavic association. Following the example of the Czech Sokol (1862), the Slovenian Sokol organization (*Južni Sokol*) was founded in Ljubljana in 1863. By the turn of the twentieth century, Sokol organizations had spread across the Dual Monarchy and beyond, most notably to the Russian Empire, USA, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Montenegro, acquiring sizeable membership in the process.[2] For Slovenians and other Slavic nationalities, Sokol represented one of the key *loci* of nation-building and the dissemination of national ideas. Murnik's family was also involved in the association; Viktor joined on the insistence of his paternal uncle, also a notable political thinker, Ivan/Janez Murnik. Throughout his life, Murnik held numerous high positions in Sokol and greatly contributed to the shaping of its associational practices and culture. Namely, he served as the Ljubljana Sokol official in different capacities at various points between 1893 and 1924, as well as the head of the Slovenian Sokol Union (1906–1918) and later the Yugoslav Sokol Union (1920–4, 1926–30), whereby he was most active as a chairman of the educational section in the early 1920s. In addition, Murnik was active in the Czechoslovak-Yugoslav Sokol federation and in the International Gymnastic Union, representing Slovenian and Yugoslav Sokol on different occasions.

Within Sokol, Murnik's greatest contributions can be seen not only in his work done in a leadership capacity, or in the fact that he trained the internationally best-performing Yugoslav gymnasts of the period, but primarily in his

2 Claire Nolte, *The Sokol in the Czech Lands to 1914: Training for the Nation* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

long-standing publishing activity which supported several of his intellectual and sociopolitical agendas.

First, he tasked himself relatively early on with developing a systematized professional gymnastics- and movement-related terminology in the Slovenian and Serbo-Croatian languages. Before, most trainers relied either on German or on nascent Czech terminology developed by the Czech Sokol Union (*Česká obec sokolská*). This terminology primarily tackled the most basic movements and positions/postures, and was in Murnik's focus not only because these terms were central to Sokol's associational life and practices, but also because of his ongoing theorization on the intimate link between bodily movement and a given nation's culture and economy. In the same vein, he set out to systematize basic gymnastic exercises, taking into account a wide array of physiological, biological, psychological, but also culture- and economy-related concerns. In addition to the terminology itself, which he aimed to 'Slavicize' by keeping the Czech roots whenever possible, Murnik also invented a counting system that captured the duration of each movement. This was applied to the complex calisthenic exercises and gymnastics dances (*telovadni plesi*) he invented, akin to other popular symbolic nation-building tools like the *tableux vivants* and Dalcroze eurhythmics. This type of public performance was rather typical of Sokol's nation-building repertoire at the turn of the century, most often presented at Sokol *slets* (large-scale urban gatherings and performances).[3]

Second, he greatly contributed to changing Sokol's associational practices and culture. Initially, it had been oriented toward an essentially elitist and certainly urban, middle-class symbolic politics centered on artistic performances, symbolic rituals in urban spaces, and socializing and networking in a neo-Slavist tradition. Murnik re-oriented Sokol rather toward highly professional and holistically understood gymnastics, which aimed not only at the maximization of associational membership, but also at the positioning of Sokol as an organization that would practically "mold" the "national body." Importantly, Murnik's most notable strategy of expanding the associational membership was to include women and women's gymnastics trainers, thus creating women's departments

3 *Tableaux vivants* were employed by various (national) movements to perform their ideology over the long nineteenth century. For the French Revolution's Festival of Reason (1793), see Mona Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 210. On *tableaux vivants* in the promotion of imperial loyalty in the Habsburg Monarchy, see Daniel L. Unowsky, *The Pomp and the Politics of Patriotism. Imperial Celebrations in Habsburg Austria, 1848-1916* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2005), 63, 79, 84, 87. For their role in staging English national identity in the complex imperial context, see Karen Elisabeth Harker, "Reconstructing Shakespearean Soundscapes: Tableaux Vivants, Incidental Music, and Expressions of National Identity on the London Stage, 1855–1911," doctoral dissertation (University of Birmingham, Birmingham, England, United Kingdom, 2020).

and committees within Sokol, where they could exercise independently and develop their own practices. In other words, his work was essential for initiating a novel phase of nation-building whereby it was translated from a primarily cultural and intellectual endeavor into a primarily practical one, with the aim of actually producing Yugoslavs with greater bodily capacity, body-mind harmony, and "national awareness" through Sokol's associational activities.

Overall, his most important texts were published almost exclusively in the context of Sokol, within its associational periodicals or as stand-alone publications. Within this frame, the main topics that he tackled were those of the (holistically understood) pedagogy of physical education, the systematization of physical movements, national economy, and Sokol ideology more broadly.[4] Importantly, he also acted as the editor of some of the most important Sokol periodicals and authored a number of choreographies for the gymnastic dances inspired by both classical and integral Yugoslavist canon.[5]

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS: *Sokolstvo in življenje* (Ljubljana, 1932); *Kultura in telovadba* (Ljubljana, 1929); "Prosvetni rad u Sokolstvu," *Sokolski glasnik*, no. 3–4 (1923): 89–95; "O problemih sistematike telesnih vaj," *Soko: List prednjaštva Saveza Sokola Kraljevine Jugoslavije*, nos. 1–12 (1935), nos. 2–12 (1936), and no. 2 (1937).

Context

The text of this source appeared in a booklet that Viktor Murnik self-published in 1929,[6] and before that as a series of articles in the main Sokol periodical, *Sokolski glasnik* (The Sokol Herald), in December that same year. It can be considered one of his most sophisticated pieces of writing on the relationship between holistically understood physical education and culture, respectively.

Due to his long-term prominent position within Sokol, as well as his practices within the association—particularly his systematization of movement and the development of Sokol pedagogy—it is important to use different elements from his biography and associational activities as a crucial context around the

4 "Prosvetni rad u Sokolstvu," *Sokolski glasnik*, no. 3–4 (1923), 89–95. Viktor Murnik, *Sokolstvo in življenje* (Ljubljana: self-published, 1932). Viktor Murnik "Narodno gospodarstvo in Sokolstvo," *Trgovski list* 15, nos. 29–36, March 8–26, 1932, 4. Viktor Murnik "O problemih sistematike telesnih vaj," *Soko: List prednjaštva Sokola Kraljevine Jugoslavije*, nos. 1–12 (1935), nos. 2–12 (1936), no. 2 (1937).

5 *Vestnik tehničnega odbora Jugoslovanske sokolske zveze* (The Herald of the Technical Committee of the Yugoslav Sokol Union); *Prednjak* (Gymnast), which was renamed in 1930 into *Soko: List prednjaštva Sokola Kraljevine Jugoslavije* (The Falcon: Journal of Sokol Gymnasts in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia).

6 Viktor Murnik, *Kultura in telovadba* (Ljubljana: self-published, 1929).

chosen text. These include, first, his very particular political socialization in *fin-de-siècle* Ljubljana; second, his subsequent role as an intellectual mediator between Western intellectual trends and regional ones; third, the relevance of the volatile local political context and his eventual ideological transformation. This transformation can be seen in Murnik's gradual shift from an optimistic, culturally Yugoslavist evolutionist thinker socialized in the modernist neo-Slavist traditions, towards a culturally pessimistic one that heavily biologized and essentialized cultural phenomena. It stemmed from his and most other intellectuals' grave disappointment brought about by the turbulent politics of the first decade of the interwar Yugoslav state and later the Great Depression. For that very reason, this 1929 booklet is one of the first publications that reflects his change of attitude.

Sokol, as the main venue of his political socialization, was rooted in its founders' and subsequently Masarykian evolutionist and modernist ideologies. To that end, Murnik heavily drew on these traditions throughout his life, albeit reading them through lenses of different disciplines at different points in time. This meant that he held strictly liberal beliefs on the value of voluntarism, "small-scale work," and gradual change, in contrast to those who increasingly argued for radical, revolutionary change from both left and right. Importantly, as with other Sokol thinkers, Murnik tasked himself with translating these thoughts into practice and, consequently, "molding the national body" which he saw as culturally and economically underdeveloped. The goal of this process was to raise the level of collective culture and productivity so that it could eventually fit the political modernity he initially thought the new Yugoslav state embodied due to its relatively more democratic character when compared to the previous state structures, e.g. the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

Crucially, Murnik was one of the most profound positivist thinkers on physical education in the region and belonged to the camp of those who vehemently argued for a distinction between (Western European) competitive sports and (Swedish, German, and Sokol) gymnastic systems on philosophical, pedagogical, psychological, but also economic grounds. This was primarily due to gymnastics' collectivist and sports' individualistic characters, rendering the former as a potential vehicle for large-scale change in national health, strength, efficiency and beauty. In this sense, Murnik can be regarded as a mediator between Western European positivists and theorists of gymnastics as boundary-work performances, such as Georges Demény, and the local knowledge producing milieux that hadn't yet experienced the institutionalization of such disciplines in the Slovenian or wider South Slavic context.

The thinkers who greatly influenced Murnik in this period usually stemmed from the strain of contemporaneous cognitivist pedagogy which sought to reject

the previously dominant behaviorist paradigm. Additionally, they acquired monistic views on the relationship between body and mind, seeking to connect gymnastics, education, and wider sociopolitical systems. In other words, these thinkers believed in the possibility of physically training people into adopting certain psychological traits as a consequence of bodily exercise. They believed that this would consequently create conditions for the creation or upholding of particular sociopolitical systems. This belief was in stark contrast with both Western European competitive sports- or aesthetics-based physical culture at the time, but also with the stances that came to dominate the East Central European contexts in the mid-to-late 1930s, after many such thinkers and practitioners experienced grave disappointment with the lack of results of their long-standing practical efforts.

Murnik and the rest of the thinkers engaged in associations similar to and including Sokol had a holistic and monistic view of physical education. They assumed that physical exercise greatly influenced human psychology, cognition, values, and capacities. Because of this, they engaged with the associational membership with an aim to establish and improve practices that were to raise the population's cultural level, but also labor capacity and efficiency.

However, the volatile party politics in 1920s Yugoslavia caused a wide-spread disappointment among those post-Habsburg Yugoslavist thinkers.[7] This was true also of Murnik, who had expected the state to take the lead in achieving the aforementioned goals. Therefore, he gradually adopted cultural pessimist and essentially antimodernist views around 1929, which is very much reflected in his subsequent stances towards physical education as well. This becomes particularly visible in this text, in which Murnik relied on works of Oswald Spengler and Friedrich Nietzsche to espouse arguments on modern life's harmful impact on human bodily capacities.[8] He also used this antimodernist argument to overturn civilizational hierarchies, claiming that primitive cultures are bound to develop (unlike modern societies which are bound to stagnate), due to their bodily movements being more natural and unbound. His main inspiration for this, beyond Spengler's take on Slavic nations as the youthful rising ones, was the work of the Leipzig-based ethnologist Karl Weule, who studied different groups' relations to physical exercise and their allegedly consequent cultural development.

When regarded from this perspective, Murnik's writings on the theory of movement and his notable work on systematizing basic calisthenic movements, as well as their expert terminology in Slovenian and Serbo-Croatian languages, represent a crucial vehicle and backdrop for his further theorizing on "versatile

7 Dejan Djokić, *Elusive Compromise: A History of Interwar Yugoslavia* (London: Hurst, 2007).
8 Oswald Spengler, *Der Mensch und die Technik* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1931).

movement" (*svestrani pokret*). He saw "versatile movement" in turn as conducive to the production of citizens with enlarged labor capacity, energy, and efficiency, but also psychological traits enabling the development of a more stable and progressive political culture, such as feelings of social solidarity, social justice, democratic spirit (*demokratičnost*), cooperativeness, intelligence, and so on.

In this particular booklet, *Kultura in telovadba* (Culture and Physical Exercise, 1929), Murnik argued that all culture is merely an exponent of the nature of the human body and is thus solely builds upon those foundations. This argument can be read as an essentially antimodernist—but at the same time evolutionist—take on civilizational hierarchies.

Seen from the Slovenian perspective, which was the most industrialized and literate language group in the interwar Yugoslav state, Murnik's theorization on physical and psychological malleability on the one hand and the placing of these debates into a civilizational framework on the other hand, can be seen as an attempt to argue for equalizing the state's immensely diverse populations—at least in terms of bodily capacity and psychological disposition. Importantly, having in mind his strictly anti-clerical, urban liberal milieu in Ljubljana, which was aligned with the royal court's integral Yugoslavist exponents in party politics (e.g. with the *Jugoslovenska nacionalna stranka*, the Yugoslav National Party), among others, for economic reasons his amalgamation-focused theoretical arguments and practices within Sokol can be seen not only as modernization attempts, but also as supportive of the centralist conception of the novel state.[9]

When examining this and other texts he produced, it is visible that the pool of sources and debates he mainly drew on consisted of progressive, reformist Germanophone physical education theorists, such as the immensely influential Karl Gaulhofer and Margarete Streicher, who jointly coined the theory on "natural movement," as well as Friedrich August Schmidt, the promoter of open-air gymnastics and the FKK movement. Furthermore, he also relied significantly on the Hungarian-Jewish philosopher and physicist of the older generation, Menyhért Palágyi, who dealt with the philosophy of perception and imagination, and whose theory of "virtual movement" Murnik used to further theorize on and experiment with the connection between the physiology of exercise and imaginative psychological processes.

Combining the American-style theory of scientific management, derived directly from Henry Ford, and the holistic cognitivist pedagogy of Eduard Spranger, Murnik strongly believed in the ability of physical education to teach or train

9 Oskar Mulej, "'Post-Liberalism,' Anti-Clericalism and Yugoslav Nationalism. Slovene Progressive Political Camp in the Interwar Period and Contemporary Czech Politics," *Střed. Časopis pro mezioborová studia Střední Evropy 19. a 20. století. / Centre. Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies of Central Europe in the 19th and 20th Centuries* 6, no. 1 (2014): 65–93.

individuals to use their physical energies in an economically efficient manner, as well as to apply those same principles elsewhere in life and thus to culturally develop, ultimately achieving state sovereignty through economic emancipation. In the context of the relatively small, unstable, and certainly economically weak Yugoslavia, this question was of paramount importance, especially when framed in positivist terms.

VIKTOR MURNIK
"Culture and Physical Exercise"

A nation's true and genuine culture requires not only healthy geniuses but also healthy average people. The culture of a nation is not and cannot be in the domain of geniuses alone. Ordinary people—in fact, as many of them as possible, or actually the entire nation—must also take part in it, each according to their own capabilities, which they must strengthen and keep healthy. According to the prominent pedagogical scientist and philosopher Eduard Spranger, the task that education in general has to fulfill is to enable people to support culture (i.e., to explore and experience it), create culture (i.e., in an ideal sense, to participate in its further development), and possess culture (i.e., to strive to become someone with a more mature, richer, and sophisticated personality). However, to be able to fulfill these goals in culture, it is necessary, above all, to have a healthy body because all culture is originally based on nature. In a sense, it merely represents an elevated and ennobled nature. Each person who is filled with culture and animates culture is also characterized by their coexistence with nature; they, too, would be unable to create anything spiritual if their bodies were not healthy and strong.

People can only maintain their relationship with nature through their bodies. The more in harmony with it, the more naturally they live, and the healthier and more robust they are. Natural life, health, and strength are impossible without vigorous and versatile physical activity. As long as our ancestors were in a primaeval state, they had an irresistible impulse towards physical movement and were forced to engage in it by their very living conditions. Contemporary living conditions in the civilized world no longer force people to pursue versatile and vigorous physical activity, but rather quite the opposite: they promote monotonous, often weak bodily movement with a detrimental effect on the body. In the civilized era, the genuine, powerful,

and healthy physical activity inherent to primaeval life can only be achieved by engaging in systematic physical exercise, possibly in nature. Such exercise is the only way for the people and nation to maintain the natural conditions which are indispensable for culture to thrive in the ever-worsening conditions of the new era.

This is the connection between physical exercise and culture, which is crucial. Modern physical exercise represents an inevitable and basic condition for modern culture. It should develop, strengthen, and keep healthy and strong all those natural human strengths that guarantee the healthy further development of culture.

…

Spirit and Life, Each to Its Own, but Both in Harmony!

Indeed, the truth and the proper path lie in the middle. Klages supposes that the spirit will one day cease to dwell in humans. Be that as it may, it remains in people for the time being and will remain there—if not forever, at least into the foreseeable future. And as long as it dwells in people, it must be in harmony with life, with the living body, if it is to do well and right. If the spirit can recognize that it is not doing what is proper and healthy, if it can recognize its mistakes and then force itself to correct them, then it will not succumb to such a terrible fate as Klages thinks. If it were in the essence of the human spirit to want and need to oppress life, this spirit would not lament, regret, and force itself to correct mistakes, as we can see from the abovementioned sayings of prominent men. Klages himself would not lament, either. If the oppression of life was contained in the essence of the human spirit, it should represent an essential part of every human being's spirit. However, as the voices of the aforesaid profound spirits reveal, it clearly does not.

So, the spirit also deserves what it is owed. People should not be aimlessly carried or driven by the powers stemming from a strengthened life force without any reflection or work of the spirit. They also need knowledge, now more than ever: knowledge that great men have attained and accumulated over time with the help of their spirit and based on their intuition. The intuition that these men possessed throughout history cannot simply appear in one's head but needs to be learned. People need to move a lot, strengthen their bodies, but also learn. In ancient Greece, the youth had to exercise much more than today's youth, but they also had to learn a lot. With a strong body filled with vigorous life, healthy and robust emotions, and a lively, healthy imagination, learning will not only mean stuffing knowledge into the brain because a healthy intuition will ensure a healthy digestion of that knowledge.

It will not be "cramming," loading information into memory, but rather experiencing education. Properly and soundly digested knowledge will allow people to control their own intuition and examine if their intuitive "hunches" are right or wrong, if they "illuminate" or not. They will also be able to judge what is pristine and genuine in the "spiritual food" so abundantly offered in these increasingly "ink-stained" times. …

… Vital force is fading from both the intellectuals and the circles which are to receive their works. And what are these circles like nowadays, when everyone is moving to the cities, and more and more people are gathering and concentrating in them? When people smell and breathe nothing but smoke, when they see only the movement of machines, these soulless and lifeless contraptions, when at home and in the streets they only come across mechanized nature, merely wires, screws, wheels, and constructions; when at home and in the streets, their heads are filled with voices from the radio, separated from actual life—these monstrous voices, almost disembodied as if the emotions emanating from them were preserved in formaldehyde; when their ears are continuously assaulted by the roar of motorcycles and cars and the hideous screaming of their horns, a sound that only a modern civilized man could produce and whose ears are soothed by this howling but are torn apart by the ringing of bells that Napoleon still loved to listen to; when so many people hardly ever move their bodies except for sluggish modern dance moves they make in smoky rooms to the screeching sounds of a jazz band, compared to which even the sounds of cats in heat are a true comfort to the ears; and so on. In such an environment, it is no wonder that factories are built even on the city's Parnassus, spewing out, promptly on order, poetic and other artistic constructions, dark, sooty constructions of smoke that the brain spews.

However, Europeans have recently felt an increasing desire to return to unstructured life. …

The intensive fostering of physical exercise, if anything, is the only thing that can make culture compatible with civilization—a fusion that some hold up as an ideal.

Isidora Grubački

ANGELA VODE: The Woman Question

Author: Angela Vode
Title: The Woman Question
Originally published: "Žensko vprašanje," *Književnost* 1, no. 6 (1933): 200–206.
Language: Slovenian

About the author

Angela Vode (1892, Ljubljana–1985, Ljubljana) was a teacher, activist, writer, publicist, and a central figure in the Slovenian interwar feminist movement. Despite her prominence, scholarly engagement with her activism and political thought has seen little growth. The 2001 publication focusing on Angela Vode and Boris Furlan as victims of the 1947 Nagode show trial remains the most comprehensive scholarly work on this prolific intellectual.[1] Since then, while there has been an increase in interest—reflected in several short biographies and articles[2]—her writings remain largely unexplored through the lens of the history of political

1 Peter Vodopivec, ed., *Usoda slovenskih demokratičnih izobražencev: Angela Vode in Boris Furlan, žrtvi Nagodetovega procesa* (Ljubljana: Slovenska matica, 2001).

2 Mateja Jeraj, "Angela Vode: pomembna osebnost slovenskega ženskega gibanja," *Splošno žensko društvo 1901–1945. Od dobrih deklet do feministk* (Ljubljana: Arhiv Republike Slovenije, 2003), 166–87. Karmen Klavžar, "Angela Vode," in *A Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminisms*, ed. Francisca de Haan, Krassimira Daskalova, and Anna Loutfi (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006), 604–07. Branka Vičar, "Angela Vode med liberalnim in socialističnim feminizmom," *Studia Historica Slovenica* 13, no. 2–3 (2013): 779–96. Sabina Žnidaršič-Žagar, "Angela Vode (1892–1985), Spol in usoda (1938/39)," *Studia Historica Slovenica* 13, no. 2–3 (2013): 797–816.

thought, though with a few notable exceptions.[3] Unusually for the time, Vode was, since March 1920, a member of the illegal Communist Party of Yugoslavia (*Komunistična partija Jugoslavije*, KPJ) and a leading figure in the feminist organization Women's Movement (*Ženski pokret*) in Ljubljana.[4] Although her commitment to feminism, social justice, and anti-fascist politics remained consistent, she withdrew from the communist movement in 1939 due to her disagreement with the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact.

She was born in 1892 in Ljubljana to Anton Vode, a railway worker, and Frančiška Vode, probably a housewife. She never married and did not have any children. Her formal education (also in Ljubljana) led her to a teaching job, and as a teacher Vode worked in various schools in villages around Ljubljana from 1911 until early 1917, when she lost her job. After that, she briefly worked as a private governess in Ljubljana and Maribor and in the Jadranska Bank in Kranj, from where she moved to a white-collar job in a factory. From most jobs, she was fired for her political views or activity, until she was employed as a secretary within the JSDS in Ljubljana. In March 1920, she joined the Socialist Workers' Party of Yugoslavia (Communist) (*Socijalistična delavska stranka Jugoslavije (komunista)*), where she worked until December 1920, when the party was made illegal. After that, she dedicated herself to the study of special education. She passed the state exam in this field in May 1921 (with some further specialization in Prague and Berlin) and then obtained a position at the special school for children with intellectual disabilities in Ljubljana, where she worked until January 1944, and then again briefly after the war.[5]

Overall, her ideological worldview can be described as an original intertwining of Marxism and feminism. She initially came into contact with socialist ideas through her father, who was a social democrat, and the socialist newspaper *Arbeiter Zeitung* which he read.[6] Her belief that "injustices must be addressed and one must fight to change the world"[7] was what drew her toward this path. Anti-Austrian sentiment was another core aspect of her identity and ideology from her formative years; "At every step, I realized that children who claimed to be

3 For the analysis of her antifascist thought, see Isidora Grubački, "Political Transformations of Interwar Feminisms: the Case of Yugoslavia," doctoral dissertation, Central European University, 2023, chapter 3. An excerpt from her 1934 publication has been translated and published with a biographic and contextual introduction by Manca G. Renko, "About the Author" and "Context" to "Angela Vode: The Woman in Contemporary Society," in *Texts and Contexts from the History of Feminism and Women's Rights*, 98–102. See also Trencsényi, *Intellectuals and the Crisis of Politics*, 104.

4 Angela Vode, "Spomini," in *Zbrana dela Angele Vode*, vol. 3, *Spomin in pozaba* (Ljubljana: Krtina, 2000), 96.

5 Ervin Dolenc, "Pedagoško delo Angele Vode," in *Usoda slovenskih demokratičnih izobražencev*, 29–30.

6 Renko, "About the Author" and "Context" to "Angela Vode: The Woman in Contemporary Society," 99. Vode, "Spomini," 54.

7 Vode, "Spomini," 50.

Germans held a privileged position," she remembered.[8] Her personal experience as a woman brought her close to the women's movement: "In my case," she wrote, "the drive for equality did not arise from theoretical study of the social question, nor from the founding of the women's movement, but rather from observing life around me, from personal experience—we girls had to realize every day how we were being pushed aside in favor of boys. And then later, in the workplace!"[9] All of this reveals that her involvement in the communist and feminist movements was deeply rooted in her personal pursuit of social justice and equality, values that remained at the heart of her lifelong activism.

Along these ideological lines, during the interwar period she was active in various pedagogical and feminist organizations in Ljubljana and in Yugoslavia. Most importantly, she was, together with Alojzija Štebi and Cirila Pleško-Štebi, co-founder of the organization *Ženski pokret* (Women's Movement) in Ljubljana in 1926, where she was active first as a secretary and then as a (vice-)president until 1937.[10] Through *Ženski pokret*, she was active in the *Dravska* section of the *Jugoslovanska ženska zveza* (Yugoslav National Council of Women, JŽZ, est. 1934), the leading platform for women's progressive activism in the Slovenian lands.[11] Her antifascist activism was arguably crucial for connecting Yugoslav and particularly Slovenian women's organizations with the Women's World Committee against War and Fascism, the leading women's antifascist organization founded in Paris and active from 1934 until the Second World War.[12]

At the heart of her activism was a prolific publishing career. She contributed to many periodicals and newspapers from the second half of the 1920s, among them the central Slovenian women's journal *Ženski svet*; the Yugoslav feminist journal *Ženski pokret*; the periodical of the *Zveza delavskih žen in deklet* (Association of Working Women and Girls), *Ženski list*; as well as in *Žena in dom*, *Gospodinja*, and in various other publications. Between 1931 and 1938, she edited the Monday edition of the daily newspaper *Jutro*, where she also wrote most of the contributions; according to Vode, the cancellation of her column was due to increasingly "pro-Hitlerian" state politics. Her books published in the 1930s were sociological analyses of women's position at the time. While *Žena v sedanji družbi* (Woman in Contemporary Society, 1934) and *Žena i fašizam* (Woman

8 Ibid., 50.

9 Ibid., 56.

10 As a delegate of *Ženski pokret*, she was also active on the international stage, participating in the congresses of the leading women's organizations of the time. She was a delegate at the following congresses: the Little Entente of Women in Prague (1927); the International Woman Suffrage Alliance in Berlin (1929), and the International Council of Women in Dubrovnik (1936).

11 For a recent overview of the work of the ICW and the *Dravska* Section, see Isidora Grubački and Irena Selišnik, "The National Women's Alliance in Interwar Yugoslavia. Between the Feminist Reform and Institutional Social Politics," *Women's History Review* 32, no. 2 (2023): 242–60.

12 Grubački, "Political Transformations of Interwar Feminisms," chapter 3.

and Fascism, 1935) focus predominantly on women's rights in the context of the rise of fascism, in her later book *Spol in usoda* (Sex and Destiny, 1938–39), Vode offered an analysis of the coming-of-age paths of women and men, arguing that the destiny of both is deeply conditioned by their sex.[13]

In 1939, Angela Vode was expelled from the Communist Party because of her disagreement over the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact between Germany and the Soviet Union; however, this information at the time remained largely within the circles of the Party.[14] Despite this, after the Second World War started in Yugoslavia in April 1941, Vode joined the Slovenian antifascist organization *Osvobodilna fronta* (Liberation Front, OF) as a representative of JŽZ. According to the historian Bojan Godeša, she remained active in the OF until the spring of 1942, when she was discreetly sidelined—not only because of her differing views from the Party leadership on key issues, but also because her growing influence among organized women made Party leaders increasingly uneasy. Vode was again invited to become active in the OF in the autumn of 1942 and in the *Protifašistička ženska zveza* (Antifascist Women's Alliance) in early 1943, which she rejected. Yet, her antifascist activism led to her arrest by the German authorities in February 1944, when she was taken to Ravensbrück. After several months in detention, she was eventually released, and upon her return wrote a memoir about her experiences in this concentration camp.[15]

After returning to Ljubljana, she continued working in the special school for children after the war until her arrest.[16] She was arrested by the new authorities on May 25, 1947, and soon after was given a twenty-year prison sentence. She remained imprisoned until January 1953. After her release, she was sidelined in public life and largely forgotten, yet not completely. Erna Muser, a Marxist activist, writer, and the first historian of women's movement in Slovenia, who had cooperated with Vode in the 1930s feminist movement, renewed contact with her in the 1960s and kept in touch for decades. Later on, Vode gave her first public interview to Frančiška Buttolo in 1984.[17]

13 *Spol in usoda*, Part I, was published in 1938; Part II was published in late 1938, although the official year of the publication is 1939. Upon the publication of the second part of *Spol in usoda* in late 1938, some conservative intellectuals attacked her in Catholic periodicals *Slovenec* and *Slovenski delavec*. The best contextualization for this event can be found in: Jelka Melik, "Angela Vode prvič pred sodiščem," in *Usoda slovenskih demokratičnih izobražencev*, 52–60.

14 Bojan Godeša, "Angela Vode in medvojne dileme," in *Usoda slovenskih demokratičnih izobražencev*, 65.

15 Ibid., 73. Angela Vode, "Spomini na suženjske dni," in *Zbrana dela Angele Vode*, vol. 3, *Spomini in pozaba*, ed. Mirjam Milharčič-Hladnik (Ljubljana: Krtina, 2000), 204–344. For an analysis of her memoirs about Ravensbrück, see "Angela Vode – Mara Čepič: dva različna pogleda na žensko koncentracijsko taborišče Ravensbrück," *Acta Histriae* 15, no. 2 (2007): 739–46.

16 Dolenc, "Pedagoško delo Angele Vode," 29–30.

17 Frančiška Buttolo, "O inteligenci in intelektualcih. Pogovor z Angelo Vodetovo," *Nova revija* 3, no. 24–25 (1984): 2788–91.

Angela Vode died in 1985. After her death, the sociologist Mirjam Milharčič Hladnik rediscovered her work in the 1990s and subsequently published and republished some of Vode's work in late 1990s. In 2006, the journalist and publicist Alenka Puhar published Angela Vode's "hidden memoir," *Skriti spomin*.[18]

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS**:** *Zbrana dela Angele Vode*, 3 vols., ed. Mirjam Milharčič-Hladnik, (Ljubljana: Krtina, 1998–2000); *Skriti spomin*, ed. Alenka Puhar (Ljubljana: Nova revija, 2006).

Context

The translated text below is Angela Vode's article "Žensko vprašanje" (The Woman Question), originally published in 1933 in the Marxist periodical *Književnost* (Literature, 1932–1935), edited by the prominent playwright, novelist, and literary and theater historian Bratko Kreft (1905–1996). In addition to literary works and translations—including excerpts from the writings of Maxim Gorky, Miroslav Krleža, Ernst Toller, as well as Kreft himself and the Slovenian writer Milena Mohorič—*Književnost* featured numerous translations of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. It also published a wide range of articles, discussions, and critiques by Slovenian communists, including contributions by one of the movement's leading figures, Edvard Kardelj (1910–1979), writing under the pseudonym Tone Brodar. Among these contributions were three texts on the "woman question" and feminism: one by Angela Vode, published in 1933, and two by Leopoldina Kos (see the following contribution in this reader) in 1934. The periodical also featured a positive review of Vode's 1934 book *Žena v sadašnji družbi* (Woman in Contemporary Society), describing it as "a great gain for Slovenian social-publicist literature." The review emphasized the book's value in shedding light on how one should approach what it called "one of our most difficult problems"—the "woman question."[19]

In this text, Angela Vode presents her own interpretation of the "woman question" within the framework of what she, following the socialist tradition, refers to as the "proletarian women's movement" and the "so-called bourgeois women's movement." Writing from a Marxist perspective, she contends that the concept remains insufficiently defined in the Slovenian context, as it is usually associated either with the *narodne dame* ("national ladies") active in Slovenian humanitarian and cultural women's associations, or with women's efforts to imitate men.

18 *Zbrana dela Angele Vode*, vol. 1, *Spol in upor* (Ljubljana: Krtina, 1998); vol. 2, *Značaj in usoda* (Ljubljana: Krtina, 1999); vol. 3, *Spomini in pozaba* (Ljubljana: Krtina, 2000), all edited by Mirjam Milharčič-Hladnik. Angela Vode, *Skriti spomin*, ed. Alenka Puhar (Ljubljana: Nova revija, 2006).

19 VL. Šk., "A. Vode: Žena v današnji družbi," in *Književnost*, no. 5–6 (1935): 221–26.

Calling for a rethinking of the "woman question," Vode challenges both prevailing associations. To support her argument, she draws not only on foundational Marxist texts such as *Das Kapital* (1867, published in Slovenian in 1933) and August Bebel's *Die Frau und der Sozialismus* (1879, published in Serbo-Croatian in 1909), but also on contemporary literature available at the time of her writing. These include Lisbeth Franzen-Hellersberg's *Die jugendliche Arbeiterin, ihre Arbeitsweise und Lebensform* (1932), Fannina Halle's *Die Frau in Sowjetrussland* (1932), and Alice Rühle-Gerstel's *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart* (1932). Drawing on these sources, Vode first examines the woman question from the perspective of working-class women—emphasizing the importance of autonomous women's organizing within the proletarian struggle—and then, in the excerpt translated below, from the perspective of bourgeois women's organizations. Thus, Vode approaches what she calls the "so-called bourgeois women's movement" with a tone of scientific objectivity, acknowledging the positive contributions of these organizations overall.

When viewed in light of Vode's biography, her 1933 article "The Woman Question" offers valuable insight into how she, as both a Marxist and a member of the Communist Party, came to see feminist organizing as not only necessary but politically meaningful, as reflected in her engagement within the organization Women's Movement in Ljubljana. As part of the state-wide alliance *Alijansa ženskih pokreta* (Alliance of Women's Movements, AŽP, 1923–1940), *Ženski pokret* promoted a broad feminist agenda that included demands for political rights, as well as legal, economic, and social reforms for women. Her relatively sympathetic view of the bourgeois women's movement and feminism becomes especially clear when her text is read alongside that of fellow Slovenian communist activist **Leopoldina Kos**, whose article "Feminism and the Struggle of the Working Woman" (*Feminizem in borba delovne žene*) was published in the same journal a year later. As Manca G. Renko notes in her contextualization of Kos's article,[20] Kos adopts a far more polemical tone—one reportedly encouraged by other members of the Communist Party—and delivers a harsh critique of the bourgeois women's movement. Seen in this light, Vode's article can be read as a subtle but deliberate intervention against the dominant stance among Slovenian communists in the early 1930s which disapproved of noncommunist women's organizing. It also becomes apparent that Kos's text simplifies the women's movement in precisely the way Vode warns against: by drawing a sharp and reductive line between bourgeois "ladies" and working-class women. In the memoirs she wrote many years later, Angela Vode noted that she still could not understand

20 See the entry on Leopoldina Kos in this volume.

Kos's article. As she elaborated: "In my opinion, this statement testifies to a complete ignorance of the situation, even among the working class, a lack of logical thinking, and much more. If, on the one hand, it is acknowledged that feminism gained moral legitimacy with the rise of fascism, why then would it be unnecessary in our Slovenian context?"[21]

At the same time, Angela Vode's text engages with the broader transnational debate on the "crisis of feminism" in the early 1930s. One of the intellectuals who helped shape this discourse was Alice Rühle-Gerstel, whose aforementioned 1932 study *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart* critically examined both the socialist and Weimar women's movements. A Marxist psychologist who combined Alfred Adler's individual psychology with Marxist theory, Rühle-Gerstel argued that the women's movement had reached a dead end.[22] In her view, the Weimar feminist movement had lost its relevance after achieving its primary goal: women's suffrage.[23] Read in this context, Vode's article reveals a strong alignment with Rühle-Gerstel's critique. However, writing after Hitler's rise to power in January 1933, Vode expanded Rühle-Gerstel's critique, emphasizing the weakness of political democracy in Germany *even with* women's suffrage. This position reflects her broader conviction that political rights are insufficient without corresponding economic rights; as she argued, "to expect women to achieve complete equality with men on the basis of political rights is to fall prey to these false hopes."[24] Building on Rühle-Gerstel's critique, Vode argues that the fatal error of the women's movement was its isolation of feminist goals from broader social and economic struggles.

Finally, Vode's article can also be read in the context of the Yugoslav discussion about the feminist "crisis," which entered the Yugoslav public sphere through a series of articles by the Prague-based, Serbian-born feminist Julka Chlapcová-Đorđević.[25] Drawing also on Rühle-Gerstel's work, Chlapcová-Đorđević argued that the feminist movement—both in Europe and particularly in Yugoslavia—had lost its direction due to its entanglement with national projects and its failure

21 Vode, "Spomini," 153.

22 The Adlerian approach, which considered individuals in connection with their environment, put an emphasis on the connections of individuals in community and their cooperation. Katherine E. Calvert, *Modeling Motherhood in Weimar Germany: Political and Psychological Discourses in Women's Writing* (Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2023), 42–48.

23 Alice Rühle-Gerstel, *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1932), 140.

24 Renko, "About the Author" and "Context" to "Angela Vode: The Woman in Contemporary Society," 101. Vode, "Spomini," 105.

25 She also published a study in Czech developing similar arguments: *Osudná chvíle feministického hnutí: Sexuální reformy a rovnoprávnost muže a ženy* (Prague: Prace Intelektu, 1933). In a way, Chlapcová-Đorđević introduced the discourse of the "crisis of feminism," which was later appropriated in historiography as well. See: Isidora Grubački, "Čija kriza? Feminizam i demokratija u Jugoslaviji 20-tih godina XX veka," *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 62, no. 2 (2022): 29–49, especially 31–32.

to focus on what she considered specifically feminist concerns such as reproductive rights, gender relations, and the division of labor.[26] This important Prague-based thinker specifically criticized the leader of the Alijansa ženskih pokreta, the civic feminist Alojzija Štebi, whose organization had since the introduction of the royal dictatorship in 1929 removed the demand for women's suffrage rights from the organization. In the article below, while not explicitly referring to the debate between these two feminists, Vode evidently sided with Štebi, as she cited her argument that the women's movement must become a broader social movement. She concluded that the only viable future for feminism was to align itself with the wider struggle of working people. She also advanced a similar argument in a review of Chlapcová-Đorđević's book published also in the summer of 1933.[27] Overall, this position mirrors Vode's own praxis, which consistently sought to bridge the women's and working-class movements—one example being her decision to write positively about the bourgeois women's movement in a Marxist communist periodical.

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ANGELA VODE
"The Woman Question"

All serious sociologists have considered the women's question as one of the crucial foundations for tackling the organization of human society. Given this fact, especially as, in recent decades, the women's question has come to the fore due to the changed economic situation, we could expect a little more clarity in this respect in our society. However, for our average person, the term "women's question" is almost always associated with the idea of a group

26 Kristina Andělová and Isidora Grubački, "Crises of Feminism and Democracy in the Interwar Period. Yugoslav and Czechoslovak Entanglements," in *East Central European Crisis Discourses in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Trencsényi et al., 159–82, especially 164, 172–73.

27 Angela Vode, "Dr. Julka Gjorgjević-Chlapcová," *Ženski svet* 11, no. 7–8, 1933, 179–81.

of women who, under the immortal name of "the ladies of the nation," work in various humanitarian and cultural women's societies. Those who consider themselves informed think that the women's question has been "created" by women who want to imitate men at all costs, especially in terms of morals and outward appearances, and who are trying to force them from their position of power. We have to admit that women themselves are guilty in this respect as well because they are also among those who completely misunderstand and misinterpret the women's question. Terms such as emancipation, equality, or independence are still only clear to a very small circle of women, yet clarity in this respect is urgently needed today.

…

In this respect, the proletarian women's movement fundamentally differs from the bourgeois women's movement, which unites women of all opinions and classes in an independent organization. The bourgeois women's movement was also given its initial impetus by the economic transformation of society. Its historical justification is based on this fact. It was born mainly out of the material hardship of middle-class (petty bourgeois) women and only partly out of the spiritual need of women who desired meaning and independence in their lives, although they were well off – especially in the previous decades when the middle classes were not yet as proletarianized as they are today. This is unsurprising because women's spirituality became shallow as their household duties diminished and their homes became cramped and empty. Thus, they also came to the realization that the only thing that could save them from economic and spiritual misery was professional work, which gave many of them a new meaning to their lives.

However, their husbands resisted them at this point, mainly because they felt threatened. Thus, women's physical and mental fitness to exercise the so-called higher professions has been debated for generations. Men also saw the danger to the "natural vocation" of women, who would no longer want to be mothers capable of love. The same men, however, considered it perfectly reasonable that workers' wives should perform the hardest work in the factories and saw no danger to the "natural vocation" of the female workers who poisoned their bodies working in chemical factories under the most unfavorable conditions. Women have also always performed the most demanding jobs as farmers, housewives, and cottage industry workers – yet no one has ever questioned their ability there. However, when women started to advance towards the so-called higher professions, men worried about their physical and spiritual "femininity".

Therefore, the bourgeois women had yet to gain access to vocational education and a profession. This fact inevitably gave rise to the need for women to unite and fight together for the same rights as men. This aspiration provided the basis for the so-called bourgeois women's movement, which assumed the task of achieving civil and social equality (to men), which would serve as a foundation for the common efforts aimed at humanity's cultural and social progress. This is the fundamental difference between the two movements. The proletarian women's movement sees the possibility of women's equality only in a society where social equality applies to everyone. Within a class state, proletarian women cannot profit much from political rights, although, at certain times, they are not insignificant to them. That is why we have seen many examples of working-class women struggling for civic equality in parallel with bourgeois women in the era of parliamentary democracy. If we take into account the bourgeois women's social position and especially their mentality, determined by their upbringing as well as by their feminine nature whose essence consists of an absolutely concrete view of life and its phenomena, it is understandable that professionally employed bourgeois women would not join the working-class women in their class aspirations. For these reasons, for example, public and private female employees very rarely consciously recognize that they belong to the proletarian class, even though they are just as exploited as working-class women, perhaps only in a different form. Even if all their conditions of existence do, in fact, classify these women as the proletariat, this conclusion means nothing to them because all their aspirations go in the opposite direction: to be, at least outwardly, bourgeois. Most of these women have not yet realized any need for solidarity with their comrades. In most of them, the aspiration has not yet been awakened to elevate their personality to that of a full-fledged human being. These women only feel that they are disregarded as women, both at work and within the family. Therefore, they are much more open to the aspirations of the women's movement with its concrete goal of achieving equality between men and women rather than to the class movement, as most women lack all the preconditions to understand the latter. In this respect, class-conscious women within the women's movement have an important educational task.

The educational significance of the bourgeois women's movement lies in the fact that it has demonstrated the importance of women's economic and spiritual independence. Rühle-Gerstel says the following about it: "Even if the women's movement would have achieved nothing else, the very fact that it has taught women to see their destiny collectively makes it one of the great historical phenomena."

Since women have by now penetrated all professions and enjoy political rights in almost all countries, the bourgeois women's movement has actually completed its task or at least achieved its formal external aim. This was demonstrated years ago at the congress of the IAW – International Woman Suffrage Alliance, which changed its name accordingly: the "Women's Alliance for the Political Education of Women." Today, the women's movement is at a standstill: partly for the reason mentioned above – because it has already reached its goal – but certainly, to a large extent, because it has not brought women the satisfaction and successes that they had hoped to gain in view of their social position as a result of equality. A classic example of the value of political rights is Germany, where political democracy was just recently at its height, but overnight, men and women have been deprived of their rights. Even the simple truth that the men who have the right to vote are nowadays starving just as much as women who do not should reveal the problematic value of the struggle for mere political equality.

The women's movement made the fatal mistake of setting its purpose in isolation from the other necessities of life, which it could not foresee in an era of economic boom – because it did not consider the dynamics of historical development. Consequently, it is now faced with a new realization and thus a new task: women's equality can only have real value in a society based on social equality, which depends on the precondition of the economic reorganization of society. This is what we need to focus our efforts on.

Individual members of the women's movement are fully aware of this fact. Thus, Lojzka Štebi states the following in one of the recent issues of the *Ženski pokret* magazine: "The crucial mistake of the women's movement was to overestimate the power of women and underestimate the power of the system."

She then lists the problems that the women's movement has tried to address – the protection of mothers and children, the regulation of marriage and family – and concludes: "The same is true for these crucial problems of our movement as for the others: the asocial and amoral system of life as a whole should be fundamentally changed. – Can the women's movement of our time overcome the critical situation in which it has found itself? It can, but only on one condition: that it realizes it must be the first social movement and accepts all the consequences of such a movement."

This means that the women's movement must become a part of the working people's movement, in which all the oppressed struggle for a more equitable society in which women will also have their rights. The prerequisite for such a system is economic security, which alone can bring women personal freedom and the possibility of participating in the regulation of their own

relations to society, the working community, and the family because they will thus consciously take part in public life as full-fledged citizens.

The women's question has not even remotely been resolved, but the path to a solution is clearer than ever. Today, women have only just begun to realize the urgency of changing their situation. However, the solution to the women's question will only reach its acute stage once the preconditions have been met.

Manca G. Renko

LEOPOLDINA KOS: Feminism and the Struggle of the Working Woman

Author: Leopoldina Kos, under the pseudonym M. Knapova
Title: Feminism and the Struggle of the Working Woman
Originally published: "Feminizem in borba delovne žene," *Književnost* 2, no. 1–2 (1934): 24–33.
Language: Slovenian

About the author

Leopoldina Kos (1889, Idrija–1968, Golnik), also Poldka Kos, was a teacher and political worker particularly politically active during the interwar period. As a teacher with a strong political stance, she was frequently relocated and worked in Idrija and its surrounding areas, in the rural areas around Ljubljana, and in Murska Sobota. Being on the move, especially as a politically suspicious person, meant that she did not retain many of her documents, including her writings, lectures, and letters. Although she published little, in this volume she represents the often-overlooked women political workers in the interwar period, as her efforts were primarily among the rural population, especially women.

To date, there is no comprehensive and accessible biography of Leopoldina Kos. Her life is scarcely documented, with only a brief entry in the Slovenian Biographic Lexicon.[1] This biography aims to fill that gap by piecing together her life trajectory from limited archival sources and her autobiographical writings.[2] The following biography is based on documents preserved in the collection of Erna Muser, a political activist, feminist, and chronicler of Slovenian women's history.[3]

As indicated by her correspondence with Erna Muser, who initiated and edited her writing, Leopoldina Kos spent several years crafting her autobiography. Before publishing parts of her memoir, Kos expressed doubts, insisting she had experienced little and lacked writing skill. "Besides," she wrote in a letter to Muser from 1959, "you're all forgetting that I'm old; this year I'll turn 70."[4] Throughout the writing process, Muser provided feedback, asking for specifics—names, dates, and locations—whenever details were vague.[5] The final manuscript, totaling twenty-four pages, is concise, condensing a lifetime into a narrative shaped by the political transformations of the twentieth century. The autobiography was written in the context when the Historical Archive of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in 1958 issued a call for memoirs about the labor movement and the Communist Party, and Kos's submission won one of the prizes, as reported in the newspaper *Ljudska pravica* in 1959.[6] This context suggests two points: first, the memoir was fact-checked, making it a reliable source; second, it reflects both her ideological alignment with the Party and the political expectations of the time, which may introduce some ideological bias.

It comes as no surprise that her life trajectory according to her autobiography follows a typical ideological development for interwar socialists and communists as often narrated in memoirs written after the Second World War. Her father was a middle-class liberal nationalist. She grew up in Idrija, a town in Habsburg Carniola (today in western Slovenia), renowned for its mercury mine that generated the social, political, and cultural life of the area. Until the end of the First World War, in the time of Kos's intellectual and political formation, Idrija

1 Branko Marušič, "Kos, Leopoldina (1889–1968)," *Slovenska biografija* (Ljubljana: ZRC SAZU, 2013), https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi1015290/.

2 Some of these writings remain unpublished and are preserved in the collection of her comrade, researcher, and political worker Erna Muser (1912–1991) at the National and University Library in Ljubljana. Others have been published, including her autobiography featured in the newspaper *Idrijski razgledi* in 1959 as an excerpt and posthumously as a whole in 1968; see Poldka Kos, "Nekaj spominov iz mojega *življenja*," *Idrijski razgledi* 4, no. 1 (1959), 3–7 and *Idrijski razgledi* 13, no. 1 (1968), 11–18, no. 2, 43–52, and no. 3, 70–72.

3 Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica, NUK Ms 1432, VIII.1.9. Kos Leopoldina.

4 NUK Ms 1432, IV Korespondenca, Kos, Poldka, M55, Letter from February 2, 1959.

5 NUK Ms 1432, III Pisma, M45.

6 "Izid nagradnega natečaja," *Ljudska pravica* 24, no. 305, January 1, 1959, 16.

belonged to Carniola (*Kranjska*), a region of the Habsburg Empire, which Kos often described as a "clerical" land resistant to "progressive" ideas.[7] As a student at a teacher-training school (*učiteljišče*) in Gorizia, with its mixed Italian-Slovenian population, she identified as a Slovenian nationalist herself, later developing sympathies for the Sokol movement. She thrived in the cultural and intellectual milieu of progressive Slovenian circles in Gorizia, where she encountered the ideas of South Slavic unification and Yugoslavism. She warmly embraced these concepts, viewing them as an appealing alternative to the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, which she, as a Slovenian nationalist, opposed. She finished her studies in 1909 and was excited to experience financial independence and to "work amongst the people."[8]

In 1909/10 she first worked as a substitute teacher in the rural area of Notranjska in Carniola (Stari trg pri Ložu and Cerknica). She found her circumstances difficult, because the position of teachers in rural areas was, as she recalled, "between the chaplain and the sexton."[9] She also realized that the female teachers were worse off than male teachers, as they had no political rights and were constantly restricted in their private lives. The headmaster even warned her that it was inappropriate for a "young girl" to be alone "eating at a restaurant," as he once saw her having lunch outside.[10] In the Slovenian region of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, as across early twentieth-century Europe, female teachers were central to education and women's rights. Teachers like Leopoldina Kos experienced workplace gender disparities and became key figures in the feminist movement, advocating for national and gender equality. In the multiethnic northern Adriatic, where Kos began her career, teaching often intertwined with national activism, as women were expected to instill pride in their mother tongue and national identity.[11]

Such was the case in Idrija, where she was transferred a year later, in 1910. The school there was funded by the German owners of the mine, promoting strong German language and cultural influences within a predominantly Slovenian community. Her Slovenian national activism clashed with the school leadership's values, and by the end of her first school year, she was dismissed. From that point on, she was assigned only to the most remote villages to limit her potential political influence. As the First World War broke out, being politically outspoken was a higher risk, but one that she was willing to take. In 1915 she was

7 NUK Ms 1432, VIII.1.9. Kos Leopoldina, Manuscript from 1947/8, unpaginated.
8 NUK Ms 1432, VIII.1.9. Kos Leopoldina, Manuscript from 1958, f. 3.
9 NUK Ms 1432, VIII.1.9. Kos Leopoldina, Manuscript from 1958, f. 4.
10 Ibid.
11 Marta Verginella, "Female Teachers–The Ferrywomen of Transitional Education," in *Women and Work in the North-Eastern Adriatic*, ed. Marta Verginella and Urška Strle (Budapest–Vienna–New York: Central European University Press, 2025), 33–61.

arrested and sent to prison in Ljubljana, because she cheered "*Živijo*" (Long live!) when the Russians took Przemyśl.[12] At the time, she believed that the existence of Yugoslavia would solve all the social and political problems of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.[13]

After the war, she was assigned to the village Ledine above Idrija. Following the Treaty of Rapallo (1920), Idrija became part of the Kingdom of Italy. This marked an amplification of the struggle against Italian fascism in the Littoral, in which Kos participated as a teacher. By 1923, she started to consider herself a communist.[14] This ideological switch can be attributed to the Gentile school reform that came to power in the same year. One of the attempts of this reform was to limit the number of women teachers in schools and to forbid non-Italian (Slovenian and Croatian) schools in the Julian March that managed to maintain classes in the mother tongue. The Italian language became the obligatory language of instruction.[15] She was transferred to the village Vojsko, above Idrija, and was prohibited from teaching in the Slovenian language. Nevertheless, she continued to do so, which frequently led to conflicts with the authorities. In 1926, she was dismissed from her position, as she wrote in her memoir, for "hating Italy and fascism and leading a campaign against the enrollment of teachers into the fascist union."[16] Like many other Slovenian and Croatian teachers (and also other intellectuals), she moved to Yugoslavia.

Her first post in Yugoslavia was in the village of Šmartno near Ljubljana, where she was not only a teacher, but also organized a society for young women and girls (the "*dekliški krožek*"). As she remembered, it was attended by approximately 30 participants, some of whom came directly from Ljubljana where they worked. She lectured to them on personal hygiene, first aid, home organization, laundry, and cooking, as well as on "the origins and development of society, the historical evolution of women, and their equality."[17] The following year, she was transferred to the village of Suhor in Bela Krajina after being denounced as a communist. A year later, she was able to return to her position. However, she was not permitted to continue her involvement in the girls' club. She was the subject of two disciplinary investigations. The first was because she criticized the principal

12 "Zasledovanje učiteljice Leopoldine Kos," *Slovenski narod* 51, no. 53, March 5, 1918, 1.

13 Ibid.

14 She mentioned the year 1923 as crucial in her memoir (p. 7) and in a letter to Muser (NUK Ms 1432 M, IV Korespondenca, Kos, Poldka, M55, Letter from March 22, 1956).

15 For recent contributions about Gentile's school reform, see for instance the conference *Ob 100. obletnici Gentilejeve šolske reforme: posledice za primorski prostor*, organized in Trieste by the Študijski center za narodno spravo (Study Center for National Reconciliation) and the Društvo slovenskih izobražencev (Association of Slovenian Educators) in 2023, https://www.scnr.si/znanstveni-posvet-ob-100-obletnici-gentilejeve-olske-reforme-posledice-za-primorski-prostor.html.

16 NUK Ms 1432, VIII.1.9, Kos Leopoldina, Manuscript from 1947/8, unpaginated.

17 NUK Ms 1432, VIII.1.9, Kos Leopoldina, Manuscript from 1947/8, unpaginated.

for imposing his lessons on female teachers and not working as hard as they did. The second investigation arose because she collected signatures for women's suffrage. Again, she was transferred "for political and anti-state reasons"[18] to Murska Sobota in Prekmurje, a location as distant from Ljubljana as possible. There, she attempted to organize a strike in a local textile factory, albeit unsuccessfully, maintained close ties with the local communists, and gave lectures to teachers on topics such as fascism, women's equality, and imperialism.

In September 1937, the principal in Murska Sobota submitted material for the initiation of a disciplinary investigation against her. In a decree she was accused of "seriously damaging the reputation of her profession" through "propaganda statements that contradicted her position as a teacher and state official."[19] The allegations included promoting antimilitarism, discussing government corruption, advocating for women's equality, and maintaining close ties with known communists.[20] After that, she was relocated once again, this time to the village of Veliki Trn above Krško, where she fell ill and retired in 1941. Following her retirement, she moved to Ljubljana and joined the antifascist resistance movement. In September 1944, she was arrested and deported to Auschwitz, which she survived with the solidarity and support of her comrades.[21]

After 1945, she worked in the education department of the Municipal People's Committee in Ljubljana. However, in 1947, due to her declining health, she requested a transfer to Idrija. There, she lived with her sister and finally "found a home after many years of wandering."[22] She died in 1968 at the age of 79.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS: "Feminizem in borba delovne žene," *Književnost* 2, no. 1–2 (1934): 24–33; "Redukcija žen v javnih službah," *Književnost* 2, no. 5 (1934): 182–185.

Context

Kos's political journey was deeply intertwined with the turbulent history of her era and shaped by the cultural and political landscape of her intellectual and political formation. Her first influence was Idrija, a town marked by the working-class culture of its mining community and intense nationalistic tensions among its Slovenian, German, and Italian communities. It is no coincidence that Idrija

18 NUK Ms 1432, VIII.1.9. Kos Leopoldina, Manuscript from 1958, f. 14.
19 NUK Ms 1432, VIII.1.9. Kos Leopoldina, Odločba, Kraljevska banska uprava Dravske banovine Ljubljana, November 22, 1937.
20 Ibid.
21 NUK Ms 1432, VIII.1.9. Kos Leopoldina, Manuscript from 1958, 15–20.
22 Ibid, 20.

was the site of the first Slovenian translation of the Communist Manifesto in 1908, during the formative years of Kos's political consciousness. Her ideological evolution—from anti-clericalism and Slovenian nationalism to Yugoslavism, liberalism, and ultimately social democracy and Marxist communism—paralleled the dramatic political shifts she witnessed throughout her life, encompassing the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Italian fascism, the authoritarian Kingdom of Yugoslavia, socialist Yugoslavia, and the upheavals of two World Wars. As a public employee and teacher, she directly confronted the ideological, political, and gender-based pressures imposed by each regime.

Kos occasionally contributed as a writer. Her articles, characterized by their simple yet precise language, articulated sharp political messages. They often addressed the injustices of capitalist society and authoritarian regimes, with a particular focus on the exploitation of women. The article "Feminism and the Struggle of Working Women" was published in *Književnost* (Literature), the first Slovenian Marxist magazine, which ran from 1932 to 1935 and was edited by writer, theatre director, and academic Bratko Kreft.[23] This was a significant achievement, given that the Communist Party had been operating illegally since 1921 and faced intensified persecution following King Alexander's dictatorship in 1929. *Književnost* primarily featured literary works, including both translations and original Slovenian texts. Ideological articles were often disguised under pseudonyms, as in our case: "M. Knapova" ('*knap*' means 'miner', with the suffix *-ova* suggesting a woman who sympathizes with miners or is a miner's wife, a nod to Idrija's economic heritage). Kos recalled that she wrote the text in order to "open the eyes of those women who saw the solution to their oppression in feminism."[24]

Leopoldina Kos believed that the true solution to women's issues lay in the collective struggle of all the oppressed against class exploitation. This perspective was a common socialist position in the interwar period. As early as 1920, among others, the communist activist and later Partisan Tončka Čeč (1896–1943) wrote in the newspaper *Rdeči prapor* (The Red Banner) that only a unified struggle of women and men could liberate people from capitalist oppression.[25] The same year, the political activist, teacher, and writer Angela Vode (1892–1985) argued in the social democratic paper *Naprej* that the "woman question" was fundamentally

23 The text "Feminizem in borba delovne žene" was republished in a 1983 special issue of the Yugoslav Marxist magazine *Teorija in Praksa* (Theory and Practice): *1883–1983: Marx A Hundred Years Later*, edited by Neda Brlgez (later Pagon). However, the article was wrongly attributed to Milena Mohorič (1905–1972), and it was the only wrongly attributed text of the 30 published in the issue. It was also the only text written by a woman.

24 NUK Ms 1432, VIII.1.9. Kos Leopoldina, Manuscript from 1958, f. 11.

25 Tončka Čeč, "Ženam proletarkam!," *Rdeči prapor*, no. 55, December 7, 1920, 1.

a social issue.[26] Leopoldina Kos claimed that the so-called "woman question" was actually a broader "bread question" (*krušno vprašanje*), emphasizing that issues traditionally seen as specific to women were, at their core, about fundamental economic survival and class struggle.[27] These and similar ideas were famously appropriated and synthesized by Vida Tomšič in her prominent lecture at the Fifth Conference of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in Zagreb in 1940. Tomšič asserted that "feminism as a movement of the liberal bourgeoisie is disintegrating" and that the only way to resolve the "woman question" was through class struggle.[28]

While editing the draft of her memoirs in 1956, Erna Muser asked Kos if she knew Alojzija Štebi, a prominent feminist of the era.[29] Kos replied that she had never been in contact with Štebi and was unfamiliar with her work.[30] This suggests that Kos knew little about feminism and opposed feminist positions primarily because she believed it was expected by the Communist Party. In 1958, Muser questioned Kos about a 1941 letter in which Kos had criticized a poem Muser wrote, calling it "feminist" and advising changes (she used the word "*preorientacija*").[31] Kos also wrote: "This order comes from the avant-garde but is also a response to contemporary needs. Feminism must be eliminated."[32]

Kos, therefore, wrote against feminism despite limited knowledge of it. This is a reminder that intellectual and/or political positions have often been shaped by limited information. The source itself makes it quite evident: while it addresses many topics, it lacks coherence and depth. Though the source is "messy"—broad, conflicted, and sometimes written merely to fulfill the implicit reader's expectations—analyzing imperfect sources is essential for understanding intellectual and political history. Coherent ideas often emerged from a range of conflicting stances and perspectives. This is one of such cases. Kos wasn't a skilled writer (and she was aware of it herself), but she was a tireless political worker and educator amongst people. However, in a 1958 letter to Muser, she hesitated to elaborate further on this article, believing it was not a particularly good one. She suggested summarizing it simply as: "I wanted to say that all working women belong to the

26 Angela Vode, "Socializem in žena," *Naprej* 4, no. 80, April 9, 1920, 1.
27 M. Knapova (Leopoldina Kos), "Feminizem in borba delovne žene," *Književnost* 2, no. 1–2 (1934): 24.
28 Vida Tomšič, "Referat na V. državni konferenci KPJ," in *Slovenke v narodnoosvobodilnem boju: zbornik dokumentov, člankov in spominov*, ed. Stana Gerk et al. (Ljubljana: Borec, 1970), 18–22.
29 NUK Ms 1432, III Pisma, M45, Letter from Erna Muser to Leopoldina Kos, March 5, 1956.
30 NUK Ms 1432, IV Korespondenca, Kos, Poldka, M55, Letter from Leopoldina Kos to Erna Muser, March 22, 1956.
31 NUK Ms 1432, III Pisma, M45, Letter from Erna Muser to Leopoldina Kos, July 27, 1958.
32 Ibid.

unified front, led by the working class."[33] She expressed little regard for the article itself, noting that her polemical tone was adopted at the Party's suggestion.[34]

While opposing feminism and reframing the "woman question" as central to class struggle are core themes in "Feminism and the Struggle of Working Women," she also addressed a range of other issues. These include women's right to work, the policies of the League of Nations, economic questions, fascism, prostitution, and family dynamics. The reader may get the impression that, with so few opportunities to write, she tried to say everything at once when given the chance. However, work emerges as the central topic in the chosen excerpt. This focus is evident not only in her life trajectory but also in her writings, which frequently return to this subject. The prominence of work in her discourse reflects its pertinence in the early 1930s, a period when the economic crisis and fascist ideology reignited debates about women's employment and their role in society. This topic is also pertinent in Angela Vode's canonical work *Žena v današnji družbi* (The Woman in Contemporary Society),[35] which was published in the same year as the two articles that Kos wrote for *Književnost*. In addition to the article in focus, Kos also published an article titled "Redukcija žen v javnih službah" (The Reduction of Women in the Public Sector). In both pieces, like Angela Vode, Kos strongly argued that economic independence is a fundamental right for women and that they should not be excluded from any professional roles. She advocated that instead of pushing women out of the workforce, employers should create conditions where more people can work fewer hours for the same salaries.[36]

"Feminism and the Struggle of Working Women" critiques the disconnect between what she calls "bourgeois" and "working-class women," arguing that feminism, as shaped by the bourgeoisie, cannot address the real needs of working women. Kos opens the article with an anecdote about a strike in Jesenice,[37] where working women protested alongside men for higher wages. Their efforts, however, were ignored by non-socialist women's publications, which focused on "bourgeois concerns" rather than the urgent "wage struggle" of the proletariat. Kos contrasts the bourgeois woman's interest in kitchen gadgets with the working-class woman's need for better working conditions, emphasizing that the bourgeois

33 NUK Ms 1432, IV Korespondenca, Kos, Poldka, M55, Letter from Leopoldina Kos to Erna Muser, December 17, 1958.

34 Ibid.

35 Manca G. Renko, "Angela Vode: The Woman in Contemporary Society," in *Texts and Contexts from the History of Feminism and Women's Rights*, 98–108.

36 Knapova, "Redukcija žen v javnih službah," *Književnost* 2, no. 5 (1934): 183.

37 She refers to the 1932 ironworks strike in the industrial town of Jesenice. While the 1932 strike was unsuccessful, subsequent strikes in the following years became highly politicized. See Janko Prunk, "Prvo ljudskofrontno povezovanje na Jesenicah 1935–1937," *Zgodovinski časopis* 31, no. 1–2 (1977): 87–95.

perspective trivializes the daily struggles of laboring women. Kos contends that bourgeois women lack an understanding of true economic hardship and suggests that bourgeois women's activism only seeks to improve their position within the existing class structure, while working-class women are compelled to labor out of economic necessity. For working-class women, she claims, work has never been a right but an unavoidable duty. Though feminism has secured workplace entry for middle-class women, Kos argues this was tolerated by capitalism because women provided cheap, exploitable labor. Under fascism, however, women's rights faced new threats, giving feminism renewed moral urgency.[38] At the same time, as she argued in another text, capitalism also often shifted its burdens onto the working classes, for instance by dismissing of married civil servants.[39]

When it comes to her writing style, it is evident from the excerpt that Kos frequently employs irony to highlight the disconnect between feminist rhetoric and the struggles of the working class. Her text is accessible and easy to read, reflecting her background in fieldwork and her experience giving lectures to working-class women. Based on her writing style, it is easy to believe that she was a passionate speaker who could engage her audience with humor while also articulating their frustrations.

Above all, it could be argued that Leopoldina Kos was a practical woman; she understood ideals while maintaining clear goals. This can be illustrated, rather anecdotally, in her discussions with Erna Muser about where to publish her memoir. In a letter, written on the International Women's Day in 1959, she was straightforward: "Publish it where the fee is highest."[40]

Acknowledgement

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38 M. Knapova, "Feminizem in borba delovne žene," *Književnost*, 2, no. 1–2 (1934): 25–30.

39 M. Knapova, "Redukcija žen v javnih službah," 183.

40 NUK Ms 1432, IV Korespondenca, Kos, Poldka, M55, Letter from Leopoldina Kos to Erna Muser, March 8, 1959.

LEOPOLDINA KOS
"Feminism and the Struggle of Working Women"

The women's question involves the various interests that women have as human beings and members of society. Therefore, despite ignoring events, mixing up concepts, and avoiding facts, there is only one truth: that in contemporary class society, the women's question cannot be the same for all women because the personal and social position of wives depends, just as in the case of their husbands, on the economic position dictated by their social class. This can be best explained by comparing two distinct class representatives: the wife of a magnate and the woman working in his factory. The former is a "distinguished lady" who lives in idleness or dedicates herself to her own "culture," enjoying all the luxuries and comforts of the privileged. On the other hand, the factory worker can barely earn enough to survive with her hard work, while the factory owner appropriates her surplus labor and his wife lives off this exploitation as well. Due to the former's parasitism and the exploitation of the latter, these two women share no common interest.

Different women's movements also stem from different class positions. The bourgeois women's movement emerged earlier. When the worsening economic situation pushed petty-bourgeois women to seek independent income, they felt it shameful to take up just any job—like proletarian women had been forced to do decades earlier—and sought employment suited to their condition. However, since they were not qualified for vocational work, they demanded "the right to education and work," which represented the beginning of the bourgeois women's movement.

Meanwhile, proletarian women did not have to fight for the "right to work" because work was not a right but rather a duty for them, stemming from their class position, the need to earn (and co-earn) money, and the production process itself, which had immediately incorporated women's and children's labor with the emergence of industry.

Thus, the aim of both women's movements is completely different, despite the same impulse: the economic one. The bourgeois women's movement fights for the independent existence of bourgeois women and their assertion in the bourgeois society. Meanwhile, the proletarian movement struggles against class exploitation and for the liberation of women in the socialist society in general.

…

It is clear that feminism cannot liberate working women. With the advent of fascism, which denies women their political and economic freedom, feminism has regained moral legitimacy, respectability, and scope—although only subjectively, as the fascists' struggle is not aimed only against women but against working people in general. Fascism represents capitalism's ultimate effort to secure its own existence, and the greater the capitalist crisis, the more it must exert downward pressure, especially against the most rightless part of society: the working women. Feminism has indeed ensured the right to work for bourgeois women, but it has succeeded only because this has not undermined the capitalist economy. On the contrary, capitalism has based the dirtiest exploitation system on the right to work. Consequently, working women are generally happy if they can give up their vocational work and their economic, political, and personal "freedom" as they return to their "natural occupation"—housework and motherhood. This is probably the main reason for the success of fascism and other reactionary movements (for example, clericalist movements in Spain, etc.) among women. Now that capitalist interests demand a reduction of the workforce, fascism has successfully broken the power of the best-organized feminist movement in Germany with a single stroke and is successfully dismissing working women from vocational jobs and production. Feminism's framework is too narrow for working women because only the struggle of the class-conscious proletariat against exploitation and for a society of new free people represents the fight for true independence and freedom.

This is what feminism is: the equality of women and men, social reforms, and cultural advancement in the bourgeois social order. The issues are raised and addressed in the spirit of liberal democracy, with the women's question as central and autonomous. This is perfectly in line with the needs of bourgeois women, who strive for legally recognized emancipation in comparison with men of their own class. In practice, these women are equal to their husbands anyway, while they are actually privileged in every respect in comparison with the petty-bourgeois or proletarian men, even if they seem disadvantaged on paper. It is in the interest of the bourgeoisie to preserve the existing social order, which is why these ladies fight for a united women's front, emphasizing common sexual, social, etc., injustices while using phrases about humanity and respect for freedom and personality to cover up class differences and exploitation and conceal the true source of oppression: private property and class society.

…

Differences in women's participation reveal their class differentiation in our country as well. While proletarian and working women struggle for a piece of bread, the right to work, human and social equality, and a new society, bourgeois women pursue "charity, physical culture, aesthetics, and splendor." The development of the society in which we all must live also pushes the women's movement towards a distinct separation of fronts and a clear definition of the struggle.

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Cody James Inglis

ETBIN KRISTAN: Un-American Socialism

Author: Etbin Kristan
Title: Un-American Socialism
Originally published: "Neamerikanski socializem," *Majski glas* 14 (1934): 11–14.
Language: Slovenian

About the author

Etbin Kristan (1867, Ljubljana–1953, Ljubljana) was a writer, dramatist, politician, political theorist, and publicist.[1] In 1896, Kristan co-founded the

1 Unfortunately, I do not deal with Kristan's literary or dramatic work here. This political-biographic sketch was derived from the following published sources: Stanislaus Florjančič, "Das politische Werk des Etbin Kristan bis zum Ende des Ersten Weltkrieges. Eine evolutionistisch-revolutionäre Konzeption zur Lösung der sozialen Frage," Magister thesis, University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria, 1988. Dušan Kermavner, "Kristan, Etbin," in *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije*, vol. 5, *Jugos–Mak* (Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod FNRJ, 1962), 396–97. Matjaž Klemenčič, "Politično delo Etbina Kristana," *Migracijske teme* 4, no. 1–2 (1988): 103–09. France Koblar and Avgust Pirjevec, "Kristan, Etbin," in *Slovenski biografski leksikon*, vol. 4, *Kocen–Lužar*, ed. Franc Ksaver Lukman et al. (Ljubljana: Zadružna gospodarska banka, 1932), accessible online at http://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi305141/, last accessed December 12, 2024. Majda Kodrič, "Etbin Kristan in socialistično gibanje jugoslovanskih izseljencev v ZDA v letih 1914–1920," *Prispevki za zgodovino delavskega gibanja* 23, no. 1–2 (1983): 63–87. Franc Rozman, "Etbin Kristan und seine Idee der Personalautonomie," in *Arbeiterbewegung und nationale Frage in den Nachfolgestaaten der Habsburgermonarchie*, ed. Helmut Konrad (Vienna: Europa-Verlag, 1993), 97–109.

Yugoslav Social Democratic Party (*Jugoslovanska socialdemokratska stranka*, JSDS), becoming its leading personality and main theorist on the national question before 1914. From 1914 to 1951, Kristan lived in the United States, where he was active in the South Slavic branch of the Socialist Party USA, the Yugoslav Socialist Federation (*Jugoslovanska socialistična zveza*, JSZ). The JSZ was particularly active in Chicago and the Midwest, but with branches in nearly all US states. He became a Marxist in the 1890s, but that peculiar kind endemic to East Central Europe, with his political vision refracted through the heterogeneous Austro-Marxist and South Slavic social democratic traditions. During his time in the US, he became deeply indebted to the progressive renditions of American federal and republican thought as well. To add another twist, as historian Dušan Kermavner wrote, "he did not deepen the theory of scientific socialism; although at first he defended the fundamentals of Marxism, utopian-socialist doctrines remained closer to him."[2]

Kristan first encountered socialism as political theory through the decentralized, intra-imperial labor movement at some point during his secondary school studies in Ljubljana and Zagreb (1876–1884), his officer training at the Infantry Cadet School in Karlovac (1884–1887), and subsequent service as a lieutenant (1887–1890). From 1887 to 1895, Kristan also worked as a journalist for the *Agramer Tagblatt*, the main German-language daily paper in Zagreb. From 1895, he was a correspondent for the German- and Slovenian-language workers' papers *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, *Delavec*, and *Der Eisenbahner*, moving between Vienna and Trieste. In 1896, when he was 29, Kristan co-founded the Yugoslav Social Democratic Party with Josip (Jože) Zavertnik (1869–1929), France Železnikar (1843–1903), Melhijor Čobal (1864–1943), and others. Kristan became the editor-in-chief of the party's numerous organs (including *Delavec–Rdeči prapor*, *Rdeči prapor*, and *Zarja*) from 1896 to 1914. During this period, he argued for a strictly non-territorial "federalism of nations" rather than the territorialized cultural autonomies which the leaders of Austrian social democracy advocated.[3]

See also relevant archival collections at the Manuscript Collection of the National and University Library in Ljubljana: Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica, NUK Ms 1962, IV. Dela, Folder 8, O političnem liku Etbina Kristana (1953), and NUK Ms 1979 Kristan Etbin; as well as relevant collections at the Immigration History Research Center Archives at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis: IHRC1149 Yugoslav Socialist Federation Records, IHRC1616 Ivan Molek Papers, IHRC2879 Yugoslav Republican Alliance Records, and IHRC2999 Etbin Kristan Papers.

2 Kermavner, "Kristan, Etbin," in *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije*, 396.

3 See, e.g., Kristan's "Nationalismus und Sozialismus in Österreich," *Akademie: Orgán socialistické mládeže–Organ der socialistischen Jugend* 2, no. 11, August 1898, 485–91, as well as his polemic with Karl Renner (Rudolf Springer) in the subsequent issues. Recently, Kristan received some further attention, as in Börris Kuzmany, *Vom Umgang mit nationaler Vielfalt: Eine Geschichte der nicht-territorialen Autonomie in Europa* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2024), particularly 54–59 and 61–63, though not dealing with Kristan's work in any detail beyond the turn of the twentieth century. Urban Makorič has recently dealt in much more detail with Kristan's political thought between 1896 and his death

This became particularly clear in his interventions at the 1899 Brno Congress, when the *Gesamtpartei* resolution on the national question was passed.[4] Notably, his intellectual circles in Trieste and Ljubljana before 1914 included, among many others, Ivan Cankar (1876–1918), **Zofka Kveder** (1878–1926), **Albin Prepeluh** (1880–1937), Alojzija Štebi (1883–1956), Rudolf Golouh (1887–1982), Marica Bartol Nadlišek (1867–1940), and Anton Dermota (1876–1914).

In 1912, Kristan arrived in the United States for the first time, invited by the main Yugoslav Socialist Federation (JSZ) branch in Chicago to give a lecture tour among working-class South Slavic immigrants. The original JSZ branch had been founded in 1905 in Chicago through a merger of independent left-wing Slovenian, Serbian, and Croatian political groups which had organized predominantly among immigrant South Slav industrial workers, farm laborers, and working intellectuals. In January 1911, the JSZ became a formal branch organization of the Socialist Party USA, by then comprising thirty local branches, mainly in the Midwest, totaling 635 members.[5] From that point on, the JSZ had hoped to receive much more institutional, financial, and organizational support from the national party, but in fact became rather a source of financial support for the main party.[6] Still, with the JSZ's backing, Kristan was still able to travel to and then tour and lecture across the United States.

During the first part of his trip in Chicago, Kristan reunited with former JSDS comrade Jože Zavertnik, who had emigrated in the meantime, and met Ivan Molek (1882–1962), by then already the main figure in the socialist stream within the Slovenian National Benefit Society (*Slovenska narodna podporna jednota*, SNPJ). Just before the opening shots of the World War, Kristan left for the United States once again. He returned to Chicago, where he worked with Zavertnik and Molek in the JSZ and was given the editorship of the JSZ organ, *Proletarec* (1906–1952), soon after his arrival. He would edit the paper until 1920.

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in 1953: Urban Makorič, "Etbin Kristan in ideja socializma," MA thesis (University of Ljubljana, Ljubljana, 2024).

4 See Kuzmany and Makorič, cited above, and situated in a broader Austro-Hungarian context in Cody James Inglis, "Socialism and Decentralization: The Marxist Ambiguity toward Federalism in the Late Habsburg Empire, 1899–1914," in *From Empire to Federation in Eurasia: Ideas and Practices of Diversity Management*, ed. Ivan Sablin and Egas Moniz Bandeira (London: Routledge, forthcoming 2026).

5 "Report of the South Slavic Federation," in *Socialist Party Meeting, National Committee: Reports on Foreign Federations* (Chicago: Socialist Party of America, May 1915), 11, held in IHRC1149, Folder 10: Socialist Party Materials, 1912–1940.

6 See Joseph Stipanovich, "'In Unity is Strength': Immigrant Workers and Immigrant Intellectuals in Progressive America: A History of the South Slav Social Democratic Movement, 1900–1918," doctoral dissertation (University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1978), 138–68. Joseph Stipanovich, Introduction to *An Inventory of the Papers of Jugoslovanska socialistična zveza (Jugoslav Socialist Federation)* (Minneapolis: Immigration History Research Center–University of Minnesota, 1976), 1–2. Matjaž Klemenčič, "American Slovenes and the Leftist Movements in the United States in the First Half of the Twentieth Century," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 15, no. 3 (1996): 22–43.

After the February Revolution in Russia, and the entry of the United States into the World War, Kristan and other South Slavic socialists in Chicago began to see the conflict not only as a war among capitalist empires, but also as a war of national liberation and unification for the South Slavs. At this point, the JSZ broke off from the Socialist Party USA, owing to the latter's strict anti-war stance.[7] Against the pro-Habsburg South Slavic monarchists in Vienna and the pro-Karađorđević South Slavic monarchists on Corfu,[8] Kristan and the Yugoslav Socialist Federation in Chicago rather argued for the establishment of a federal Yugoslav republic as a postwar aim. They published the "Chicago Declaration" in July 1917 in *Proletarec*, outlining their republican socialist vision for the postwar South Slavic state.[9] The following month, in August, Kristan and his cohort created the Slovenian Republican Alliance (*Slovensko republičansko združenje*, SRZ) out of the JSZ to engage in the propagation of those ideas.[10] In spring 1919, after their Serbian and Croatian comrades joined, the Alliance was renamed the Yugoslav Republican Alliance (*Jugoslovansko republičansko združenje*, JRZ).[11] Kristan was the lead theorist of the movement, his texts regularly appearing as the main articles in the English-language SRZ/JRZ journals, *The Slovenian Review* (1918–1919) and *The Jugo-Slav Review* (1919).[12] Likewise, Kristan led the JRZ delegation that appeared before the US Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs on September 4, 1919, to discuss the new South Slav state and its future boundaries with Italy.[13]

7 Ivan Molek, *Slovene Immigrant History, 1900–1950: Autobiographical Sketches*, trans. and ed. Mary Molek (Dover, 1979), 191–93. For more on the Socialist Party's anti-war policy and its context, see Jack Ross, *The Socialist Party of America: A Complete History* (Lincoln, NE: Potomac Press–University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 146–215, albeit with no mention of the South Slavic socialists in the book.

8 Here, I refer to the authors of the May Declaration and the Corfu Declaration. On the May Declaration, see Janko Pleterski, *Prva odločitev Slovencev za Jugoslavijo* (Ljubljana: Slovenska matica, 1971). Vlasta Stavbar, *Majniška deklaracija in deklaracijsko gibanje* (Maribor: Pivec, 2020). On the Corfu Declaration, see Dragoslav Janković, *Jugoslovensko pitanje i Krfska deklaracija 1917. godine* (Belgrade: Savremena administracija, 1967). For shorter English-language overviews of the period, see Ivo Banac, "The Unification," in *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 115–40. Dejan Djokić, "Death and Union," in *Elusive Compromise: A History of Interwar Yugoslavia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 12–39. Marie-Janine Calic, "The Three Balkan Wars," in *A History of Yugoslavia*, trans. Dona Geyer (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2019), particularly 57–70.

9 Etbin Kristan et al., "Slovencem v Ameriki," *Proletarec* 12, no. 513, July 10, 1917, 3. Molek, *Slovene Immigrant History*, 193–97.

10 See "Slovensko republičansko združenje," *Proletarec* 12, no. 518, August 14, 1917, 3, 8; no. 519, August 21, 1917, 3, 8.

11 "J.R.Z.," *Proletarec* 14, no. 606, April 24, 1919, 21–22. On the contacts between the JRZ and the Yugoslav Republican Party in Belgrade, see Aleksandar Lukić, "Osnivanje Jugoslovenske republikanske stranke 1920. i odnosi u jugoslovenskoj republikanskoj emigraciji u Sjedinjenim Američkim Državama (Čikagu)," *Tokovi istorije* 20, no. 3 (2012): 343–60.

12 With some Slovenian-language copies published too.

13 Testimony of Etbin Kristan and the Jugo-Slav Republican Alliance, September 4, 1919, in *Treaty of Peace with Germany: Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate*, 66th Cong. (1919) (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1919), 1091–108.

The following year, Kristan returned to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes to propagate the idea of a federal Yugoslav republic in advance of the country's Constituent Assembly. Elections were held for the Assembly in November 1920; Kristan headed the social democratic list in the Maribor–Celje and Ljubljana–Novo mesto electoral districts and was elected alongside eight other social democratic deputies (mainly from the Maribor–Celje and Sombor–Baranja electoral districts).[14] During the proceedings, he allied with one of the representatives of the Yugoslav Republican Party, the Montenegrin federalist Jovan Đonović (1883–1963), to give a "separate opinion" on the draft constitution, declaring its articles undemocratic and reiterating the necessity of completely reformatting the state on republican lines.[15] Ultimately, the monarchist Vidovdan Constitution was passed on June 28, 1921. Soon after, Kristan returned to the United States. He moved to New York City with Frances Kristan (née Cech, 1894–1984), his Ljubljana-born American wife, where he had been appointed as an immigration officer for the Yugoslav consulate at least through 1925. Ivan Molek, in his memoirs, recalled that Kristan may have retained the position until 1929.[16] What is certain is that Kristan retreated from politics upon his return from Yugoslavia, seemingly breaking off contact with his interlocutors in the JSZ as well. After their time in New York City, Etbin and Frances moved to Grand Haven, Michigan, where Frances had grown up and where her family still lived; they opened a small diner together, The Well Café, where they both worked through the mid-1930s.[17]

By this point, Kristan slowly re-entered the political life of Slovenian and Slovenian-American socialists in the Midwest. It is not entirely clear why this was the case, though we can judge by the years of his reactivation that the election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt to the American presidency in 1932 and the appointment of Adolf Hitler as chancellor in Germany in 1933 set an important background. The article "Un-American Socialism" from 1934, reprinted below, demonstrates clearly the dedication Kristan maintained to socialist ideas over decades of historical change, personal mobility, and a retreat from public political life.

Kristan continued to work intensively in the years following. In 1937, Kristan was given the editorship of the progressive, antifascist *Cankarjev glasnik* ([Ivan] Cankar's Herald), based in Cleveland, Ohio. Kristan, now entering his 70s, began

14 *Statistički pregled izbora narodnih poslanika za Ustavotvornu skupštinu Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca* (Belgrade: Ustavotvorna skupština, 1921), 829.

15 Etbin Kristan and Jovan Đonović, *Odvojena mišljenja g.g. Etbina Kristana i Jovana Đonovića, narodnih poslanika i članova Ustavnog odbora* (Belgrade, 1921).

16 Molek, *Slovene Immigrant History*, 200–01.

17 *Grand Haven City Directory* (Grand Haven, MI: R. L. Polk & Co., 1936), 88.

to travel around the upper Midwest much more frequently, as demonstrated by his correspondence with Frances.[18] He relayed all of his recurring issues with organizing among South Slavic immigrants at the grassroots level: keeping individuals on membership rosters for political and cultural organizations; the printing and distribution of leaflets, newspapers, and journals; giving talks and holding fora for discussion; and the exhaustion of constant back-and-forth travel between different towns and cities.

By 1941, the war in Europe had been on for nearly two years. But it was the Nazi-led Axis invasion of Yugoslavia in April that year which dramatically altered the landscape of South Slavic immigrant politics in the United States. In contrast to the leftist criticism from abroad of particular policy choices in monarchist Yugoslavia, or trying to gain international support for persecuted workers or intellectuals in the country, the wartime occupation of Yugoslavia prompted (once again) new reflections on the problem of state form among the Slovenian-American Left. The question hadn't been resolved in 1918 or 1921. In 1942, Kristan argued at a meeting of the wartime Yugoslav Relief Committee of the SNPJ that "our minimum political demand must be that, following the war, Yugoslavia should get a form of government similar to that of the United States, a democratic republic."[19] Kristan remained convinced that true democracy could only be realized politically in a republic and economically in socialism, a position he had held consistently for roughly three decades. The same year, in December 1942, Kristan was elected president of the Slovenian American National Council (*Slovenski ameriški narodni svet*, SANS), an umbrella coordinating committee organized to guide the wartime activities of the numerous Slovenian political, philanthropic, and social organizations in the United States. He retained the position until 1947.

During the Second World War, Kristan and many others from Slovenian-American socialist and progressive circles began to support the Yugoslav Partisans, particularly after the establishment of the Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (Antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Jugoslavije, AVNOJ) in Bihać, Bosnia, in 1942. Likely through the Slovenian-American writer Louis Adamič/Adamic (1898–1951), Kristan and SANS made contact with Edvard Kardelj (1910–1979) and other Yugoslav communists and Partisans during the war. These connections pushed many South Slavic socialists in the US to favor and then materially support the Partisan movement. Kristan's work bore fruit after the war: in November 1949, he was invited to hold a consultation with

18 See NUK Ms 1979 Kristan Etbin, Pisma, Frances Kristan. The collection contains 313 items, dated between 1918 and 1953, though with most from the mid-to-late 1930s, including a sizable collection of small postcards written serially to convey longer messages.

19 Molek, *Slovene Immigrant History*, 262.

Kardelj and the Yugoslav mission to the UN in New York City, likely over the character of the South Slavic political community in the United States and their relation to the fallout from the *Informbiro* crisis and the Tito–Stalin Split from the year previous.[20]

After nearly 40 years, Kristan departed the United States for Yugoslavia in 1951. Upon crossing the border, it was reported that Kristan exclaimed "Greetings to my socialist homeland!"[21] Frances made a number of trips to visit him, though never moved there permanently, and the couple was even received personally by Tito in 1951 or '52.[22] Etbin Kristan spent what would be his last years in Ljubljana. Aside from some trips around the countryside, and periodically attending events or giving invited talks, he led a quiet, private life after his return. During Frances's 1953 trip to Ljubljana, Kristan contracted pneumonia and passed on November 22 of that year. He was 86.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS: "Nationalismus und Sozialismus in Österreich," *Akademie: Orgán socialistické mládeže–Organ der socialistischen Jugend* 2, no. 11 (August 1898): 485–91; *Kapitalizem in proletarijat* (Ljubljana, 1901); *Nevarni socializem* (Ljubljana, 1908); *Narodno vprašanje in Slovenci* (Ljubljana, 1908); *V dobi klerikalizma* (Ljubljana, 1908); The Chicago Declaration / Chikaška izjava, published as "Slovencem v Ameriki," *Proletarec* 12, no. 513 (July 10, 1917): 3; *Krfska deklaracija in demokracija* (Chicago, ca. 1917–18); *Svetovna vojna in odgovornost socializma* (Chicago, ca. 1918); "Ustava in socialisti," published serially in *Naši zapiski* 13, no. 8 (1921): 163–66, vol. 14, nos. 1–2, 3–4, and 7 (1922): 1–4, 25–28, 73–75; "Neamerikanski socializem," *Majski glas* 14 (1934): 11–14; "Zedinjene države evropske," *Cankarjev glasnik* 2, no. 12 (1938 [July 1939]): 315–22; *Povesti in* črtice (Chicago, 1945); *Izbrano delo* (Ljubljana, 1950).

Context

Etbin Kristan wrote "Un-American Socialism" (*Neamerikanski socializem*) for the May 1934 edition of *Majski glas*, the May Day special edition of *Proletarec*, the daily newspaper and organ of the JSZ in Chicago. In a way, the text is a call-to-arms in favor of the Socialist Party USA and the JSZ. But Kristan only states this at the end; what is rather more interesting are the political ideas he develops beforehand. At its core, Kristan uses the text to break down the discourse that socialism is anti-national and unpatriotic, particularly in the United States. The underlying

20 NUK Ms 1979 Kristan Etbin, Pisma, Frances Kristan, November 4, 1949.

21 Molek, *Slovene Immigrant History*, 306–8.

22 See newspaper clipping "Local Woman Is Dinner Guest of Tito at His Villa in Belgrade, Yugoslavia," in IHRC2999. The clipping is a Xerox copy which does not include the date (nor which newspaper).

structural crises (and crisis discourses) of the interwar period had pushed forward a set of new problems, namely direct state intervention into the economy and society, the rise of authoritarian governance and state administration, as well as the retreat into exclusivist nationalism and racism as (false) solutions to the crisis.[23] The average worker or even the petit bourgeois sought ways to retain a sense of meaning and identity in such times of fundamental economic, social, and political dissolution. A plethora of solutions were placed before them; Kristan offered a combined vision of socialism and American republicanism as an answer.

While the economic crisis in the United States began in autumn 1929, it was only in 1933 that the domestic unemployment rate hit a high of 25%. Over 12 million people were out of work. The year previous, the former Governor of New York, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, won the 1932 Presidential election, ousting Herbert Hoover. The passage of the Emergency Banking Act of 1933—pushed through Congress within the first week of Roosevelt's presidency—partially restored the American public's confidence in the banking system but by itself was not enough to arrest the momentum of the economic collapse which beset the country. Enter the New Deal. New federal programs and agencies like the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, the National Recovery Administration, the Civil Works Administration, and the Federal Emergency Relief Administration—as well as massive infrastructural projects like the Tennessee Valley Authority—began to tackle unemployment and raise the country's economic output through the unprecedented intervention of the American federal state into the country's socio-economic matrix. A great deal of optimism greeted Roosevelt and his reforms from below, and it seemed that such intervention would solve the inadequate hands-off, *laissez-faire* approach which had defined the Hoover administration.

However, for many American socialists, the New Deal did not address the structural deficiencies of capitalism; rather, it buttressed the private accumulation of capital through institutional safeguards and regulatory guarantees. New Deal programs like the Works Progress Administration may have kept many workers and intellectuals employed, but it also maintained a system of salaried exploitation and dependency. From the Left, the New Deal was critiqued for not going to its radical ends (e.g., the expropriation of private capital and its redistribution, failing to include Black workers fully into the recovery programs) while from the Right it was seen as being far too extremist in its intervention, orientation, and goals.[24]

23 For an analysis of crisis discourses in interwar East Central Europe, see Trencsényi et al., eds., *East Central European Crisis Discourses in the Twentieth Century* as well as Trencsényi, *Intellectuals and the Crisis of Politics*.

24 For an overview, see e.g. Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995); or Colin Gordon: *New Deals: Business, Labor, and Politics in*

The momentum toward authoritarian rule—and toward unprecedented state intervention into public and private life, even in liberal democracies—was the immediate context in which Etbin Kristan wrote his "Un-American Socialism." The 1930s were years marked by political experimentation between previously (that is, seemingly) incompatible strains of political thought. This had come as a result of the widespread disillusion with liberal democratic principles following the World War and the onset of the global Great Depression. The traditional poles of Left and Right underwent quite serious contestation from Third Way positions. In general, these discourses generated strange political mixtures. The sovereignty of the individual began to be couched in totalitarian visions; anti-modernist political rhetoric used modernist vocabulary. In Europe, groups ranging from the French *non-conformistes* to the Romanian 1927 Generation to the Strasserists in Germany to the Hungarian *népi* writers took up these tropes, all trying to find a way out of the capitalist–socialist/communist counter-positions. While Kristan was largely incubated from experiencing these European changes first-hand, he nevertheless followed European developments closely, which is quite apparent in "Un-American Socialism."

European developments since the First World War acted both as a foil for Kristan's discussion of socialism in the American context as well as an opportunity to demonstrate the long-term consistency in his own thought. One is hard-pressed to find serious divergences from his ideas already expressed in the 1890s. In "Un-American Socialism," Kristan argues clearly that anti-socialist sentiments are typically taken up by those who claim they are "patriots," but who are in fact nothing more than national chauvinists, authoritarians, or fascists. According to National Socialist Adolf Hitler, socialism is "un-German"; according to Austro-Fascist Engelbert Dollfuß, socialism is "un-Austrian"; the Italian fascist *Duce* Benito Mussolini claims the same in reference to Italian national values; for the authoritarian regent Miklós Horthy, socialism has no place in Hungary. For Kristan, however, socialism is "anti-national" precisely because it agitates against the leaders of the nation and the state, those figures who are everywhere and always embedded in the defense and preservation of the capitalist system within and between modern nation-states.

Turning back to the United States, however, Kristan asks whether capitalist values are in fact core American values. A cursory overview of the (not too distant) past of the United States demonstrates that the origins of the British (and French) colonies in North America were established under still-existent feudal economic systems. After the original thirteen colonies declared their independence from the British Empire, they were still feudal constructions, but it was only

America, 1920–1935 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

with the development of capitalism that the seemingly core American institutions of representative governance, territorial federalism, and state administration took on their modern forms. (Not to mention the country's westward expansion, including its colonization and genocide of indigenous populations.) To that extent, capitalism and American values became synonymous. Kristan points to an obvious but under-acknowledged fact: capitalism and the creation of modern bureaucratic state systems may have originally gone hand-in-hand, but placing that process in a larger historical (and historical materialist) framing allows one to perceive its reification and so its contingency. While contemporaries perceive this state of affairs as natural it is, in fact, still an object of historical change, not divine permanence.

And yet, the World War and the Great Depression had destroyed the liberal promise of progress rooted in capitalist expansion, the modernization of economies, and consolidated state systems. Instead, the international state system had collapsed under the weight of inter-state capitalist competition set in imperial(ist) continental and global dynamics. After the war, the state system globally and in Europe in particular began to be reorganized according to the principle of national self-determination, bringing with it the further proliferation of small, homogenizing nation-states. By breaking down the large economic units of continental and global empires into smaller, often protectionist nation-states in a capitalist system, a harsh set of new problems arose: post-war mass national(ist) hysteria, the breakdown of cross-regional economic ties built up over centuries, a global *increase* in expansion-driven capitalist competition among smaller units fighting for scarcer resources, and the concentration of financial capital into fewer and fewer hands, all justified by national liberation or national independence.

Once this Gordian knot of problems had been tied, the consequences were inevitable: complete economic breakdown on a global scale. After failed attempts to let the global economy reset on its own, which inevitably exacerbated existent structural problems, the (nation-)state finally had to step in and intervene directly into the economy. But this also led to a marked increase in authoritarian governance across Europe, particularly in those countries formerly part of the continental and dynastic Hohenzollern, Habsburg, Romanov, and Ottoman empires. With the rise in authoritarianism (from royal dictatorships to national fascisms), state intervention often took on the form of corporatism, which preserved national capitalist interests at the expense of the independence of labor.

Drawing an intellectual line back to Kristan's pre-war work, a republican "federalism of nations" would be the only path to international socialism precisely because it would break from the authoritarianism inherent in the nation-state and in the global capitalist system. "[A]s Engels said," Kristan notes in the text

which follows, "the republic is the very form of state in which socialism is most easily established." Kristan then moves for socialists to realize that they too stand for republican values, that they should remember Austrian and German socialists who fought and died to save their interwar republics, and so sought to reclaim the radical potential in the very etymology of the word 'republic'. "Socialism demands the republic," Kristan writes, "and it wants to perfect it, so that it is truly what its name indicates: *Res publica*, a public thing, the property of all."

In the 1930s, Kristan largely escaped from the ongoing flirtation between the radical Left and extreme Right on anti-modernist foundations by choosing to reiterate his long-incubated republican socialist vision in a modernist language. To be sure, Kristan did briefly argue in the text that corporatist state intervention into the economy—and the economy's reorganization—did foreshadow the realization one of the foundational goals of socialism: "[New forces and new machines] are not only paving the way for socialism, but they also demonstrate—through vast organizations that are no longer confined to individual industries but instead bring them together into organic units—how it is possible to do precisely what socialism wants: to organize systematically all production and distribution for the benefit of the entire nation." But he did not match this with pithy overtures to the "masses" or grotesque ideas of "control" over society. Instead, Kristan's vision was one of a responsive, responsible socialist economic mechanism matched with the most responsive, responsible form of state: the republic. This was a much more democratic vision than anything the Third Way in the United States or Europe could offer. Consistent in his ideas from the 1890s to the 1930s, Kristan viewed socialism as simply the modern fulfillment of the latent radical potential within the republican idea from the Romans onward. Against the authoritarianism of the nation-state, and against the destructive tendencies of capitalism, socialism means a *res publica* for all, not only for the patricians.

ETBIN KRISTAN
"Un-American Socialism."

Socialism is un-American…

How often have you heard this phrase, which the defenders of the current social "order" use in an attempt to eliminate any possibility of socialist reorganization in one fell swoop? If a jingo quotes it, you shrug and smile; it comes as no surprise from a chauvinist. However, it is more unpleasant when

otherwise sensible, intelligent, and relatively progressive people speak and think like this. Among the latter is, for example, Jay Franklin, who used this phrase in a widely circulated "magazine" while defending Roosevelt against the accusation of becoming a socialist.[25] As if such a defense were necessary! While President Roosevelt is a rather likeable man, he is as far from socialism as the moon is from the sun. Therefore, his "Americanness" must be absolutely unquestionable.

However, how original is this "patriotic" phrase about socialism?

Ask Hitler. Socialism is un-German, and yet the "Grand" Chancellor of the Third Reich calls his party National *Socialist*. Now, of course, he no longer emphasizes the second half of the name; *Nazi* is sufficient. However, there used to be a time when the socialist attribute was attractive, and Hitler simply used it, just as Lueger had done before him when he founded his Christian "Social" Party in Vienna.

Listen to Dollfuß. Socialism is so un-Austrian that the socialist workers' homes in Vienna, organized in an exemplary manner, had to be destroyed with cannons, killing many victims; the "insurgents," wounded in a fair fight, were dragged from the hospital to be executed!

Mussolini will also assure you that socialism is un-Italian. Of course, the man used to be a socialist himself, but that was only because he wanted to "transform the socialists into Italians." All Italianism is now completely fascist, and one wonders where it had been hiding for all those long years before Mussolini's march on Rome.

You can travel the entire world and find the same result everywhere. For Horthy, socialism is un-Hungarian; for the samurais, it is un-Japanese; for the shah, it is un-Persian; for the rajahs and maharajahs, it is un-Indian; etc.

In a sense, they are all correct, of course. Socialism has no specific national color. It is international, universal, and global. For black people, it is the same as for white or yellow people; its goals are the same in China as in England, Spain, Paraguay, or Algeria. Its aspirations embrace all humanity, and its ideals are the same for all tribes and peoples. There is no national socialism, no religious socialism, no provincial socialism.

However, this universality of socialism does not entail what the chauvinists would like to imply. It does not oppose the character of any nation or country; it is as much Slavic as it is Roman, Anglo-Saxon, Mongolian, or

25 Jay Franklin, "Is Roosevelt Going Socialist?" *Liberty* 11, no. 10, March 10, 1934, 5–7. John "Jay" Franklin Carter (1897–1967) was an American writer who chronicled the New Deal era and the early postwar period in his column "We the People" (1936–1948) for *Liberty*, a weekly variety magazine (1924–1950). From 1931, the magazine was a supporter of Franklin D. Roosevelt.

mulatto. And it is consistently *American*. It does, however, oppose something that is just as global, just as universal, and, in fact, a hundred times more anti-national than socialism; *it opposes the capitalist system*.

...

American institutions! Oh, yes, that is what anti-socialists are defending. They must be preserved to prevent a crash and cosmic chaos. Socialism would crush these institutions, which are dear and sacred to the nation.

Every institution, as it is established, becomes "sacred." To oppose it constitutes "a sin." However, to oppose the institution that existed before this one was also "a sin," yet the present one would never have been founded without that sin.

But—no offence—what are the specifically American institutions that we must believe should be preserved at all costs? If we are not mistaken, several such "sacred" institutions that were untouchable have existed but have nevertheless disappeared. For example, black slavery, lynching laws in the West, the deprivation of women's political rights, Prohibition, long swimsuits, etc.

Well, jokes aside: America is a republic. That is definitely something that must be preserved. By the way: the republic is not an American invention; the Romans had it long before Columbus was born. Republics outnumber monarchies in the world today, so this institution is not exclusively American. Either way, socialism certainly does not tear down the republic because, as Engels said, the republic is the very form of state in which socialism is most easily established. Of course, there are also differences between republics. Many existed that did not even deserve the name, as the only difference between them and monarchies was that the latter had a single ruler—an emperor, a tsar, a king, or a sultan—while medieval "republics" were ruled by a few families. Socialism demands a republic, and it wants to perfect it so that it is truly what its name indicates: *Res publica*, a public thing, the property of all.

That this is not an empty phrase was proven by the socialists in Germany and Austria, who were the only ones defending the republic—not only with words and political action but with their bodies and lives.

If the republic is considered an American institution, it is absurd to label socialism as un-American because it supports the republic more than any other political theory.

...

Just like any others, our institutions are not untouchable, while the economic system that prevails in this country, as in most of the world—that is,

the capitalist system—has little regard for those institutions' traditionality, nationality, and sanctity. Economic conditions are the strongest forces influencing all institutions; as long as the world is capitalist, everything—legislative and executive power, industry and commerce, education and justice, private and public life—must remain under its influence. Institutions that resist it must capitulate or be crushed. Mussolini, Hitler, Dollfuß, and other such potentates are possible because capitalism tolerates them, knowing it can use them. Dictators may overturn justice and parade as masters; as long as they do not hurt capitalism, they are allowed to. They are allowed to mock parliamentarism as long as they advance the interests of capitalism. They can order women to their rightful place "at home and in the kitchen"; this does not hurt capitalism so severely that it would be worth resisting. However, by digging a little deeper, it is possible to realize that these dictators are all creatures of capitalism, while their suppression of not only socialism but also any independent labor movement provides the best answer to the question of whom they serve.

...

Capitalism is capitalism, regardless of whether the Republicans, the Democrats, or some new progressives have the majority in the Congress. Profiteering and competition, which drive each other, cannot be eliminated from the capitalist system. The human spirit, always coming up with new discoveries and inventions, cannot be stopped. Even the most liberal working hours have already become too long to provide regular employment for all those looking for work. New forces and new machines bring the same problems they have always brought and the same consequences. How can these problems be solved by private entrepreneurs, who must be speculators by the nature of capitalism?

These are the forces that are paving the way for socialism rather than royal traditions and universal military service. They are not only paving the way for socialism, but they also demonstrate—through vast organizations that are no longer confined to individual industries but instead bring them together into organic units—how it is possible to do precisely what socialism wants: to organize systematically all production and distribution for the benefit of the entire nation.

The Socialist Party, if it achieves a majority, is the only force that could accomplish this goal without revolutionary horrors. Socialism has no interest in bloodshed; if such a thing were to happen, mostly proletarian blood would be shed. To obstruct and repress the development of socialism is nothing

other than to provoke catastrophes, the scale of which can never be predicted. Socialism wants to spare America and every other nation from such disasters.

And that is why it is un-American!

Socialism creates equal rights.

Socialism implements democracy.

Socialism eliminates economic misery.

Socialism shortens working hours and thus extends freedom.

Socialism gives every worthwhile ambition a chance to be fulfilled.

Socialism creates the basis on which culture will be accessible to everyone.

Socialism is the beginning of a new civilization in which world peace becomes possible.

If there is anything un-American about this, then socialism is un-American.

But if democracy, equality, and freedom are not just hypocritical phrases of newspaper moguls and speculative politicians, *then the Socialist Party is the most American of all the parties in the country*.

.....

Isidora Grubački

MINKA GOVEKAR: The Value of Housework

Author: Minka Govekar
Title: The Value of Housework
Originally published: As a radio lecture entitled "Vrednotenje gospodinjskega dela," 1935.
Language: Slovenian

About the author

Minka Govekar (1874, Trebnje–1950, Ljubljana) was a teacher, writer, translator, journalist, and one of the leading figures of the women's movement in Ljubljana and more broadly the Slovenian lands in the first half of the twentieth century. She was a strong proponent of the equal position of women in society and argued for this within the frameworks of the family and the nation. Her feminist political thought was therefore more on the conservative side of the political spectrum. It will become clear from this contribution that the focus on what she called "the housework question" was one of the key elements in her political thought.

Govekar was born in 1874 into the family of a medical doctor and a housewife. After gaining a formal education at the teacher training college in Ljubljana, she worked as a teacher until she got married in 1897. Her husband was the writer

Fran Govekar (1871–1949), whom she had met while still in school, and with whom she remained in contact during his medical studies in Vienna. This situation positively impacted her informal education, as he sent her journals, books, and various publications from Vienna, including the journals *Arbeiter Zeitung* and *Dokumente der Frauen*. Even though she stopped working as a teacher after getting married and having three children, she continued to work in several different spheres, primarily as a journalist, activist, and a translator. She published in various newspapers and journals, including *Slovanski svet* (Slavic World), *Edinost* (Unity), *Slovenski narod* (The Slovenian Nation), as well as a variety of women's journals of the time, including *Slovenka* (The Slovenian Woman, 1897–1902), *Ženski svijet/Jugoslavenska žena* (Women's World/Yugoslav Woman, 1917–1920), and *Ženski svet* (Women's World, 1923–1941). In the broader Yugoslav sphere, she contributed to the journal *Glasnik jugoslovenskog ženskog saveza* (Herald of the Yugoslav National Council of Women, 1935–1940), but did not publish in the central feminist Yugoslav journal *Ženski pokret* (Women's Movement, 1920–1938).[1] She published under her own name, but she also used pseudonyms, among them Josip Trdina, Minka Kastelčeva, M. K., and Mila (Milena) Dobova. She also authored several books, edited several journals and volumes, and translated over forty plays and novels from Russian, Polish, German, and Serbo-Croatian into Slovenian.[2]

Govekar took an active and leading part in Slovenian and Yugoslav women's organizations. Her activism should be primarily interpreted in the context of two organizations. One of them, the Slovenian General Women's Society (*Slovensko splošno žensko društvo*, SSŽD), Govekar co-founded and was its secretary for twenty-seven years. Founded in 1901, the SSŽD was the central Slovenian women's organization until the Second World War, and it demanded women's passive and active suffrage rights, equal pay for equal work, social support for children

1 *Glasnik jugoslovenskog ženskog saveza* was the official journal of the *Jugoslovanska ženska zveza* (see below), affiliated with the International Council of Women. *Ženski pokret*, on the other hand, was the official journal of the *Alijansa ženskih pokreta* (Alliance of Women's Movements), affiliated with the International Alliance of Women. For edited volumes on two of the mentioned periodicals, *Slovenka* and *Ženski pokret*, see Marta Verginella, *Slovenka: prvi ženski časopis (1897–1902)* (Ljubljana: Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete, 2017). Jelena Milinković and Žarka Svirčev, eds., *Ženski pokret (1920–1938): Zbornik radova* (Beograd: Institut za književnost i umetnost, 2021).

2 This paragraph is mainly based on an excellent text by Mateja Jeraj, "Minka Govekar. Duša splošnega ženskega društva," in *Splošno žensko društvo 1901–1945. Od dobrih deklet do feministk*, ed. Nataša Budna Kodrič and Aleksandra Serše (Ljubljana: Arhiv Republike Slovenije, 2003). See also "Govekar, Minka (1874–1950)," *Slovenska biografija* (Ljubljana: SAZU, ZRC SAZU, 2013). Vesna Leskošek, "Minka Govekar (1874–1950)," in *Pozabljena polovica: portreti žensk 19. in 20. stoletja na Slovenskem*, ed. Alenka Šelih et al. (Ljubljana: Tuma, SAZU, 2007), 134–38. Irena Selišnik, "Samocenzura, družinske interpretacije in vpliv uradne pripovedi na avtobiografije žensk," *Primerjalna književnost* 46, no. 1 (2023): 151–67.

born out of wedlock, etc.[3] Govekar herself published articles arguing for the importance of women's right to vote already in 1911.[4] The second organization was the National Council of Women (*Narodna ženska zveza*, NŽZ). Founded in 1919 and affiliated with the International Council of Women (ICW), the NŽZ was the first nationwide union of a significant number of women's organizations across the country. In 1929, the organization was renamed the Yugoslav Council of Women (*Jugoslovanska ženska zveza*, JŽZ). Subsequently, in 1933–34, it decentralized into regional sections; the section gathering all Slovenian women's associations was the *Dravska* Section. Govekar became the JŽZ *Dravska* Section's president from its founding until 1938.[5]

As a leading figure in both of these organizations (as examples will show further below), Govekar particularly pursued social justice, as in her campaign for the first women's hospital in Ljubljana in the 1920s.[6] In the 1930s, within the JŽZ *Dravska* Section, she closely collaborated with the Marxist feminist Angela Vode, at the time vice-president of the Ljubljana *Ženski pokret* organization (also a member of the *Dravska* Section), and through it made many antifascist, feminist, communist, and politically subversive actions possible. Her activism also crossed national borders. Through the JŽZ, Govekar took part in the work of one of the major international women's organizations of the time, the International Council of Women, and was one of the Yugoslav delegates at the 1930 ICW Vienna Congress and at the 1936 ICW Dubrovnik Congress. As she described in a 1935 interview in *Žena in dom* (Woman and the Home), she was happiest when women travelled abroad on their own ("*v svet*," lit. "in the world"): "We felt the best when there were no men around and we could chat and laugh as we pleased."[7]

According to Govekar, she became interested in feminist issues by reading socialist literature, which is particularly interesting given that her own published texts could hardly be described as socialist. In Govekar's own words, her feminism developed by reading works such as August Bebel's *Die Frau und der*

3 Leskošek, "Minka Govekar," 135. See also Kodrič and Serše, ed., *Splošno žensko društvo*, especially 35–44.

4 Minka Govekar, "Ženske in volilna pravica," *Slovenska gospodinja* 7, no. 5 (1911), 65–67.

5 Jeraj, "Minka Govekar," 152. The JŽZ *Dravska* Section, the most active in the country, had around twenty organizations. For more about the NŽZ/JŽZ and the *Dravska* Section, see Jovanka Kecman, *Žene Jugoslavije u radničkom pokretu i ženskim organizacijama 1918–1941* (Beograd: Narodna knjiga: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1978), 163–78, 266–81. Ida Ograjšek Gorenjak, "Yugoslav Women's Movement and 'The Happiness to the World'," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 31, no. 4 (2020): 722–44. Isidora Grubački and Irena Selišnik, "The National Women's Alliance in Interwar Yugoslavia. Between the Feminist Reform and Institutional Social Politics," *Women's History Review* 32, no. 2 (2023): 242–60.

6 Leskošek, "Minka Govekar," 135.

7 Ivo Peruzzi, "Minka Govekarjeva: ob 60. letnici rojstva," *Žena in dom* 6, no. 1 (1935), 16–17.

Sozialismus, the work of Baltic-German writer Laura Marholm, as well as those of the pioneering Russian female mathematician Sofya Kovalevskaya, the German socialist feminist Lily Braun, and the socialist Adelheid Popp.[8] Govekar's dedication to women's rights and equality was a constant throughout her career. In 1935, she summarized it as: "Equal qualifications, equal duties, as well as equal rights and pay! This was and still is our program!"[9]

However, her publications about women's rights and the improvement of women's position in society were consistently discussed within the framework of national politics and that of the Slovenian nation. This is most visible through her edited volume *Slovenska žena* (The Slovenian Woman, 1926), in which the most important Slovenian women (writers, actors, etc.) were presented. As argued below and showed in the source, one of the central concepts of her feminist political thought was housework, and this is the sphere in which she was active the most, which is also visible from her publications. Before the war, she published the books *Dobra kuharica* (A Good Cook, 1903) and *Dobra gospodinja* (A Good Housewife, 1908), and edited the journal *Slovenska gospodinja* (The Slovenian Housewife, 1905–1914). The topic of housework remained the most common topic in her radio lectures from the mid-1930s and in the magazine *Ženski svet*, where she edited the column "*Naš dom*" (Our Home) from 1933.

Incredibly respected by her fellow activists, it was not a coincidence that Govekar was one of the central figures in the Slovenian women's and feminist movement. In one of the portraits of Govekar, published in the magazine *Ženski svet* on the occasion of Govekar's election as the JŽZ *Dravska* Section president in 1934, Angela Vode characterized her as honest and a "feminist of a right style," emphasizing that: "Govekar is not a president in name only, but in practice—through her actions, personal commitment, and strong sense of duty, which prevents her from abandoning her calling, especially in times like these, when women feel the ground shifting beneath their feet and united willpower is essential to preserve the few rights that we still have."[10]

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS: Minka Govekar, *Dobra kuharica* (Ljubljana: L. Schwentner, 1903); Minka Govekar, *Dobra gospodinja* (Ljubljana: L. Schwentner, 1908); Minka Govekar, ed., *Slovenska žena* (Ljubljana: Jugoslave Express Réclame Company, 1926).

8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
10 Angela Vode, "Jubilej, ki ga ne moremo prezreti," *Ženski svet* 12, no. 10, October 1934, 233–35.

Context

The translated text is a radio lecture which Minka Govekar gave on Radio Ljubljana in December 1935 and was a part of the series of lectures "*Ženska ura*" (Women's Hour) organized by the *Dravska* Section of the JŽZ and held every Sunday at 4 p.m. to enhance the Section's visibility and outreach. Their use of radio as a medium to reach women should not surprise us, as the ICW—of which JŽZ was a member—had an interest in broadcasting since the mid 1920s, whereas its Standing Committee on Broadcasting was formally established in 1936.[11] Aside from Minka Govekar, other speakers on these radio broadcasts were the feminist activists Angela Vode, Zlata Pirnat, and Minka Krofta, among others. The transcripts of these talks are held in the personal fond of Minka Govekar in the Archives of the Republic of Slovenia (SI AS 1666), and are a fascinating source for a better understanding of women's and feminist activism as well as of feminist political thought in Slovenia at the time.

Minka Govekar addressed female listeners of the "Women's Hour" on May 12, 1935, introducing the relatively recently reorganized JŽZ and particularly the *Dravska* Section with the following words: "As we do not have yet suffrage rights, this [organization] is our female parliament." She emphasized the importance of the harmony (*sloga*) and unification (*združitev*) of all women—she listed specifically peasant women, working-class women, and bourgeois women—because "only in harmony, unification, and courage lies strength and success." The *Dravska* Section is where, she further explained, the women of the whole country could discuss needed changes to the laws which would benefit women and children; women's equal access to all professions; the protection of motherhood, children, and youth; women's right to education; the questions of the relation between the household and the economy; on the need for various charity tools; the national question; and many others.[12] Around that time, the *Dravska* Section organized many important initiatives, including public demonstrations demanding the right to abortion for all women; against high prices; against the announced discontinuation of the Female Gymnasium in Ljubljana; as well as against the new Finance Law, which intended to solve the issue of teachers' unemployment by declaring that a woman working as a teacher can be married only to a teacher; as well as demonstrations to demand equal pay for equal work.[13]

11 Kristin Skoog and Alexander Badenoch, "Mediating Women: The International Council of Women and the Rise of (Trans)National Broadcasting," *Women's History Review* (2024), pre-print, 1–21.

12 Arhiv Republike Slovenije, SI AS 1761, Box 2/22, Minka Govekar, Uvodne besede k prvi Ženski uri v radiju, May 12, 1935.

13 Kecman, *Žene Jugoslavije*. See also Mateja Jeraj, "Slovenska ženska društva med obema vojnama: (1918-1941)," *Arhivi: Glasilo Arhivskega društva in arhivov Slovenije* 23, no. 2 (2000): 53–61.

The question of women's work was, of course, an important topic not only for the *Dravska* Section, but for most women activists in Yugoslavia particularly after the economic crisis, as a women's right to work in public service was under attack. Alojzija Štebi, the leader of the national feminist organization *Alijansa ženskih pokreta* (the Alliance of Women's Movements), had, at least since 1930, been writing in the organization's journal *Ženski pokret* about professional women and the feminist movement.[14] In February 1931, Štebi warned about the "offensive against professional women" (*ofanziva protivu žena u pozivu*), arguing for the absolute necessity of women's right to work outside of the home, in contrast to the other path of forbidding women to receive an education and find work, which would lead to women's complete subordination to their husbands.[15] In 1934, a whole issue of *Ženski pokret* was dedicated to this important issue, following up on a meeting held in Belgrade on February 10, 1934, where organized women reacted to the proposed state budget for 1934–35, according to which many married women would remain without their jobs.[16] On this issue, moreover, the JŽZ issued a resolution it had adopted, demanding that no difference in employment should be made on the basis of sex, but only on the basis of qualifications and abilities.[17]

Govekar supported the abovementioned demonstrations and policies as the president of the *Dravska* Section. Work was one of the central topics she addressed, yet she did it through a focus on housework and domestic life. This was the case with her radio speeches, including the one on the value of housework, translated below.[18] Interpreting this radio speech in the context of Minka Govekar's earlier publications, it becomes clear that besides women's education, equal pay for equal work, and equal professional opportunities,[19] housework has, since the early twentieth century, been one of the central concepts of her feminist political thought.[20] Govekar wrote about housework already in her 1908 book *Dobra gospodinja* (A Good Housewife), where the central point of her argument was that

14 See, for example, Alojzija Štebi, "Žene u pozivu i feministički pokret," *Ženski pokret* 11, no. 1–2 (1930), 1. Alojzija Štebi, "Žene u pozivima i njihove organizacije," *Ženski pokret* 11, no. 17–18 (1930), 1–2.

15 Alojzija Štebi, "Ofanziva protivu žena u pozivu," *Ženski pokret* 12, no. 3–4 (1931), 1.

16 See the whole issue, and especially: "Za pravo na rad," *Ženski pokret* 15, no. 1–2 (1934), 3.

17 "Da li je to socijalna pravda?," *Ženski pokret* 15, no. 1–2 (1934), 9–11.

18 She commonly gave advice on subjects including the necessity of keeping order in the house; the importance of ventilating houses; or the need for women to bathe their children and to help them do their homework. See, for instance, her radio lectures: SI AS 1666, Box 2/100, Minka Govekar, "Red in snaga," radio lecture, May 18, 1933; SI AS 1666, Box 2/103, Minka Govekar, "Higijena stanovanja," radio lecture, October 18, 1933; etc.

19 Peruzzi, "Minka Govekarjeva," 16–17.

20 See also the article about ideological views of women's housework in the nineteenth century: Andrej Studen, "Dobra meščanska gospodinja. Ideološki pogledi na žensko delo v dobi meščanstva," *Žensko delo: delo žensk v zgodovinski perspektivi*, ed. Mojca Šorn, Nina Vodopivec, and Žarko Lazarević (Ljubljana: Založba INZ, 2015).

women had to prepare for their work as mothers and housewives, because this kind of knowledge did not come naturally to women. As she highlighted, "only an enlightened woman can become truly her husband's equal."[21] At the time, she framed her argument for women's right to education by putting an emphasis on women's contribution to the nation through their biological and cultural reproductive labor. As she argued, "The most important, the most distinguished class is that of the mothers and the housewives, and only a nation of good mothers and great housewives can advance in their education and in their well-being." Young women of the day, she thought, should find time to read useful books and periodicals, and she noted that the same was true for peasant women.[22]

She continued to publish on various related issues in the magazine *Ženski svet* during and after the 1920s. In 1923, for instance, she advised women that the best way to tie their husbands permanently to the home was to be "good, pleasant, and humble," a "diligent homemaker," and "interested in everything the husband is interested in."[23] Over the course of the 1930s, she focused her attention even more on the issue. At the 1930 JŽZ meeting in Zagreb, in fact, Govekar spoke about the need for the organization of housewives on an economic basis, arguing that this was the question which could unite women of all classes.[24] This materialized in the organization of the *Zveza gospodinj* (Housewives' Association) and its journal, *Gospodinja* (The Housewife). In her views on housework, Govekar was particularly inspired by organized Czechoslovak women. Thus, in one of her 1932 texts, she praised a lecture held by Růžena Černá, with the main message that women's contribution to the national economy was immense and that Yugoslav women should be aware of it.[25]

In contrast to Govekar's ideas on housework from the pre-First World War period, she argued in the 1930s for the professionalization of housework, including making it a paid profession. In her 1933 radio lecture "*Gospodinjstvo–poklic*" (Housework: A Profession), of which only a part is preserved, she argued that the professionalization of housework and the "protection of women's housework" was vital. Govekar explained that this was a demand of many other women's organizations internationally.[26] In the 1935 radio lecture entitled "The Value of Housework," Govekar argued that there were three main roles for women toward the nation and the state (in comparison to the period before the World War,

21 Govekar, *Dobra gospodinja*, 12.
22 Ibid.
23 Minka Govekar, "Kako privežem moža trajno na dom," *Ženski svet* 1, no. 3 (1923), 64–65.
24 Minka Govekar, "Organizacija gospodinj na gospodarski podlagi," *Ženski svet* 9, no. 1 (1931), 14–17.
25 Minka Govekar, "Pomen ženskega dela v domačem in narodnom gospodarstvu," *Ženski svet* 10, no. 3 (1932), 80–83. Černá's book of advice for the home and household work was published in Slovenian in 1937: Růžena Černá, *1400 nasvetov za dom in gospodinjstvo* (Ljubljana: Žena in dom, 1937).
26 SI AS 1666, Box 2/102, Minka Govekar, "Gospodinjstvo—poklic," radio lecture, June 6, 1933.

when only the nation was mentioned): those of "wife, mother, and housewife." Emphasizing the value of women's housework in terms of saving (in this way contributing to the household income, as the "financial minister" of the home) and care work, she demanded the legal recognition of housework as a profession, as well as practical and theoretical courses in all female schools, which would teach women the details of this work. Calling many ignorant, she argued against their prevailing opinion that housework was easy, and that housework was not work. Her comparison of housekeeping with professions such as tailor or baker makes it evident not only that she really did see it as an actual profession, but also that she understood the complexity of the work which was, as she argued, even more difficult, as it encompassed a fusion of different types of work ("a seamstress, a laundress, a housemaid, and a cook again," etc.). Her views were not isolated, as a similar discourse was present, for instance, in the case of the Belgrade feminist organization *Ženski pokret* and their member Darinka Lacković, who worked with peasant women and argued for the professionalization of peasant women's work along the similar lines.[27] At the same time, while arguing for the importance of household labor, her discourse solidified the gendered division of labor in the household, which would, with her suggestions, become institutionalized as well.

Minka Govekar's intervention was a part of the broader story of the politics of organized women who, in the interwar period, focused their attention on the issue of housework. As historian Jelena Tešija recently argued, the International Cooperative Women's Guild in this period "treated household labor as a policy issue worthy of discussion at the international level."[28] In the "Housewives' Programme" adopted by the ICWG Committee in 1933 and later used for international advocacy, various aspects of women's housework were addressed, not excluding the "double burden of housework and industrial or agricultural employment."[29] The issue of housework was also discussed at the conferences of the ICW, particularly in Vienna in 1930 and in Dubrovnik in 1936. While this remains an important avenue for further research, at this point it is important to note that Slovenian women—led by Minka Govekar—contributed greatly in this regard, proposing that a new household economics committee within the ICW should be established.[30]

27 Cf. Isidora Grubački, "Women Activists' Relation to Peasant Women's Work in the 1930s Yugoslavia," in *Women, Work and Agency: Chapters of an Inclusive History of Labor in the Long Twentieth Century*, ed. Eloisa Betti, Silke Neunsinger, Leda Papastefanaki, Marica Tolomelli, and Susan Zimmermann (Budapest, New York: CEU Press, 2022), 211–33.

28 Jelena Tešija, "'Millions of Working Housewives': The International Co-Operative Women's Guild and Household Labour in the Interwar Period," *Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe* 31, no. 2 (May 4, 2023): 331.

29 Ibid., 334.

30 S.E., "Kongres mednarodne ženske zveze (CIF) v Dubrovniku," *Ženski svet* 14, no. 11 (1936), 250–54.

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MINKA GOVEKAR
"The Value of Housework"

As wives, mothers, and housewives, women single-handedly perform three vital tasks for the benefit of the nation and the state. They represent the central axis around which every family revolves, grows, and prospers, while family represents the smallest but most important unit of the national and state formation.… A family is like a small cell in a honeycomb, and all the cells collectively form the kingdom of bees. Similarly, a country consists of millions of families led, governed, and sustained by the care, labor, and love of women as mothers and housewives.

The tasks performed by mothers and housewives are therefore distinctive and essential for the well-being of their families and thus the entire country. And yet, most average men believe that housekeeping is but a minor task that can be accomplished with minimal effort. Naturally, the more skilled the housewife is, the faster she gets the work done—and the less she talks about it, the less recognition she receives.

Every day, we listen to ignorant men counting women's blessings: You can remain carefree and enjoy staying at home, while housework is just something to keep you entertained, while we, the husbands, bring money home to you.

These men are unaware that housewives must divide each day into countless parts. Each craftsman focuses his attention only on the work he performs. A cobbler focuses on the shoes he is making, a tailor on the suit, a joiner on the table, a glazier on the windowpane, a baker on the pastry… All the paths of reason and will are directed toward a single goal: the object in their hands. Hence, they all perform the jobs they have learned and trained for according to precise rules so that they can do them routinely, mechanically, and without much mental effort.

Meanwhile, the housewife's profession is a complex calling, consisting of exceedingly diverse and sometimes diametrically opposing tasks and actions. She is required to adapt instantly to ever-changing situations: a moment ago, she was just a mother, while in the next one, she must turn into a cook; she has not yet prepared the meal but might need to attend to her sick children as a nurse or even a doctor; her boys need help with their homework and the girls with handicrafts. Then, she must become a seamstress, a laundress, a housemaid, and a cook again. For a change, she might also need to dig, plant, and weed the garden, whitewash and paint the kitchen, and take care of hundreds of little things that make the home cozy and comfortable. In the meantime, she is supposed to take care of her appearance, educate herself, and be a pleasant companion, co-worker, and wife to her husband.

She cannot focus completely and entirely on any single task, yet each one demands her entire attention. She is supposed to do everything subtly and silently, and by no means should the husband notice that she might not always be present with all her mind and heart. He could resent it and look elsewhere for company.

That is how multifaceted middle- and lower-class housewives must be. The professional work of every lowliest worker, every maid, is recognized and paid. Only a housewife—who is often a mother, cook, housekeeper, teacher, educator, and handyman all at once—is legally without a profession, earnings, or any means of her own. She is a person without any rights who—without a considerate husband and her own possessions—must beg for every pair of socks, every dress, and every hat.

Few people consider how much, for example, a housewife saves by doing all the household chores herself without a housekeeper's aid, therefore performing all the work that would otherwise need to be paid. She saves the expenses of the housekeeper's monthly salary, food, housing, lighting, cleaning, laundry, insurance, Christmas presents, etc. If we add up all these expenses, plus the housekeeper's salary, the total amounts to at least 700 dinars. On top of all that, a housewife sews, mends, raises the children and helps them with their studies. Of course, housewives usually spend money more prudently, take care of every little thing, and do not break or ruin so many things. These savings can be calculated at a minimum of 300 dinars per month, meaning that a housewife earns at least 1000 dinars per month with her housework. From time to time, it is necessary to express the housewife's work in figures because many husbands claim that housework is not work at all and that wives contribute nothing to the household's prosperity. However, any considerate and just person must recognize that housework performed by the wife

should count as the family's income in the same manner as the husband's wages. The price of housework increases with the number of family members. Consequently, the work of a busy housewife and mother of a large family can often exceed her husband's earnings. How, then, can we even begin to evaluate the work of the many wives employed in a profession, who—usually at night—also take care of all the housework and mothering at home? We must consider and assess all of this so as not to underestimate the wives' earnings—either as housewives, professional workers, or both.

However, even a housewife who takes care of the household, her husband, and children with the help of a housekeeper should not be denied the value of her work. If she knows how to divide up the chores between herself and the housekeeper, keeping a watchful eye to make sure nothing is wasted at home while, as we say, doing wonders for the house from dawn till dusk, she can save a lot of money, meaning that her work is profitable.

Housewives' and mothers' lives are full of self-sacrifice and self-denial, especially in these times of widespread crises. Those housewives who know how to distribute work, income, and expenses fairly and reasonably; make wise and thorough use of food, fuel, warmth, clothing, footwear, time, and their spiritual and physical powers; and practically conjure things out of thin air without abundant resources—such housewives and educators do not work only with their hands and bodies but are also intellectual workers who deserve to have their multifaceted work valued and paid for like any other independent profession.

The legal recognition of housework, demanded by women in all cultured countries and already ensured in some places, would boost women's confidence, will, and energy to stand before the world and their families ever more steadfast and reinvigorated. It would enhance their sense of responsibility.

Like the prudent financial minister of her family, a contemporary wife would claim a reward for herself only once even the smallest life necessities of her husband and children have been covered, as is the case in the homes of all noble women today. I believe that most housewives still put their family first and only then take care of themselves.

This is primarily a question of recognition but nonetheless also of money.

…

Naturally, the world will only consider housework a profession if the wife truly excels in it and deserves this title. Each woman owes this to the community.

Every profession demands serious training, education, and professional skills, and contemporary housework demands it in particular.

Many girls marry without any housework skills. They think that this is something you learn in marriage. How dearly must they pay for their mistakes, inexperience, and belated education!

Neither a primary nor middle nor secondary school certificate can guarantee that a woman will meet the requirements of a good housewife. Therefore, in addition to general and professional education, practical housework skills are necessary and should be acquired by every girl, whether she marries or not. If she will not be doing housework for her husband and children, she will be doing it for herself.

It is high time that all girls' schools, without exception, introduce practical and theoretical instruction during the entire final year of schooling, covering all types of housework. On paper, in the curriculum, such instruction has been approved for a long time, while in reality, it is nowhere to be found. Among other things, we lack a sufficient number of housework skills teachers and, above all, a school to train them.

…

Therefore, housework education must also be a priority for the relevant authorities because anyone can see that prosperity only prevails in nations with virtuous housewives. The prosperity of our national economy largely depends on how the issue of housework is solved.

…

That is why contemporary women who faithfully and skillfully perform their duties as mothers and housewives are just as valuable as their husbands. There is a reason for the old saying that the wife supports three corners of the house. It is no secret that a good housewife performs chores around the house that her husband could never do. It would thus only be fair and just for the public to recognize this work as a proper profession that should also be legally protected.

.....

Lucija Balikić

JOSIP VILFAN (WILFAN): The Congress of European Nationalities and the Peace Problem

Author: Josip Vilfan (Wilfan)
Title: The Congress of European Nationalities and the Peace Problem
Originally published: Dr. Josip Wilfan, *The Congress of European Nationalities and the Peace Problem* (Vienna: W. Braumüller, 1936); offprint from *Nation und Staat* 10, no. 8 (1936): 489–494.
Language: English

About the author

Josip Vilfan (Wilfan) (1878, Trieste–1955, Belgrade) was a lawyer, politician, and political thinker. He is considered one of the most important European liberal legal and political theoreticians of the minority question in the interwar period, when the modern concept of a national minority was still being stabilized

and articulated by various actors. It was particularly the Julian March—and its turbulent history during the First World War and after, with the attempt to implement the secret 1915 Treaty of London[1]—that proved to be his original sociopolitical context and main point of reference in his later texts.

Born in Habsburg Trieste, he moved to Vienna to study law. Following his studies in Vienna, he returned to Trieste, where he practiced law, served in the Trieste municipal council, and became secretary and later president of the notable Slovenian cultural society *Edinost* (Unity). During the break-up of the Habsburg Empire at the end of the First World War, Vilfan promoted the annexation of Trieste and the (former) Austrian Littoral to the newly established Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. Subsequently, he theorized on the modalities of cohabitation of the Italian and Slavic (mainly Slovenian) populace in the region.[2]

During this decisive period, the representatives of the newly founded Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes—Vilfan among them—evoked Wilsonian principles, based on which nationality was to be the determining principle for drawing the new borders.[3] By contrast, Italian diplomacy insisted on the legalistic view of the aforementioned London Treaty, signed by the Serbian Pašić government. This conflict, as well as the rise of the Fascist Party in Italy, motivated the political elites of the South Slavs in Italy to rapidly unite, which resulted in the creation of the Vilfan-led "Unity" Political Association (*Politično društvo Edinost*) in August 1919.[4] This association later evolved into the Yugoslav People's Party (*Jugoslovanska narodna stranka*, JNS), which worked toward re-establishing the recently closed schools in the territories newly acquired by Italy, as well as toward including South Slavic languages into official state communication. The party's initiatives remained mostly unrealized, not least because of the political and ideological tensions within the party itself, particularly between Vilfan's national liberalism and the Christian socialism of Virgil Šček.[5]

1 It was concluded by the United Kingdom, France, and Russia on the one part, and Italy on the other, in order to entice the latter to enter the World War on the side of the Triple Entente, promising it the territories of Austria-Hungary on the Adriatic, among others.

2 The 1910 Austrian population census estimated that some 400,000 people who could be identified as primary Slovenian- or Croatian-speakers lived in the region acquired by Italy through the 1922 Rapallo Treaty, which in turn was based on the 1915, British-brokered, secret Treaty of London. Importantly, the Italian population comprised the majority of the urban, Trieste-based population, while the majority Slovenian (and South Slavic) areas were predominantly rural. See Table VI, "Die Bevölkerung österreichischer Staatsbürgerschaft nach Umgangssprachen und die Staatsfremden mit Unterscheidung der Geschlechter," *Österreichische Statistik, Neue Folge* 1, no. 2 (Vienna, 1914), 43.

3 Glenda Sluga, *The Problem of Trieste and the Italo-Yugoslav Border: Difference, Identity and Sovereignty in Twentieth-Century Europe* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2001).

4 This is not to be confused with the Edinost Society of Trieste, which was founded as early as 1876 by Slovenes, Croats, and other Slavs in Trieste. They published a newspaper of the same name.

5 Milica Kacin Wohinz, "Poslanci Jugoslovenske narodne stranke v italijanskem parlamentu v predfašistični dobi," *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 14, no. 1–2 (1974): 109–36.

Soon after, in 1921, Vilfan was nominated by the JNS and elected to serve as a representative in the Italian parliament, where his work mostly concentrated on improving the position of the Slavic populations that found themselves in the newly acquired Italian territories.[6] Most of his appeals in that context were unsuccessful, leaving the local Slavic population without cultural associations and legal safeguards. His and his colleagues' (most notably Engelbert Besednjak's) advocacy prompted the Italian government to adopt a program in 1923 for the overt assimilation of national minorities in both Venezia Tridentina (targeting German-speakers) and Venezia Giulia (targeting speakers of South Slavic languages). This inspired a subsequent wave of anti-fascist resistance by the local Slavic population.[7]

The lack of success in the parliamentary arena led Vilfan to escalate the issue to the international level. First, he became a member of the Inter-parliamentary Union, an international organization which served as a platform for mediation and negotiation between governments, already in 1922. Crucially, he later became the chairman of the permanent working committee of the Vienna-based Congress of European Nationalities, which he founded in 1925, a year before experiencing several politically inspired arrests on Mussolini's orders.[8] Following that, he relocated from Italy to Vienna in 1928.

The newly-founded Congress of European Nationalities strived to develop into a European inter-governmental body dedicated to minority rights protection. It aimed to develop a normative legal framework for ensuring the rights of minorities in Europe as well as serve as an institutional basis for further European political integration.[9] Its first assembly took place in Geneva, where the representatives of more than thirty European national minorities participated and presented their grievances. Not long after that, Vilfan and his associates managed

6 Egon Pelikan, *Josip Vilfan v parlamentu = Discorsi parlamentari dell'on. Josip Vilfan* (Trieste: Krožek za družbena vprašanja Virgil Šček, 1997).

7 Andrea Di Michele, "The Fascist view of the '*allogeni*' in the border regions," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 28, no. 1 (2022): 90–112.

8 Gianfranco Cresciani, "Mussolini, Vilfan, and the Slovenian Minority," in *Anti-Fascism in European History: From the 1920s to Today*, ed. Jože Pirjevec, Egon Pelikan, and Sabrina P. Ramet (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2023), 157–69. Egon Pelikan, "Josip Wilfan in Engelbert Besednjak v Kongresu evropskih narodnosti v letih 1925–1938," *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 40, no. 1 (2000): 93–112. David J. Smith, Marina Germane, and Martyn Housden, "'Forgotten Europeans': transnational minority activism in the age of European integration," *Nations and Nationalism* 25, no. 2 (2019): 523–43.

9 Ferenc Eiler, "The Congress of European Nationalities and the International Protection of Minority Rights, 1925–1938," in *Populism, Memory and Minority Rights: Central and Eastern European Issues in Global Perspective*, ed. Anna-Mária Bíró (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 235–82. John Hiden, "European Congress of Nationalities," in *Encyclopedia of Jewish History and Culture Online*, ed. Dan Diner (Leiden: Brill, 2017–2021), consulted online on March 14, 2024, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2468-8894_ejhc_COM_0214.

to secure financial support for the Congress from both victorious and revisionist states. It was in the context of his work for the Congress of European Nationalities that he produced his most relevant political texts and declarations.[10] After the Congress was dissolved in 1939, Vilfan moved to Belgrade.

During the Second World War, his son, Jože Vilfan (Trieste, 1908–Ljubljana 1987), also a lawyer, acted as one of the leaders of the regional chapter of the Liberation Front (*Osvobodilna fronta*) in the Littoral, later becoming a high-ranking Yugoslav diplomat in the socialist period.[11] Following the end of war, Josip Vilfan acted as a member of the Institute for International Affairs, adjacent to the Yugoslav Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and contributed to the Allied-led demarcation and making of the state border between Italy and socialist Yugoslavia in 1947, which eventually resulted in what is known as the "Trieste crisis." Afterwards, Vilfan gradually disengaged from public life, remaining in Belgrade until his death in 1955.

Ultimately, Vilfan remained committed to broadly liberal internationalist and institutionalist values and practices throughout his career and intellectual production, which was at its most fruitful precisely in the period of his activity at the helm of the Congress of European Nationalities. Crucially, however, this was done in parallel to his fellow (post-)liberal Slovenian Yugoslavists' radicalization and adoption of integral nationalism, despite the fact that they all largely supported both étatist centralism and individual autonomy throughout the interwar period.[12]

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS: "The Speech in the Italian Parliament," in *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe 1770–1945: Texts and Commentaries*, vol. 3/1, *Modernism: The Creation of Nation-States*, eds. Ahmet Ersoy, Maciej Górny, and Vangelis Kechriotis (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2010); *Les minorités ethniques et la paix en Europe* (Vienna, 1929); *Die Organisierung der Volksgemeinschaft* (Vienna, 1932); *Die programmatische Arbeit der Nationalitätenkongresse: aus der Eröffnungsrede Dr. Josip Wilfans zum Nationalitätenkongreß* (Vienna, 1934); "Manjšinski kongresi," *Sodobnost* 2,

10 Gorazd Bajc, "'Paradiplomacija' Josipa Vilfana," *Studia Historica Slovenica* 13, no. 2–3 (2013): 461–97. Gorazd Bajc, *Josip Vilfan: življenje in delo primorskega pravnika, narodnjaka in poslanca v rimskem parlamentu* (Koper: University of Primorska, 2005).

11 Jože Koren, "Vilfan, dr. Jože," in *Primorski slovenski biografski leksikon*, vol. 17/4, *Velikonja–Zemljak,* ed. Martin Jevnikar (Gorica: Goriška Mohorjeva služba, 1991), online edition at http://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi788321/#primorski-slovenski-biografski-leksikon.

12 Oskar Mulej, "'Post-Liberalism', Anti-Clericalism and Yugoslav Nationalism. Slovene Progressive Political Camp in the Interwar Period and Contemporary Czech Politics," *Střed. Časopis pro mezioborová studia Střední Evropy 19. a 20. století. / Centre. Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies of Central Europe in the 19th and 20th Centuries* 6, no. 1 (2014): 65–93.

no. 4 (1934): 145–51, and no. 5 (1934): 200–205; *O tisti obliki življenja, ki ji pravimo narod* (Trieste, 1978).

Context

The Congress of European Nationalities and the Peace Problem was originally published in 1936 as the organization's programmatic text on the pages of *Nation und Staat*, the Congress's organ, in ever-polarized Vienna.[13] Due to Josip Vilfan's extensive experience in building an international institutional and normative legal framework dedicated to minority rights protection, his various publications, including declarations and speeches, and the institutional practices he introduced within this organization can be taken as a relevant context for the given source.[14]

Overall, his publications and institutional practices, particularly his design of the Congress of European Nationalities, can provide a valuable insight into the way he aimed to articulate the concept 'nationality' which was markedly ambiguous in the liberal internationalist context. His usage was characteristic for the prewar Habsburg context, in the sense of "nationality" (*Volksgruppe*) as a collective actor, and *Rechte der Nationalitäten* as an antecedent concept. This came in contrast to "minority", which represented a nascent, modern concept initially developed and enforced by the Entente in Paris, focused on numerical weakness.[15] Importantly, the modern concept of national minority, developed in the context of the Paris Peace Conference, was defined primarily in conjunction with the presupposed assimilatory nation-state, the culturally homogeneous nation, and the international order.[16] Vilfan's understanding and application of the concept 'nationalities' was developed in close cooperation with Ewald Ammende, an Estonian politician and human rights activist, whose 1925 Law on the Cultural Autonomy of Minorities in Estonia served as a key example of non-territorial autonomy that they both subscribed to, rooted in a voluntary, non-binding, and non-essentializing concept of nationhood.[17] Vilfan's most notable contributions

13 Not to be confused with Vilfan's 1929 French-language publication with a similar title, which contains his speech from the 1929 Congress that took place in Geneva. Josip Wilfan, *Les minorités ethniques et la paix en Europe* (Vienna–Leipzig: Bräumiller, 1929).

14 Jože Pirjevec, *Pensiero e attività di Josip Vilfan* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1994). For competing contemporaneous discourses tackling similar topics, see Vesna Mikolič, "Comparison of Fascist and National Defense Discourse," in *Anti-Fascism in European History*, 31–48.

15 Bence Bari and Anna Adorjáni, "National Minority: The Emergence of the Concept in the Habsburg and International Legal Thought," *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, European and Regional Studies* 16 (2019): 7–37.

16 Jennifer Jackson Preece, *National Minorities and the European Nation-States System* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

17 Martyn Housden, *On Their Own Behalf: Ewald Ammende, Europe's National Minorities and the Campaign for Cultural Autonomy, 1920–1936* (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 2014). Oskar Mulej, "Illiberal Forms of Non-Territorial Autonomy: The Sudeten German Party Case," in *Realising*

in terms of political thought can be seen in the articulation of the modern liberal concept of the national minority, in developing the language of universal human rights, and his theorizations on the building of liberal international institutions.

It is also necessary to intellectualize his institutional practices undertaken at the Congress of European Nationalities in order to complement his thought espoused in the texts themselves. Importantly, the Congress, under his presidency and in contrast to comparable modern multilateral international organizations, hosted representatives based not on already established nation-states, but rather of those groups who had regional, religiously rooted, or other cultural or ethnic identities, needed representation, and were willing to send their representatives. For instance, the Congress gave platforms to Jewish, Rusyn, Frisian, and Catalon envoys, among others. This does not mean that the Congress was always successful in its attempts to provide such national projects with their platform. On the contrary, by the mid-to-late 1930s, its work was significantly impacted by the Third Reich's and other revisionist powers' instrumentalization of the 'minority question' and further destabilization of the Versailles order.

This particular text, published in 1936 and overflowing with conceptual clarifications and definitions, captures a moment in the transformation of Vilfan's liberal internationalist language from the one that was supposedly accepted as reflective of an objective order to a markedly defensive one. This publication followed the 1935 session of the Congress of European Nationalities which took place in Geneva. In the text, Vilfan dedicates a considerable amount of space to conceptual clarifications and definitions. In a reactive way, he reflects on various attempts at the politicization of national minorities and the reframing of, if not contestation of, their status. While Vilfan remained insistent on a liberal-democratic vision of minorities loyal to the sovereign nation-state and vice-versa, other relevant actors evaded that understanding either by promoting popular sovereignty (as in the case of National Socialists and other revisionists/irredentists) or by escaping the jurisdiction of minority treaties more broadly (as in the British and French empires).[18] Vilfan criticized the National Socialists and other revisionists both in his speech to the Congress and in this text. Through his intellectual output during the 1930s, at a moment when Vilfan and his circle had become a weaker minority on the international stage, he developed and promoted a vocabulary around his liberal-democratic vision. This ranged from thematizing minorities' cultural autonomy (within a sovereign nation-state), but also pertinent issues such as statelessness, authoritarianism, ultranationalism, and the

Linguistic, Cultural and Educational Rights Through Non-Territorial Autonomy, eds. David J. Smith, Ivan Dodovski, and Flavia Ghencea (London: Palgrave Macmillan Cham, 2022), 73–87.

18 Tara Zahra, "'The 'Minority Problem' and National Classification in the French and Czechoslovak Borderlands," *Contemporary European History* 17, no. 2 (2008): 137–65.

potential annihilation of various national groups. In other words, while delimiting the cultural sphere from politics had worked in the 1920s, many revisionist actors started regarding minorities as the carriers of (state/territorial) sovereignty in the 1930s.

His focus on the problem of European peace can also serve as an indicator of the radicalization of his claims as a response to the increasingly illiberal understanding of national autonomy which changed the conceptual morphology of 'national minority' from excluding to including territorial claims.[19] Importantly, Vilfan maintained civilizational arguments to the extent that he saw the unobstructed cultural development of national minorities as an indicator of a state's elevated intellectual and cultural level.

Intellectually, this text can be situated at the intersection of several strains of thought, with the liberal internationalist one as the central axis. Both in this text and in others, Vilfan relies on civilizational hierarchies when elaborating his claims on the international order and the nation-state as a form of modern political organization. This has already been widely discussed in the historiography on the making of the Versailles order and the League of Nations as the most relevant multilateral attempt at creating an international institutional and legal framework. Yet Vilfan's example demonstrates that it was not only the revisionist powers or the Western maritime empires that operated with civilizational hierarchies, but also the liberal thinkers who represented the newly established, post-Habsburg nation-states nominally rooted in the principles of political modernity. In this particular text, he seems to base his proposition for the minority protection mechanism on the existence of a European moral and cultural mission to further export the given system to those societies that would eventually reach the required civilizational or developmental level. In a nutshell, this source can be read as an attempt by Habsburg-socialized liberal thinkers not only to argue for their own states' political modernity (as opposed to what they saw as anachronistic, oppressive Habsburg imperial rule based on sheer force), but also to insert themselves symbolically into the ranks of civilized nations by theorizing on the (in)applicability of the novel framework to other, namely culturally inferior, social and political contexts.

Another important issue concerns the way Vilfan defined the concept of national minority in this context. Similar to other notable (post-)Habsburg thinkers, such as the Austro-Marxist Otto Bauer or the Hungarian civic radical Oszkár Jászi, Vilfan insisted that the concept of national minority had less to do with the group's size and much more to do with the group's national quality, positing them primarily as an extension of a given national body, equally as important

19 Mulej, "Illiberal Forms of Non-Territorial Autonomy," 73–87.

as any other part of it. This assertion provided a basis for the concept of cultural autonomy complementary to one's loyalty to a sovereign state.[20]

Overall, Vilfan's thought demonstrates that the very concept of the national minority, and adjacent concepts from the same conceptual cluster (e.g., assimilation, minority rights), was born out of an identifiable and contingent historical situation. It was articulated by distinguishable historical actors, namely the post-Habsburg liberal thinkers who had to grapple with the practical impossibility of creating culturally homogenous nation-states without including significant portions of minorities into their own population.

By contrast, the contributions by thinkers from Western maritime empires on the topic were less significant and elaborate. They mainly operated with legalistic arguments and existent nation-states as the main actors. What is more, their own (disproportionate lack of) intellectual participation in the elaboration of the newly founded international organizations and institutions might serve to indicate their disinterest in a multilateral order in which multiple actors decide on matters horizontally. Interestingly, the debates that took place within the Congress also produced numerous new arguments, claims, but also concepts. For instance, the concepts of cultural autonomy, assimilation, and dissimilation (later proposed by the Nazi-affiliated thinkers), but also of intellectual (*geistiges*) mutual respect in international relations, can be traced back to the debates among the representatives of different communities within the Congress.

Lastly, Vilfan's crucial point on minority rights protection being the basis of further European political integration can also be taken as implying a vision of a horizontal, democratic European union with a mission to project political modernity towards those societies which are not (yet) culturally ready to participate in such an international legal-institutional framework. Vilfan was, however, not naively convinced by the power of liberal institutions. He underscored the importance of the intellectual work necessary to assist communities in retaining their cultural identity and—consequently—political and civic rights. To that end, he attempted to provide a corrective to the basic principle of nationality that held the (false) promise of creating modern homogenous and, presumably, democratic nation-states. On several occasions, Vilfan accentuated that implementing this corrective would present an important step in the general course of human progress and ensure a permanent peace in Europe—liberal and humanist ideals that proved insufficient to stop the escalation which resulted in the Second World War.

20 For more on the debates around sovereignty in this context, see Natasha Wheatley, *The Life and Death of States: Central Europe and the Transformation of Modern Sovereignty* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023).

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DR. JOSIP WILFAN, President of the European Congress of Nationalities
"The Congress of European Nationalities and the Peace Problem."

First of all, I think we must be at least fairly clear as to which state we conceive as one of real peace. It seems to me essential for a real peace that it should be a lasting and constant state of affairs resting upon normal and regulated relations between the powers. It may indeed be occasionally disturbed by incidents and by conflicts of interests which may arise. At all events a real peace cannot possibly exist in circumstances where constant tensions and frictions bring about, as it were, a chronic disease in the relations between two or more countries.

Just as the characteristics of real peace require here, in my opinion, to be indicated in short, the contrasting representation of the problem of nationalities must really be set forth in detail. In the limits of a short article, however, it must be confined to the universal principles. … But how could the areas inhabited by the individual nations be indicated and finely and clearly separated by lines on a map of this imaginary state comprising all of Europe? The concrete size of a nation and the extent and boundaries of its settlements change according to the definitions of the word "nation" and to which denotation or combination of denotations one gives preference. As the most important, the following denotations may be cited only as examples: Historical unity, the unity determined by geographical boundaries, common traditions, customs and practices, the bond of descent, of language, of a peculiar and strongly pronounced civilization, the existence of collective consciousness and feeling as well as of a collective will towards self-assertion, a social structure built upon special foundation and community or economic interests.

Still more, however, would the mutual delimitation of the nations on this map be rendered difficult by the fact that the settlements of the neighboring

peoples are not everywhere sharply contrasted. In wide stretches of territory various peoples live mixed together. Elsewhere runners of one nation project fairly deep into the territory of another nation or indeed whole nations are surrounded on all sides like islands by another nation. This is especially the case in Central and in Eastern Europe. On this hypothetical map of Europe could consequently only the central areas of the individual nations be clearly indicated as their own particular territories, with the exception of the Jewish people who lack entirely any such territory. …

… In reality the size of the national minorities in several states will be not inconsiderably greater than can be ascertained from the official data. In a lesser percentage, however, all the other states of the European continent show an admixture of national minorities, with regard to which I must at this point stress that the numerically unfavorable ratio of a minority to the major nation, especially in the case of compact settlements, need not be of decisive importance. For, as I said once before, an oakwood remains as such, however great the pinewood may be which surrounds it. The nationalities or national minorities in the various European states are parts of the population which have lived on the soil on which they have settled for centuries, in most cases indeed from time immemorial. They regularly possess a cultivated social structure. The majority form on their restricted native land a compact community. Where this is not the case, and the minorities live together with the ruling nation, the cohesion of the individual nationalities is still with few exceptions so strong that one can still talk of united social communities.

The number of peoples in Europe who come under the heading of nationalities or national minorities in the accepted sense of the word is doubtless not overestimated at a round 40 million. In it, the Soviet Union is naturally not taken into consideration. Although this number does not indicate any united and tangible people which could step forward as a power into the ranks of the other powers of this continent, it cannot be overlooked that it has reached the census-total of a number of European great powers and that by its size alone raises to the importance of a "European question of the first rank" the problem of nationalities.

But to appreciate the whole weight with which the problem of nationalities falls into the balance, one must realize the degree of passion which the national feeling has reached on the European continent. There are high spiritual values which men, individually and collectively, feel as the result and as the expression of their belonging to a certain nation. …

… In this matter of community national feeling knows no boundaries. For this reason what happens to an external national minority is felt by the

whole nation to be a wrong or a benefit. Therefore the numerical size of the minority plays a very subordinate role.…

The connection between the question of a real peace in Europe and the problem of European nationalities is clearly manifest if one keeps the essentials of both constantly in view. The genuine peace presupposes a solution of the problem of nationalities, the unsolved problem of nationalities threatening the peace. The primary element of international relations is still the state. Where the will and capacity of a state to preserve itself are not present in a sufficient degree or are lacking, the exterior pressure gains the upper hand and forces in the walls of the state-building. For this reason, we must also consider the question of peace and the problem of national minorities in this perspective and often ask ourselves the question: Are the national minorities in themselves, merely because they exist, and by virtue of their existence making the claim for their maintenance valid, a danger to the state? Can they endanger the state by their influence directed against it? Does the continued existence of foreign nationalities especially when they are settled on the state boundaries create or increase the dangers which can threaten a state from without? By which procedure towards the national minorities within their frontiers can the states lessen or increase the dangers which threaten them on this side?

… At this point only some quite general statements can be made. Firstly this, that even the right of the states in question to exist or at least their right as opposed to that of the extra-national parts of their population is brought into question if one admits that the existence of the national minorities in itself threatens the integrity or even the existence of the states. And moreover, that it cannot be, for reasons of humanity and morality and in fact out of considerations of expediency, a right and an interest of the states to fend off suspected, supposed or real dangers at the price of the existence and right to live of the extra-national parts of the population. With regard to the so-called irredentism it must be at once admitted that appearances of indirect or direct aspirations of this kind in latent or open form whether it be in the interior of states or directed against them from without is to be noticed here and there in the age of the principle of nationalities before and after the World War. I nevertheless believe, however, that irredentistic aspirations can never by themselves alone lead to success, but that their realization depends upon a concourse of circumstances in which much more powerful forces work together, and against one another, on a much larger scale. And I believe in addition that the introduction of such a concourse of circumstances would not be arrested but only expedited, their pernicious effects not mitigated but only

aggravated, if the irredentistic danger is combatted by the suppression of the national minority in question.

… Today it appears again as though a new wave of intolerance and suppression, progressing from state to state, is about to break upon the national minorities. It is a tragic consequence of such unfortunate methods that mistrust increases mutually. A circumstance operates here which really, on rational consideration, should lead to a compromise of the two extremes. Doctor Ammende constantly lays special emphasis on the fact that, with regard to the problem of nationalities, almost all European nations find themselves in a twofold situation. On the one hand, in their own national states, where the extra-national elements of their population play the part of opposition to the governing nation, and, on the other, in foreign states, where parts of their own national population experience the fate of national minorities. From its own relationship towards its kindred minorities each nation can estimate how sensitive the nerve-strings are which bind all parts of a nation together. The seed which is sown on both sides of the frontier by measures taken against the existence and right to live of national minorities does not always spring up quickly. It is soon choked amongst the germs of confidence and esteem out of which alone real peace can grow.

This knowledge was one of the deciding motives for the creation of the international protection of minorities. A protector should be given to the minorities in the League of Nations who is himself uninfluenced by national passion. By his mediation amongst other things a spoke would be put in the wheel of the intervention of individual states on behalf of kindred peoples or any other closely connected minorities. Today it can be no longer withheld that the League of Nations has done little, or, if one takes a general standpoint, no justice to this great task of peace.

Concerning the present state of affairs, one might ask oneself if it were not perhaps just a question of a painful period of transition, and would the measures of suppression not lead one day to a coincidence of the state and national boundaries? In that case the policy of suppression would not be less detestable, but it would at least bring with it this advantage, namely, that moment of tension in the relations between the nations and the states would be avoided. Now experience should have shown quite clearly that the societies known to us as nations, nationalities, or national minorities can *never* be annihilated by measures of suppression however much the people who live in them may be persecuted, even physically. There are unfortunately examples of this, but, thank God, they have not been imitated in Europe. The resolution of the problem of nationalities, which Europe must seek, can only be found

on the basis of mutual tolerance and esteem between the nations. It can only come to pass when the nations, whether living in their own national states or not, are guaranteed that right to live which the claim of our continent to have a moral and cultural mission grants them. This solution must take the form of a legal arrangement in which is taken for granted loyalty to the national community on the one hand and loyalty to the state community on the other, and that, where these do not correspond, no contradiction should be implied. To advocate this idea and to elaborate in detail the implications resulting from it, the European Congress of Nationalities was called into existence. Its works signifies an important contribution towards progress along a path which amongst others must be traversed and which cannot be avoided namely, the path by way of the solution of the problem of nationalities to the realization of a genuine European peace.

Veljko Stanić

EDVARD KOCBEK: A Reflection on Spain

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Title: A Reflection on Spain
Originally published: "Premišljevanje o Španiji," *Dom in svet* 5, no. 1–2 (1937): 90–105.
Language: Slovenian

About the author

Edvard Kocbek (1904, Sveti Jurij ob Ščavnici–1981, Ljubljana) was a distinguished poet, storyteller, essayist, diarist, translator, and politician. He is well-known for his views on Christian socialism and the active role he played in the Slovenian Liberation Front (*Osvobodilna fronta*, OF) during the Second World War, as well as in postwar, socialist Yugoslavia.

He was born in 1904, in the village of Sveti Jurij ob Ščavnici, where he grew up with two brothers and a sister in the family of a church organist and a housewife. After having finished six grades in his hometown, he went to the classical gymnasium in Maribor, then an important center for Catholic youth. Kocbek's first significant influences can be located at that time. He was active in the youth group led by the Christian socialist Janez Evangelist Krek. In the 1920s, he participated in the *križarstvo* (lit. 'crusader') movement; he published his first articles in major Slovenian newspapers and magazines. Kocbek belongs to the first generation of Slovenian students who completed their high school education in

their native language. With the founding of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes—which brought a new liveliness to cultural life—there emerged also a general atmosphere of change and crisis. In this context, the modest, withdrawn, and contemplative Kocbek decided to study theology at the Maribor seminary in 1925. Yet, after two years, he suddenly left the seminary and switched to studies in Romance languages in Ljubljana. Particularly relevant for his intellectual development were experiences and influences he gained during his longer stays and studies abroad: in Berlin in the academic year 1928/29, as well as in Lyon, Dijon, and Paris in 1931/32. After working as a teacher of French language in Bjelovar and Varaždin between 1931 and 1936, he received a teaching post in Ljubljana, returning to a place of particular importance to him.

In the mid-1930s, Edvard Kocbek was still a relatively unknown but gifted poet. His first collection of poems, entitled *Zemlja* (The Earth, 1934), received considerable critical attention. Firmly attached to its intellectual milieu, he regularly collaborated with the new series of the Catholic magazine *Dom in svet* (Home and the World, since 1929), where he published not only his poems and prose but also essays on French literature. His intellectual profile was thus gradually shaped in this period. As Kocbek later reminisced, he had three different fields of activity: literary, Christian-theological, and cultural-political.[1] It was within the third, cultural-political sphere, that he would become one of the central figures of the Slovenian Christian socialists in the second half of the 1930s. His stance concerning the question of the Spanish Civil War contributed to this in a decisive way. Amid the anti-fascist climate of the Popular Front, the events in Spain served as a political and moral catalyst, prompting Kocbek to take a more active political stance and drawing him closer to the Yugoslav communists and the idea of revolution in Yugoslavia. However, in the actions of this young left-wing Catholic, one can also discern elements of existentialist poetics, rooted in a philosophy of freedom and responsibility, authentic life and constant rebellion, which shaped the intricate interplay between this intellectual's engagement with politics, literature, and history.[2] These influences would become evident both in his confrontations within the Catholic camp and in his later divergences with the postwar Yugoslav communist regime.

Kocbek's political emancipation from the Catholic camp unfolded in the late 1930s, initially with the publishing of his magazine *Dejanje* (Action, 1938–1941), and subsequently with his prominent role in the Second World War, as member of the Executive Committee and one of the vice-presidents of the

1 See *Krogi navznoter, krogi navzven: Kocbekov zbornik*. (Ljubljana: Nova revija, 2004), 326. Cf. Andrej Inkret, *In stoletje bo zardelo. Kocbek, življenje in delo* (Ljubljana: Modrijan 2011), 101.

2 Marija Mitrović, "Istorija i individualna sudbina," in Edvard Kocbek, *Svedočanstvo: dnevnički zapisi od 3. maja do 2. decembra 1943* (Beograd: Narodna knjiga 1988), 5–10.

Liberation Front. After 1945, Kocbek held the position of Minister for Slovenia in the Federal Government and was the vice-president of the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia. In 1951, however, Kocbek published a collection of war-themed short stories, *Strah in pogum* (Fear and Courage, 1951), in which he questioned communist ethics in the war and portrayed the revolutionary characters in an existentialist way. This approach deviated significantly from the official picture of war events and Kocbek fell from political favor and was excluded from public cultural life for ten years. It was not until 1961 that Kocbek published a new collection of poems, receiving the Prešeren Prize for it, the most prestigious Slovenian literary prize at the time. From then on, he mainly dedicated his time to publishing his war diaries, poetry, nonfiction and translations, thereby becoming one of the most prominent Slovenian writers. In the mid-1970s, he once again found himself at the center of public controversy after publishing a book of interviews with Boris Pahor, a Slovenian writer from Trieste, renowned for his autobiographical novel *Nekropola* (Necropolis, 1967), which depicts life in a concentration camp. The Yugoslav authorities were particularly angered by Kocbek's discussion of the post-war massacres of anti-communist Slovenian Home Guard troops (*Domobranci*), who had collaborated with Nazi German forces during the war.[3]

Kocbek died in November 1981. The speech at his funeral in Ljubljana was delivered by the President of the Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia, Milan Kučan.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS: *Zbrane pesmi*, 2 vols. (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1977); *Svoboda in nujnost: Pričevanja* (Celje: Mohorjeva družba, 1974); *Sodobni misleci* (Celje: Mohorjeva družba, 1981); *Partizanski dnevnik: 1938–1945*, 2 vols. (Ljubljana: Sanje, 2022).

Context

"Premišljevanje o Španiji" (A Reflection on Spain) is one of Kocbek's most well-known texts, published in a special issue of the magazine *Dom in svet* dedicated to the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of this distinguished Catholic intellectual magazine. The article attracted widespread attention, sparking great

3 Immediately after the war, the new government summarily killed over eleven thousand Home Guard troops that had been repatriated by the British Army in Carinthia, and executed members of various quisling formations from other parts of Yugoslavia, notably Croatia, who were captured in Slovenian territory at the end of the war. See Vida Deželak Barič, "Posledice vojnega nasilja: Smrtne žrtve druge svetovne vojne in zaradi nje na Slovenskem," in *Nasilje vojnih in povojnih dni*, ed. Nevenka Troha (Ljubljana: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2014), 34–35.

excitement and causing a stir within conservative Catholic circles. Polemical responses appeared in various Catholic magazines, including *Straža v viharju* (Guard in the Storm), *Mi mladi borci* (We Young Fighters), *Slovenec* (The Slovene), and *Katoliško tiskovno društvo* (Catholic Print Society). The reaction also led to a temporary discontinuation of *Dom in svet*; the editorial board pulled the next issue, and the magazine only reappeared the following year with a new editorial team. Thus, Kocbek's article had a far greater impact than just on Kocbek himself, as it marked a pivotal moment for young Catholics in Slovenia. Kocbek did not collaborate with *Dom in svet* from that point onward. Instead, in 1938, he started a new magazine, *Dejanje* (Action), which he then edited until the occupation of Yugoslavia in 1941. Through this endeavor, he established himself as one of the leading figures among the Christian socialists in Slovenia.

The Spanish Civil War—the central topic of Kocbek's article—was an event of immense transnational importance, a particularly sensitive topic and "a great crisis of conscience" for Catholic intellectuals, to use French historian Michel Winock's words.[4] Taking a closer look at Kocbek's references in his article, it becomes clear that he predominantly relied on material from the French magazine *Esprit*. In other words, Kocbek's views corresponded completely with the spirit and views of this magazine.

When it comes to the Spanish Civil War, many French Catholic writers, including Georges Bernanos, François Mauriac, and Paul Claudel, welcomed the July 1936 uprising of Spanish generals which started the war. In December of the same year, a right-wing proclamation to Spanish intellectuals was signed by, among others, Claudel, Drieu La Rochelle, Abel Bonnard, Léon Daudet, Henri Massis, and Ramon Fernandez. The bombing of Guernica in April 1937—which happened only several days after the text "Premišljevanje o Španiji" was published—had a significant international impact and contributed to a partial shift in Catholic circles's views on the war. The prevailing view among Catholic intellectuals in Europe, including that of Slovenia, was that the bombing of Guernica was a righteous and holy crusade against communism.[5]

One of the rare exceptions to this anti-communist trend, already from the autumn of 1936, was the circle around the French magazine *Esprit*. Dissatisfied with most responses to the war, which were at best neutral and usually on the side of the generals, the editor of *Esprit* Emmanuel Mounier began to publish documentation about the events in Spain. In this, he relied on correspondents from Spain such as José Bergamin and José María de Semprún Gurrea. Contemplating the fate of Spanish Catholics between the Red and White Terror, Mounier did

4 Michel Winock, *Le siècle des intellectuels* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1997), 300.
5 See, for example, articles in the newspaper *Slovenec* from 1936 onward.

not see communism as an immediate threat, and preferred to support the idea of the Church under the blows of communism rather than under the protection of fascism.[6] In Mounier's view, the rebellion of the generals in Spain was a backward endeavor which led to the destruction of people and culture, and compromised spiritual values in their alliance with those in power. On the other hand, the risks of the legitimate government in Madrid were in the hostile attitude towards the Church and the possible progress of communism. Therefore, by publishing the testimonies of Spanish Catholics, priests and intellectuals, Mounier's main aim was to show that many Catholics were on the side of the Republic and, secondly, that the war in Spain was not a conflict between Catholicism and communism. This was especially the case with the Basque clergy and population. After the bombing of the Basque village of Guernica at the end of April 1937, many prominent Catholic writers followed the path of *Esprit*. For instance, left-leaning Catholic intellectuals such as François Mauriac, Gabriel Marcel, Jean Maritain, Mounier, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and others signed the proclamation calling for the defense of the Basque people, published in the newspaper *La Croix* on May 8, 1937. Three prominent figures of the European Catholic intelligentsia—François Mauriac, Jean Maritain, and Georges Bernanos—in this way stirred strong reactions within the Catholic right. Soon after, Maritain would be labelled as a "red Christian." Like Mauriac, Georges Bernanos shifted his stance from initially supporting the generals' revolt to a clear and unequivocal condemnation of fascist crimes.

Turning the focus back on the Slovenian situation, in Catholic public opinion there was a similar trend of support for the Spanish generals, i.e., the fascists. However, beneath the surface, conflicts broke out within the Catholic camp. Already in December 1934, *Straža v viharju* accused the editorial board of *Dom in svet* of being an alleged bastion of Marxism, Protestantism, and modernism. Kocbek became involved in the polemic in 1935 and published the article "Enemu izmed ozkih" (To One among the Narrow-Minded).

The Slovenian People's Party (*Slovenska ljudska stranka*, SLS)—the main political force in the Slovenian part of the Kingdom at the time—underwent, from the end of the nineteenth century onward, a transformation modelled after the Austrian Social Christians (*Christlichsoziale Partei*) and turned from its original radical social Catholicism into a mass party that fought against liberals and social democrats. The political career of Anton Korošec, leader of the Slovenian People's Party after 1917, matched Karl Lueger's: charismatic leadership was matched with the defining role of the professional politician, and the party gained a bureaucratic

6 Michel Winock, *Histoire politique de la revue "Esprit", 1930–1950* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1975), 129.

character as well.[7] However, the party was far from devoid of internal conflicts. On the contrary, its political dominance was opposed by the radical attitude of the younger generation of Catholics (*Krekova mladina*) who called for and further developed the idea of Christian solidarity from the time of Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum novarum* (1891). Besides autonomism, the main characteristics of these oppositional currents were republicanism and Christian socialism.[8] It could be argued that this new current of political thought announced a new change of generations after the one in 1917/18, when Šušterčič's place within SLS was taken by Krek and then Korošec. The demands of the youth rested on Krek's legacy of Christian socialism, highly appreciated by a part of the young Catholic intellectuals in the Yugoslav Professional Association (*Jugoslovanska strokovna zveza*). Their emphasis was on social and economic issues, on social reforms in the spirit of a Christian-social doctrine, and their criticism was mainly directed against the "elders," i.e., the clerical leadership of SLS and the Church. Relations with the leadership of SLS deteriorated especially from 1926/27, which was arguably the beginning of a new phase in the development of the Christian socialist movement in Slovenia. At that time, Anton Jeglič, Bishop of Ljubljana, worked to suppress them.[9] This conflict, which emerged already in the 1920s, took on new contours after the introduction of the Royal dictatorship in 1929, and especially the economic crisis in 1931. From then on, Christian socialists became more open to the ideas of Marxism and the issue of class struggle, although they remained faithful to a Christian ethos and a focus on moral problems. By 1934, the Christian socialists managed to break free from the original context of the SLS.

Why, then, did Edvard Kocbek author an article which caused such a conflict in the Catholic camp? In other words, how did he become such a faithful representative of the line of thought that marked the *Esprit* magazine? Kocbek's intellectual transformation allows for a closer interpretation.

When the young Kocbek left his studies of theology in 1927, he undoubtedly experienced a major crisis of conscience. A convinced young Catholic, he had initially been a true representative of the radical youth's mood. He actively published in periodicals such as *Stražni ognji*, *Križ na gori*, *Križ*, *Socialna misel*, and *Dom in svet*. He also spoke in December 1927 at a gathering of the Krek Youth

7 Karl Lueger (October 24, 1844–March 10, 1910) was an Austrian lawyer and politician who served as Mayor of Vienna from 1897 until his death in 1910. See, for example, John W. Boyer, *Political Radicalism in Late Imperial Vienna. Origins of the Christian Social Movement 1848–1897* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

8 Janko Pleterski, *Nacije, Jugoslavija, revolucija* (Belgrade: Komunist, 1985), 220.

9 Momčilo Zečević, *Na istorijskoj prekretnici. Slovenci u politici jugoslovenske države 1918–1929* (Belgrade: Prosveta, Institut za savremenu istoriju–Ljubljana: Inštitut za zgodovino delavskega gibanja, 1985), 128.

(*Krekova mladina*). However, as Bishop Jeglič noted in his diary, Kocbek spoke "in a modern manner" and he failed to understand him.[10] The following year, he became a member of the Workers' Publishing House (*Delavska založba*) at the Cooperative Union (*Zadružna sveza*) in Ljubljana.

Intimately, he was a young man who felt the "burden of his era": a sentiment that Lucien Goldmann would later identify as central to the existentialist stance of the young generation between the two world wars.[11] Kocbek's studies in Romance languages guided him toward broader horizons, particularly toward French literature. In Berlin, he attended lectures by Romano Guardini, a later opponent of the Nazis, who held the chair of philosophy of religion at the University of Berlin and was considered one of the key figures in the liturgical movement. France, where Kocbek spent time in the early 1930s, offered an especially insightful "vantage point" of the time, marked as it was by stark ideological polarizations and conflicts. This period saw the emergence of several nonconformist groups, including left-wing Catholics gathered around Emmanuel Mounier and Georges Izard.[12] From December 1930 to October 1932, they worked to launch the journal *Esprit*. They were profoundly influenced by Pope Pius XI's 1931 encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, which expressed concern about social inequalities and the poverty caused by capitalism.

Out of Mounier's circle emerged personalism as a variant of Christian existentialism. As a "third way" between capitalism and communism, personalism sought to place simultaneous emphasis on the individual and the community. The personalists, namely, believed that one must start from concrete social and historical situations, whereas the individual has significant self-actualization power through free and responsible action. With this, they aimed to reconcile the "private, public, and spiritual," and, at the same time, to distance the spiritual from the "reactionary." Moreover, the turbulence within Catholic circles was particularly visible in France, and the roots of this turbulence can be found already from the papal condemnation of Charles Maurras' *Action Française* in 1926, as well as the gradual distancing of prominent writers and thinkers from the conservative Catholic right. Two parallel processes thus unfolded: the Catholic right gravitated toward fascism, while its more moderate and left-wing factions embraced the "republican paradigm" and aligned with the Popular Front, comprising socialists,

10 Janko Prunk, *Pot krščanskih socialistov v Osvobodilno fronto slovenskega naroda* (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1977), 85.

11 "Structuralisme, marxisme, existentialisme. Un entretien avec Lucien Goldmann," *L'Homme et la société* 1, no. 2 (Oct.–Dec. 1966): 105–24.

12 Enzo Traverso, "Polarisations idéologiques," in *La vie intellectuelle en France*, vol. 2, *De 1914 à nos jours*, eds. Christophe Charle and Laurent Jeanpierre (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2016), 201–26.

communists, and left-liberal radicals. This polarization would reach its peak in the context of events surrounding the Spanish Civil War.[13]

The articles which Kocbek published in the magazines *Dom in svet* and *Dejanje* from the mid-1930s reflect his deep internal struggle regarding the mentioned divisions. This series of articles begins with the extensive and thorough "Pogled na novo gibanje francoske omladine" (A Look at the New Movement of French Youth, 1935), continues with biographical essays on the canonical figures of Christian existentialism, Søren Kierkegaard (1935) and Charles Péguy (1936), book reviews of André Gide (1936), and extends to studies on Maritain (1938), Denis de Rougemont (1938), as well as writings on Bernanos (1940) and Henri Bergson (1941). The same thread can be traced in his essays dedicated to Slovenian or broader issues.

In this context, the article "A Reflection on Spain" demonstrates an unequivocal cultural transfer that is intriguing for several reasons. Set against the backdrop of the 1930s and the sensitive era of Popular Front politics, it reveals the global interconnectedness of the themes Kocbek addresses. Thus, although indirectly, he connects Slovenian circumstances with broader European currents. The article, moreover, is equally significant when explored in the context of the significance it had on Kocbek's personal development, as it exemplifies his alignment with personalist ideas—a foundational and enduring element of his intellectual work and public engagement. Finally, "A Reflection on Spain" had broader implications for the emancipation and shaping of Christian socialists in Slovenia as an autonomous group; in the period leading up to Second World War, this group would seek pathways to active participation in the turbulent events to come.

Relatively extensive (fifteen printed pages), "A Reflection on Spain" is divided into six sections with an introduction. In the introduction, Kocbek examines the contemporary spiritual crisis, discussing particularly what he refers to as "bourgeois Christianity." Following the introduction, his primary focus is the definition of fascism, for which he used the example of Spain. Immediately rejecting the prevailing opinion in the European Catholic press, which framed the conflict in Spain as a "crusade" against Bolshevism, his principal target is dominant Catholic public opinion, both in Europe and in Yugoslavia, and among Slovenians.

In the first chapter, Kocbek frames the "Spanish question" primarily as an agrarian and social one. He highlights the spiritual weakness of the Spanish Church and places the responsibility mainly on the higher clergy. His second chapter focuses on the political events from 1931 to 1936. In the third section,

13 See Herbert R. Lottman, *La Rive gauche. Du Front populaire à la guerre froide* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1981). Frederick Brown, *The Embrace of Unreason. France, 1914–1940* (New York: Anchor Books, 2015).

the author condemns the crimes committed by both sides in the civil war, but he emphasizes the need to critique the "white terror" and the actions of the fascist generals. According to Kocbek, communism primarily serves as a pretext for their objectives. In the fourth chapter, Kocbek further criticizes the attacks on the Catholic Church but simultaneously questions what the Church did during the generals' uprising, aside from aligning itself with them. The fifth chapter delves further into examples of the brutality of the fascist camp, the ideas and statements of the generals, and includes a separate discussion of "fascist Christianity," using the example of terror against Basque Catholics. Defending the Basques, Kocbek emphasizes how Basque priests shared their people's fate and remained connected to them. Finally, in the sixth chapter, Kocbek offers readers a kind of testament through the example of those Catholics who sided with the Republic—a minority he sees as preserving the Church's honor. He concludes his article with their manifesto.

EDVARD KOCBEK
A Reflection on Spain

"Many a Christian is now either Pilate or Hamlet."
José Bergamin

Nowadays, life is no longer marked by clarity but rather by a general and intentional vagueness. Ambiguity and blandness are not only natural companions of life but represent an essential and conscious tenet of humanity which has lost its heroic sense. The more widespread and numerous a civilization becomes, the more its influences turn anonymous. Therefore, vagueness is not just some psychological category but rather a general social reality. Social participation is thus a series of masked benefits competing for spiritual superiority based on the free competition of vital forces.

This vagueness can only be caused by the deceitful human spirit that has proliferated in the world in recent centuries and lost itself in its dimensions. Ontology states that humans, in their convenient love for the material world, lose the precious spiritual freedom that comes from being independent of the forces of the world and become slaves to a lonely nature.… The man who chooses safety instead of exposure, sobriety instead of heroism, and fragmentation instead of integrity is a spiritual bourgeois, a man without creative

meaning, the greatest heresy of modernity. We also know his mask, for the essence of the bourgeois spirit lies not in an open rejection but rather in a concealed relinquishing of human integrity and heroism. All heresies and apostasies have usually been obvious acts, representing the spiritual heroism of convinced people who, of their own conscience, choose the greater and better truth, while the bourgeois apostasy is insidious and disguised—a conscious and shameful substitution of the higher values for the inferior ones, which is why it wants to disguise its action from the outside and, in doing so, develops a brilliant dialectic. The bourgeois is a man with a double face, a deceitful double, a man of "goodwill" on the outside and a non-believer, sceptic, and even cynic on the inside. The bourgeois mentality is but a clandestine retreat into a lie, a lazy helplessness, unable to create coherence within itself and a clear relationship with the world. The bourgeois duality has nothing to do with a healthy, clear, natural human conflict between the transient and the eternal; its contradictory nature has nothing to do with human tragedy, just as its conservatism, nationalism, patriotism, and outright collectivism are in fact a denial of the free human spirit.

I

In recent years, it has become even clearer that the bourgeois is nothing but a geometric spirit, a weak and unconvinced being that does not fulfill its human determination but relies on the wisdom of the world and the impersonal mechanics of life. Even if the bourgeoisie essentially betrays what it means to be human, they nevertheless want to give the impression that they represent a necessary and fertile middle ground, possess historical experience and truth, and are therefore entitled to legitimate action in all domains. To our amazement, we experience the paradox of the bourgeoisie putting themselves in the position of the guardians of life's spiritual foundations and assuming the leadership of social currents. The social bourgeois—a man of social advantages, which he may once have deserved but is no longer worthy of—meets and unites with the spiritual bourgeois, an inner Pharisee, and they want to prove, with their sudden activities, that they are worthy of their privileges. That is how fascism has been and is being born.

Fascism is a public, organized defense of the pragmatic hierarchical spirit with all social and spiritual means. The profound global shifts, political tensions, and detonations have given birth to and unleashed passionate forces that the fascist bourgeoisie has begun to exploit to gain strength. Everywhere, fascism assumes the image of an anti-Marxist fighter, while in reality, among

its ranks, people are losing their personality and freedom in the same manner. Moreover, fascism sins by obscuring the social reality in the name of decency and by covering injustice with a cloak of order. Fascism presents itself as a mystical reaction of life over mechanisms, a reconstruction of a society in which the human duty to create is opposed by the duty to preserve and which sees the spirit only as order, discipline, force, vitality, and success. In this apparently unified truth, fascism is even more dangerous than communism, for if communism constructs its false outlook clearly and openly, fascism develops its own in apparent conformity with all the spiritual principles and institutions, while in reality it disintegrates the sacred hierarchical spirit of freedom by unconditionally defending the existing order. Haecker's question keeps resonating: Which is worth more: a dead truth or a living lie?

To a large extent, fascism has succeeded in appearing as the defender of spiritual and personal life, of law, order, regularity, and even universality. Therefore, it has easily won the affection of the bourgeois Christians—that is, the Christians who have merely inherited their faith and whose spiritual life is also based on acquired things, who do not create anything with their own creative fire but instead, with suspicious vigilance, regulate that which becomes even more lost through regulation. European Christianity is mostly caught up in this social viewpoint, where the sanctification of nature and history has taken precedence over the idea of changing the world. Bourgeois Christianity is beginning to pose as orthodox Christianity, and even the Church hierarchy is failing to oppose this onslaught with sufficient determination everywhere—which is no wonder, according to Berdyaev, since the clergy has always shown a tendency towards the bourgeoisie. This has resulted in the inevitable sad fact that fascism identifies its spirituality with Christian spirituality and exploits the religious sentiment, while, on the other hand, Christian practices do not exclude the close collaboration of the Church with fascist militancy. We should add that this impossible confusion is not only due to the general weakening of the Christian spirit throughout the world but also because of the conscious—overly conscious—service of many leading Christians to the secular, fascist forces.

Spain represents a shocking example. It reveals the guilt of historical and social Christianity, as well as the artificial concealment of that guilt. Clearly, those who speak of ambiguity in the Spanish case want to absolve themselves of the responsibility and indirectly serve the untruth; while whoever only defends a single position (and, interestingly, bourgeois Christians defend the fascist position) directly serves the lie. The European Christian press represents another sad chapter, as it has been unable to maintain its independence

and has taken the fascist side with but a few exceptions—just as the liberal press has often taken the anti-fascist side out of sheer convenience. The Christian press writes incessantly of the crusade against the Bolsheviks or the holy war of Christendom against the burners of churches, the murderers of priests, and the desecrators of women and children who drink human blood. Meanwhile, it says nothing about the causes of the terrible slaughter and devastation and even less about the fascist atrocities, which are at least as horrible as those committed by the raging people's masses.

These lines are intended to draw attention to the tragically divided truth about Spain and the fact that it represents something understandable. They aim to point out the historical guilt of Spanish Christianity and the guilt of those Christians who have nowadays taken refuge in external efficiency instead of internal focus. The intention of these lines is not to minimize the guilt for the crimes which have been and are still being committed against the Church in great numbers but to refute the insolent fascist attempt to shift the root of the conflict elsewhere by claiming that the Spanish civil war is a religious war. The reasons for the terrible reckoning in Spain are not religious but social.

Marko Zajc

ANDREJ GOSAR: The Woman Question

Author: Andrej Gosar
Title: The Woman Question
Originally published: *Za nov družabni red: sistem krščanskega socialnega aktivizma*, vol. 2 (Celje: Družba Sv. Mohorja, 1935).
Language: Slovenian

About the author

Andrej Gosar (1887, Logatec–1970, Ljubljana) was one of the most important Slovenian sociologists, economists, and political thinkers of the twentieth century. He dedicated his intellectual life to seeking a more socially just economic order, developing ideas grounded in Catholic social thought, the Church's social teachings, and Christian personalism. Gosar defies easy classification within traditional historical dichotomies such as liberalism versus Catholicism or socialism versus Christianity. A prominent Catholic intellectual known for his dedication to social justice and democratic principles, he played an active role in the conservative Slovenian People's Party (*Slovenska ljudska stranka*, SLS) and in the Yugoslav Professional Association (*Jugoslovanska strokovna zveza*, JSZ)—a trade union of Slovenian Catholic workers that served as the main platform for Slovenian Christian socialists.

Andrej Gosar was born in Logatec in 1887. After completing gymnasium in Ljubljana, he pursued legal studies in Vienna, graduating in 1916. Following the

establishment of the Yugoslav state, he joined the Commission for Social Welfare (*Poverjeništvo za socialno skrbstvo*) (1919–1920) alongside **Albin Prepeluh** and Anton Kristan and served as commissioner there in 1920.[1] The same year and again in 1925, he was elected as a representative of the Slovenian People's Party to the National Assembly (*Narodna skupština*) in Belgrade. In 1927 and 1928, he held the position of Minister of Social Affairs. For several years, he represented Yugoslavia on the Social Committee of the League of Nations in Geneva. Starting in 1929, he lectured on law, economics, and sociology at the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Ljubljana, within the Department of National Economy.[2]

Although he was loyal to Catholic doctrine and SLS party discipline, Gosar remained a democrat and advocate of parliamentarism throughout the interwar period. During the 1920s, he was recognized as one of the intellectual leaders of the Christian social movement. The movement's trade union wing, with which Gosar was closely aligned, grew increasingly radical. Unlike Christian socialist movements in other Central European countries, the Slovenian Christian socialists refused to submit to SLS party discipline following the papal encyclical *Quadragesimo anno* (1931). In 1932, they broke away from the SLS and turned to a more radical form of Christian socialism, which adopted certain features of Marxism. Gosar, however, disagreed with this direction and distanced himself from the movement. Slovenian historiography refers to his circle as the "Democrats" or the "Catholic Center." This stream of Slovenian Catholicism declined rapidly in the 1930s, as it was attacked both by the Catholic Right, which moved ever closer to fascism, and by the Christian socialists, who began to adopt Marxism.[3]

Although he devoted himself to an academic career in the 1930s, he remained active in political affairs, though his influence as a politician slowly diminished.[4] Andrej Gosar played an important role in the public debate on the crisis of the Catholic cultural journal *Dom in svet*, which was triggered by Edvard Kocbek's 1937 essay *Premišljevanje o Španiji* (A Reflection on Spain).[5] In the debate that led to Kocbek's expulsion from *Dom in svet*, Gosar took a middle course, though he defended Kocbek in public. Gosar remained part of *Dom in svet*'s consortium while also collaborating with Kocbek's new magazine *Dejanje*. Judging by his diary entries, the rebellious Kocbek was not bothered by Gosar's social and political ideas, but rather by his viewpoint that these ideas could only be implemented

1 See the entry on Albin Prepeluh in this volume.
2 Janko Prunk, "Gosar, Andrej," *Enciklopedija Slovenije*, vol. 3 (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1989), 302.
3 Egon Pelikan, "Andrej Gosar in znamenja časov," *Dr. Andrej Gosar (1887–1970)*, ed. Jure Gašparič and Alenka Veber (Celje: Društvo Mohorjeva družba – Celjska Mohorjeva družba, 2015), 147–61.
4 Jure Gašparič, "Andrej Gosar med Slovensko ljudsko stranko in Jugoslovansko radikalno zajednico: o njegovem političnem položaju v tridesetih letih 20. stoletja," in *Dr. Andrej Gosar (1887–1970)*, 35–45.
5 See the entry on Edvard Kocbek in this volume.

under the auspices of Catholicism and under the leadership of Church hierarchy.[6] By contrast, communist intellectuals at the time more fiercely criticized Gosar's ideas. As noted by Vida Deželak Barič, Edvard Kardelj described Gosar's influential work *Za nov družabni red* (For a New Social Order), an excerpt of which is translated below, as a scientific contribution to the development of Slovenian fascist thought.[7]

After the collapse of Yugoslavia and the Axis occupation in April 1941, Gosar initially attempted to assume leadership of the SLS and to steer it away from collaboration with fascist forces. He entered talks with the Liberation Front (*Osvobodilna fronta*, OF), but no agreement was reached. Realizing he could not regain control of the SLS, he chose to act independently, forming a small centrist group called *Združeni Slovenci* (United Slovenes). He established contacts with Draža Mihailović's Chetnik movement and secretly took over the role of chairman of the National Committee for Slovenia from Mihailović. As a political figure untainted by collaboration with fascism, Gosar was also of interest to the British. In September 1944, he learnt through British intelligence channels that the British were convinced of Tito's victory. Political groups outside the communist-dominated OF tried to take desperate measures to prevent this scenario. According to some accounts, Gosar took part in efforts to persuade the Slovenian quisling Home Guard forces to go underground and launch an uprising against the German troops in coordination with the Allies. However, these plans fell through. The German authorities arrested him and sent him to the Dachau concentration camp as a result.[8]

After the Second World War, the socialist authorities allowed Gosar to teach at the university, albeit not in law, economics, or sociology, but only in land registry and mining law. He was also prevented from publishing and engaging in public activities. In 1966, he received the papal honor *Pro ecclesia et Pontifice*. He retired in 1958 and lived in privacy until the end of his life in 1970.

In the 1990s, Andrej Gosar's political and social thought re-emerged as a topic of intellectual discussion, both within Catholic circles and the broader social sciences.[9] In 1992, Tomaž Simčič—a Slovenian educator and Catholic cultural

6 Mihael Glavan, "Pričevanja o Andreju Gosarju v dnevnikih Edvarda Kocbeka," in *Dr. Andrej Gosar (1887–1970)*, 94.

7 Vida Deželak-Barič, "Dr. Andrej Gosar in slovenski komunisti v desetletju pred 2. svetovno vojno," *Krščanstvo in socialno gibanje: dr. Andrej Gosar, življenje – delo – pomen*, ed. Tadeja Petrovčič Jerina (Celje: Društvo Mohorjeva družba – Celjska Mohorjeva družba, 2014), 12.

8 Bojan Godeša, "Dr. Andrej Gosar v času okupacije 1941–1945," in *Dr. Andrej Gosar (1887–1970)*, 47–56.

9 Srečo Dragoš, *Katolicizem na Slovenskem: socialni koncepti do druge svetovne vojne* (Ljubljana: Krtina, 1998). Peter Kovačič Peršin, *Andrej Gosar – tretja pot v slovenski predvojni politiki* (Ljubljana: Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti, 2007), 249–67.

worker from Trieste—published the first biography of Gosar, with a focus on his social Catholicism.[10] At a 2014 symposium on Andrej Gosar, the legal expert and conservative politician Lovro Šturm contended that Slovenian communists had appropriated and altered Gosar's concept of self-management, thereby preventing its implementation in independent Slovenia.[11] At the same event, the sociologist Srečo Dragoš, despite his general criticism of the Catholic Church, highlighted Gosar's significant contribution to the development of the welfare state in Slovenia through Catholic social thought. Dragoš claimed that Gosar's ideas remain highly relevant today, particularly as a counterbalance to dominant neoliberal doctrine.[12] Andrej Gosar's legacy continues to spark debate within Slovenian public discourse.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS: *Narodnogospodarski eseji* (Ljubljana 1920); *Odlomki socialnega vprašanja* (Ljubljana, 1921); *Za krščanski socializem: pomisleki in odgovori* (Ljubljana, 1923); *Kriza moderne demokracije* (Ljubljana 1927); *Za nov družabni red: sistem krščanskega socialnega aktivizma*, 2 vols. (Celje, 1933–1935).

Context

The source below is Andrej Gosar's chapter on the woman question from the second volume of his major work *Za nov družabni red* (For a New Social Order, 1935), in which Gosar sought to understand social, economic, and political phenomena as a whole. Although women were not among Gosar's primary concerns, we chose to include this source in the reader for several reasons. As noted in the introduction, this collection aims to highlight often overlooked yet significant dimensions of political thought—such as nationalism among feminists or the agrarian question among communists. Gosar's perspective as a centrist Catholic thinker, who embraced certain aspects of women's emancipation while rejecting others, offers valuable insight into the complex position of women and feminism in Slovenian society. Additionally, it provides a comparative lens through which to examine the important issue of women's roles in interwar Catholic intellectual milieux in East Central European societies. Female intellectuals played an important role in shaping the Catholic public sphere, accepting feminist demands

10 Tomaž Simčič, *Andrej Gosar, krščanstvo in socialno gibanje* (Trieste: Mladika–Ljubljana: Slovenec, 1992).

11 Lovro Šturm, "Kako si je partija prilastila Gosarjev koncept samoupravljanja, ga popačila in naposled preprečila, da bi po osamosvojitvi zaživel v demokratični Sloveniji," in *Krščanstvo in socialno gibanje*, 50.

12 Srečo Dragoš, "Ignoriranje Gosarja," in *Dr. Andrej Gosar (1887–1970)*, 247–66.

and principles, but adapting them to established Catholic beliefs about the role of women in society. The idea of "social motherhood"—the extension of the traditional role of caring for family and society—was the dominant ideological foundation of Catholic women's movements.[13] Ivanka Anžič Klemenčič—the former editor of the feminist magazine *Slovenka* (1897–1902) and later one of the editors of the leading Catholic newspaper *Slovenec*—wrote in 1932 that the mission of the modern, free woman was "to be a mother to human beings in whatever form, in whatever profession, and to carry her motherhood into the social and political structure of society."[14]

To understand Gosar's position on the so-called woman question, it is essential to examine first the main trajectories of his political and social thought. In 1926, as many other thinkers at the time, Gosar wrote about the crisis of modern democracy and parliamentarism in the journal *Čas*.[15] According to Gosar, parliaments made decisions without sufficient knowledge. Although committed to democracy and the market economy, Gosar rejected the liberal model of parliamentary democracy. He referred to Carl Schmitt's idea that "democracy"—since it is used by all political "directions"—has no political content in itself,[16] and quoted the Austrian legal theorist Hans Kelsen, who suggested that political parties appoint experts to parliament instead of electing representatives.[17] Despite its crisis, he believed parliamentarism should be reformed, not abolished. The central idea was autonomy: people deciding their own affairs. He proposed a bicameral parliament, with one political and one socio-economic chamber, but saw its success as dependent on proper cultural and social conditions.[18]

Gosar's social theory of the 1930s remained fundamentally consistent with its core principles from the mid-1920s, despite the dramatically different political climate at the time of the publication of his monumental two-volume work *Za nov družabni red* in 1933 and 1935. Following the collapse of Yugoslav parliamentarism in 1928 and the establishment of the royal dictatorship of 1929, Yugoslavia adopted a post-democratic, restricted representative system. Meanwhile, Pope Pius XI's encyclical *Quadragesimo anno* (1931) galvanized the Catholic Right,

13 Gabriela Pošteková, "*Katolícka jednota* Magazine as an Intellectual Source of Catholic Women," *Forum Historiae* 19, no. 1 (2025): 80.

14 Ivanka Klemenčič, "Beseda ženske urednice 'Slovenca'," *Slovenec* 60, no. 238, October 16, 1932, 7.

15 For example, a former social democrat and one of the leading Yugoslav feminists, Alojzija Štebi, also criticized parliamentary democracy at the time. See Andělová and Grubački, "Crises of Feminism and Democracy in the Interwar Period: Yugoslav and Czechoslovak Entanglements," in *East Central European Crisis Discourses*, eds. Trencsényi et al., 159–82. Trencsényi, "Crisis of Democracy," in *Intellectuals and the Crisis of Politics*, 167–93.

16 Carl Schmitt, *Tri razprave* (Ljubljana: Študentska organizacija Univerze, 1994), 23, 90.

17 Hans Kelsen, *The Essence and Value of Democracy* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 62.

18 Peter Vodopivec, "O Gosarjevi kritiki parlamentarne demokracije," *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 49, no. 1 (2009): 247.

while authoritarian regimes based on Catholic corporatist ideology emerged in European Catholic countries, such as the Salazar Oliveira regime in Portugal in 1932 and Engelbert Dollfuß's regime in Austria in 1934.

Gosar's *Za nov družabni red* aimed to encompass the full spectrum of social issues. The first volume (1933) delved into the philosophical, sociological, and economic foundations of Christian social activism, whereas the second volume (1935) extensively addressed the issue of general welfare. He devoted significant attention to the socialization of the national economy, which he defined as the continuous intervention of social authorities in the natural course of economic life.[19] Societies could achieve this in two ways: through nationalization and communalization or through an intensive national economic and social policy. Gosar primarily supported the latter, although he advocated for the nationalization of key economic sectors such as railways, power plants, and significant mines.[20]

In the context of the anti-democratic trends of the 1930s, Gosar's steadfast commitment to democracy, parliamentarism, and private property is particularly noteworthy. While in 1925 he proposed resolving the relationship between political and social democracy through the aforementioned scheme of an expertise-based bicameral parliament, he left the issue of a parliamentary corporatist chamber as the second (socio-economic) chamber of parliament open. In his view, the necessity of such a chamber depended on the structure of the relationship between parliament and professional or vocational chambers. The greater the indirect influence of these chambers, the lesser the need for their direct representation in parliament.[21] The overarching principle linking Gosar's political and social thought in the decade-long period between 1925 and 1935 was the idea of self-governance. Gosar emphasized that democracy was not doomed to extinction but rather destined to be subsumed within the broader social principle of general self-governance.[22]

Gosar addressed the "woman question" as the first topic in the chapter "The Resolution of Other Pressing Issues." He derived the causes of this issue from the German Jesuit theologian Victor Cathrein (1845–1931), who attributed women's "departure" from the domestic sphere to industrialization.[23] The fundamental problem, according to Gosar, lay in men's insufficient earnings to support their families, necessitating women's participation in the workforce.[24] In his reflections

19 Andrej Gosar, *Za nov družabni red: sistem krščanskega socialnega aktivizma*, vol. 2 (Celje: Družba sv. Mohorja, 1935), 333.
20 Ibid., 369.
21 Ibid., 533.
22 Ibid., 494.
23 See, e.g., Victor Cathrein S.J., *Die Frauenfrage* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder'sche Verlagshandlung, 1901).
24 Gosar, *Za nov družabni red*, vol. 2, 828.

on the position of women in society, Gosar acknowledged gender equality from the perspective of Christian doctrine, asserting that both men and women are created in the image of God. However, he emphasized the natural physical and spiritual differences between the sexes, which, in his view, dictated distinct social roles.[25] He argued that these differences facilitated the harmonious coexistence and functioning of society by contributing to the stability of the family and community. Consequently, Gosar rejected strict advocates of gender equality, particularly Marxist theorists such as Friedrich Engels, August Bebel, and Karl Kautsky.[26]

In Gosar's view, women should have full access to all professions for which they were qualified. Nevertheless, he envisioned a social order in which men would be able to support their wives financially, rendering women's employment unnecessary. He described female labor as a temporary and unfortunate necessity that would become redundant in an ideal future society. This could be the main issue differentiating him from the contemporary feminist thinkers of the time, for whom women's employment was the key issue; even the more conservative thinker **Minka Govekar**, who also put emphasis on the importance of the nation and the family, prioritized women's professional independence, even arguing for the professionalization of housework.[27] At the same time, he supported women's participation in public life and women's suffrage, arguing that general political matters were equally significant for both genders. Women, according to Gosar, should also have an appropriate voice and influence under the principle of self-governance. While he emphasized the importance of women's engagement in legal and economic matters, he remained ambiguous about whether he endorsed complete gender equality. He believed that a self-governing societal structure would grant women greater influence than before but cautioned against their premature advancement in public life. Women, he argued, should be gradually introduced to various public and political responsibilities. He justified his "middle ground" approach between full women's equality and women's traditional exclusion from politics by asserting that women in countries where they had obtained voting rights often did not know how to use them and voluntarily renounced them.[28] Notably, he cited as a source the book *Žena v sedanji družbi* (Woman in Contemporary Society, 1934) by the communist intellectual Angela Vode, who wrote about how women with higher educations in Germany had turned their backs on feminism and voted for Hitler.[29]

25 Ibid., 831.
26 Ibid., 836.
27 See the entry on Minka Govekar in this volume.
28 Gosar, *Za nov družabni red*, 844.
29 See the entry on Angela Vode in this volume.

Gosar's approach to accommodating women's demands can also be viewed through the lens of the "leap forward"—a metaphor introduced into Slovenian historiography by the historian Egon Pelikan to describe Catholicism's adaptation to modernity. Initially, political Catholicism rejected social innovations as a threat, only to later gradually appropriate or actively promote them. Although Catholic politicians and theorists opposed women's participation in public life, they recognized the necessity of organizing women in the modern era; otherwise, other ideological movements would mobilize them against the Catholic cause.[30] Overall, however, it remains doubtful whether Gosar's efforts to reconcile Catholic teachings with feminist ideas really represent a significant step towards gender equality. According to the Slovenian sociologist Maca Jogan, Gosar's view of women hardly differs from that of traditionally more conservative Catholic sociologists such as Aleš Ušeničnik. Gosar, like other Slovenian Catholic thinkers of the first half of the twentieth century, adhered to the concept of natural gender determination, wherein a woman's primary role was that of wife, mother, and housewife. Gosar, Jogan claims, framed the "woman question" as an economic issue, asserting that it would be resolved if men earned sufficient wages. Gosar emphasized the importance of motherhood and domestic work, maintaining that women should be wholly devoted to these roles, thereby reinforcing their economic dependence on men.[31]

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30 Egon Pelikan, *Akomodacija ideologije političnega katolicizma na Slovenskem* (Maribor: Obzorja, 1997), 12.

31 Maca Jogan, "Natura habet sexus: produkcija moškosrediščne kulture kot nature v slovenski katoliški sociologiji," *Znamenje* 20, no. 2 (1990): 105–19.

ANDREJ GOSAR
Chapter 6, "Addressing Other Pressing Social Issues"
Section 1, "The Woman Question"

b) Women's Equality Issues and Solutions
1. General Issues

The fundamental problem of the woman question and the modern women's movement is ensuring that men and women are entirely equal or fully equitable as society's constituent parts. All the social differences that still separate women from men today must disappear. Instead, the principle of full equality and the equity of men and women must prevail.

It goes without saying that based on our Christian worldview, it is absolutely impossible to challenge this demand in principle, as both man and woman are created in the image of God, and both possess an immortal soul that is to fulfill its true and final destiny with God. In this crucial respect, not even the slightest difference exists between men and women. Therefore, it is also perfectly clear and beyond any doubt that both men and women are, in principle, absolutely equal in terms of their personal or, so to say, human worth and should therefore also be completely equitable.

Naturally, equality and equity do not imply sameness. On the contrary, there are so many physical and spiritual differences between men and women that it would be ridiculous to hide and belittle them. It is also not enough to acknowledge only those differences between men and women that have been so deeply ingrained in the physical and spiritual nature of one and the other that they cannot be even remotely equated. Such an action would be manifestly excessive and would represent a sin against the very foundations of a healthy social order. Precisely because men and women are not identical but rather visibly different in many ways, they are called and destined to fulfill different social tasks and functions by their nature. This is precisely why they can mutually serve the common and communal goals of family, community, nation, state, the Church, etc. …

2. The Issue of Women's Equality in the Family

It goes without saying that such an idea of women's emancipation is, at its very core, anti-social and distinctly non-communal. A new generation raised and educated in such circumstances would not even know true motherly love, let alone have any sense of true love for one's neighbor or even homeland. This would undermine one of the most essential foundations of true communal coexistence between people in general. *Therefore, we must say that even the most ideal equality of wife and husband, gained and redeemed at the price of motherhood and proper family life, would entail inestimable social damage and loss.*

There is no other choice: *either we opt for family and family life with the inevitable dependence of the wife on the husband, or we give up in advance the idea of true communal coexistence in general. There is no other way, and there cannot be any other way according to the natural conditions of human life.* …

It is clear from these very examples that it is impossible only to arrange these matters externally so that wives and husbands are guaranteed full equality in every case. First and foremost, the practical arrangements of this relationship depend, and will always do so, on the personal relationship and the personal qualities and abilities of the husband and wife. In particular, it would be futile to look for such an external solution to the problem that would guarantee the wife's complete financial independence from her husband. Such a thing would only be possible at the cost of motherhood and family life in general. In short, something like that could only be achieved *if the wife were no longer a wife, mother, and housewife but, at best, merely a companion to her husband. This would mean the complete triumph of the most selfish individualism over the communal idea of a harmonious society.* …

3. The Issue of Women's Equality in Gainful Activity

… Indeed, we can see that most such barriers have already been eliminated in modern life. Nowadays, women can be found in professions where they truly belong according to all their qualities and abilities. Only very few cases exist where women are denied access to a profession simply because of their gender,[32] and even these obstacles, insofar as they still exist, will undoubtedly also disappear.

Of course, as we have seen, this represents the source of many problems and inconveniences. These developments have many negative consequences,

32 In our country, women generally have access to all public services, except that they cannot become judges. Original footnote from the source text.

particularly for family life. However, in principle, it would be impossible to argue against women taking up gainful employment. The only remedy for this is to introduce appropriate social reforms to create suitable conditions for men to be able to start their own families in time and assume most of the responsibility for their financial well-being.

As soon as this happens, most women would quickly find their way to their most natural and vital vocation. After all, there is no denying that for the vast majority of women, the ideal is to be a wife, mother, and homemaker. Even among the most prominent and determined champions of the modern women's movement, there is no shortage of those who are struggling hopelessly just because they themselves have not found their proper place in society.

Of course, it is different for women who devote themselves entirely to spiritual life—for example, art, science, humanitarian work, etc. A woman who sacrifices herself entirely to her spiritual work and aspirations and fully devotes her life to her ideals may completely forget the original and most universal of women's vocations. Their numbers will increase as more and more women educate themselves and open their paths into the most diverse spiritual spheres. However, they still represent only a few cases, which are not decisive for the resolution of the women's question in the usual sense.

4. The Issue of Women's Equality in Public Life

… In the first years after the war, women's suffrage was greatly expanded and became common in democratic countries. At first glance, it already seemed that women would soon gain the same influence in public life as men. However, in reality, it soon became clear that "for most women, the path to public life was not a conscious one."[33] For this reason, the practical success of the women's suffrage struggle has been relatively modest and will undoubtedly remain limited for a long time. The fact is that "to this day, most women have an outright aversion to anything that requires direct political participation."[34]

Recently, these circumstances have been exacerbated by the anti-democratic developments in most European countries. The severe crisis of democratic parliamentarianism has pushed the issue of women's equality in political life so far into the background that it is hardly discussed any more. On the contrary, in the European countries considered to be at the forefront of

33 Vode, *Žena v sedanji družbi*, 53.
34 Ibid.

new political ideas and forms (Italy and Germany), all progress is headed in the opposite direction. The new fascist stance that prevails in these countries is diametrically opposed to women's political participation and encourages them to return to family and family life. However, it is even more characteristic that women themselves cling to these attitudes and willingly give in to the tempting hopes of a happy family life.[35] …

To summarize briefly, all general civic or political matters carry, at least in general, the same relevance for women as for men. Therefore, in the sense of the self-government principle, which the organization of the new communal order has been based on, it is certainly necessary—at least in principle—that women also have a proper say and influence in all these matters. …

However, all this is not enough. So far, we have discussed the need for women's representation in public life, mainly in terms of their own needs and benefits. In reality, women's access to a proper voice and influence in public life is also vitally and indispensably in the interest of the entire community—or, more precisely, in the interest of the various community groups in which women often play a prominent role and are more familiar with their real needs than men.

We only need to think of family life, the various issues of social protection for adolescents, especially young male and female workers, the issue of youth justice, etc. In all such matters, a truly satisfactory and adequate arrangement is almost unthinkable without women's participation. Therefore, it is also in the entire community's interest that women should have a proper say and influence in all such and similar matters, whether regarding their general organization or concrete decision-making related to these issues.

.....

35 Cf. ibid., 78, where the author complains: "Even those women who were college and university graduates turned their backs on feminists and followed Hitler. The fact that these so-called intellectuals fell for it just as much as the simple petty-bourgeois wives who followed their emotional proclivities is deplorable." Original footnote from the source text.

Oskar Mulej

Andrej Uršič: The Yugoslav Youth and the Cvetković–Maček Agreement

Author: Andrej Uršič
Title: The Yugoslav Youth and the Cvetković–Maček Agreement
Originally published: Andrej Uršič, "Jugoslovenska omladina in sporazum," *Naša misel* 5, no. 1 (December 1, 1939): 1–2.
Language: Slovenian

About the author

Andrej Uršič (1908, Kobarid–?) was a politician and journalist. Intellectually and politically adhering to the Slovenian "progressive camp," rooted in traditions of national liberalism, he belonged to the younger generation of interwar Yugoslav nationalists.

Born in the town of Kobarid (then part of the Austrian province of Görz-Gradisca) into the family of shopkeeper Anton Uršič, who for some time also served as mayor and the leader of local *Sokol*, he attended primary school in his hometown. In 1918, Kobarid, along with the rest of the former Austrian Littoral, became part of Italy. Uršič moved to Yugoslavia to continue his education, attending grammar school in Novo mesto. He finished his secondary education in

1928, and afterwards attended the University of Ljubljana, where he studied law, graduating in 1943. Due to rising fascist pressure at home, which directly affected his family, after 1928 he ceased visiting Kobarid. Uršič became a Yugoslav citizen in 1929.

Publicly active since his secondary school years, Uršič ideologically adhered to the "liberal," that is, anti-clerical and Yugoslav nationalist camp of interwar Slovenian politics. He became an important member in numerous associations and institutions within that camp, most notably the Yugoslav Progressive Academic Association "Jadran" (later, AD Jugoslavija) and the Club of Yugoslav Academics from Trieste, Gorizia, and Istria. Tracing its tradition back to the first Slovenian academic association, the Viennese club *Slovenia* founded in the mid-nineteenth century, "Jadran" carried a firmly "liberal" earmark, bringing together mainly Yugoslav nationalist students of moderate political leanings. In 1935, he co-founded and afterwards co-edited the Yugoslavist academic journal *Naša misel* (Our Thought, 1935–41), also acting as co-editor of the main Slovenian liberal daily newspaper *Jutro* (Morning, 1920–1945). Being one of the main programmatic shapers for "Jadran" and *Naša misel*, his writings revolved primarily around the subjects of Yugoslav national unity and Yugoslav nationalism.[1]

As an adherent of the Yugoslav National Party (*Jugoslovenska nacionalna stranka*, JNS),[2] he, together with Jože Rus, Stojan Bajič, Branko Vrčon, and Boris Sancin, acted as one of the main representatives of its youth wing (*Omladina Jugoslovenske nacionalne stranke*, OJNS). During late 1930s, the *Omladina* began to emancipate itself from the mother party, adopting critical stances toward its leadership. Its central aim was to invigorate Slovenian liberal politics by bringing them closer to the broader masses. In 1940, the *Omladina* published its own programmatic manifesto, entitled "*Politična, gospodarska in socialna načela*" (Political, Economic and Social Principles), meant to provide a joint platform for the rejuvenation and programmatic reform of Slovenian liberal politics. It was published without formal approval by the JNS leadership. Among other things, the Principles emphasized the need for democratization, far-reaching social reform, the increased role of the state in the economy, as well as a solution of the Slovenian national question and the adoption of a "Slavic" foreign policy. Uršič wrote the parts dealing with domestic politics and social policies, which in many

1 Most of Uršič's writings were published anonymously or under pseudonyms. Only two of his texts in *Naša misel* carried his full name.

2 The Yugoslav National Party (JNS) was founded in 1932 as the Yugoslav Radical Peasant Democracy and renamed into JNS in the following year. Originally meant to act as a tool for implementing the policies of King Alexander I, it functioned as the regime party until 1935, afterwards being pushed into opposition. Within the narrower Slovenian context, its membership almost fully coincided with adherence to the "progressive camp" and it represented its sole political organization until the end of the 1930s.

ways signified a move toward the left, pointing toward the need for an increased governmental role in social and economic life and the alleviation of social differences. Simultaneously, the Principles preserved some basic liberal elements by putting emphasis on personal and civil liberties, especially freedom of conscience, and acknowledging the irreplaceable role of private initiative in the economy.

After Yugoslavia was occupied and dismembered by the Axis powers, the OJNS seceded from JNS and formed an independent group called New Yugoslavia (*Nova Jugoslavija*, NJ) in the summer of 1941. During that same time, Uršič took part in negotiations between NJ and the communist-dominated Liberation Front of the Slovenian Nation, which, after the German attack on the USSR, called for an immediate armed resistance against the occupiers. These negotiations ultimately fell apart and NJ did not join the Liberation Front. Invoking the Slovenian nation's right to self-determination and claiming the exclusive right to speak on its behalf, the latter particularly disputed the continuity of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Firmly advocating the principle of state continuity, NJ in contrast remained loyal to the Yugoslav government-in-exile in London and also lent support to General Draža Mihailović and the Yugoslav Army in the Homeland (*Jugoslovenska vojska u otadžbini*).

During 1942–43, Uršič participated in the *Slovenska zaveza* (Slovenian Covenant), the key political body, formed underground in the spring of 1942, of representatives of the main pre-war parties (Slovenian People's Party, liberals, socialists). Its political platform included a restored and expanded Kingdom of Yugoslavia built on a federal basis, which was to include all the Slovenian-speaking territories, multi-party democracy, and radical social reform. Meant to act as the political representation of the entire Slovenian nation, *Slovenska zaveza* was largely crippled by behind-the-scenes disputes and intrigues, as well as independent actions by some of the constitutive groups and individuals. Although the three main political camps were evenly represented within the organizational bodies, in practice and on the ground the Slovenian People's Party acted by far as the strongest force.

In May 1945, when Slovenia was taken over by the communists, he moved back to his hometown of Kobarid, until 1947 located in the Allied-administered zone of the former Italian Julian March. Still active in Slovenian politics in Gorizia and Trieste in the early post-war period, he acted as one of the leading members of the liberal Slovenian Democratic Union and editor of the weekly *Demokracija* (Democracy, 1947–72), dedicated to pursuing national rights for Slovenes in Italy and the Allied zone of the Free Territory of Trieste, while criticizing the communist regime.

In 1947 he was kidnapped by the Yugoslav secret police, most probably transferred to Ljubljana. After having been secretly interrogated, he was killed sometime between 1948 and 1950.[3]

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS: Andrej Uršič, "Za strnitev jugoslovenskih sil," *Naša misel* 5, no. 2 (January 1, 1940): 1–2; [Andrej Uršič with B. Sancin, B. Vrčon, J. Rus, D. Verbič], *Politična, socialna in gospodarska načela, sprejeta kot osnova delovnega programa na seji banovinskega odbora OJNS, v Ljubljani 5. Septembra 1940* (Ljubljana: Banovinski odbor OJNS, 1940); Andrej Uršič [under the pseudonym Slavko Hribovec], "Misli o demokraciji," *Demokracija* 1, no. 1 (April 25), no. 2 (May 2), no. 3 (May 9), no. 6 (May 30), and no. 18 (August 15, 1947).

Context

The text "*Jugoslovenska omladina in sporazum*" (The Yugoslav Youth and the Cvetković-Maček Agreement) was published on December 1, 1939—the Yugoslav day of "national unification"—in *Naša misel*. The journal was published bi-weekly by the academic association "Jugoslavija" in Ljubljana, closely linked to the OJNS in the Drava Banovina, encompassing the Slovenian part of Yugoslavia. Authored by Andrej Uršič, the editor of *Naša misel* and a leading OJNS member, the text presented a critical commentary to the August 1939 Cvetković-Maček Agreement, written from a Yugoslav nationalist perspective. As such, the text presents a firm defense of the idea of unitary Yugoslavism at a time when it was being widely considered as a thing of the past, offering a good outline of the principles and considerations that continuously guided its proponents.

The August 1939 agreement made between Yugoslav Prime Minister Dragiša Cvetković (1893–1969) and Vladko Maček (1879–1964), the leader of the Croatian Peasant Party, created an autonomous Banovina of Croatia with its own parliament (*sabor*), its own judiciary, and wide administrative powers. It was tied to the rest of the country only via personal union in the king, foreign policy, the army, a common currency and trade policy, internal security, and transport. Broadly acknowledged as a necessary step towards solving the so-called Croatian Question that had haunted the Yugoslav state since its inception, it however left many problems open. Moreover, the Cvetković-Maček Agreement immediately gave ground to further demands in other parts of the country, including

3 *Enciklopedija Slovenije*, vol. 16 (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2002), 203–04. Ivo Jevnikar, "'Neznani Slavko' v zaporih udbe: Novi podatki o usodi Andreja (Slavka) Uršiča," in *Koledar Goriške Mohorjeve družbe*, ed. Jože Markuža (Gorizia: Goriška Mohorjeva družba, 1994), 83–89. Katja Ozebek, "URŠIČ, Andrej. (1908-1950)," in *Obrazi slovenskih pokrajin* (Kranj: Mestna knjižnica Kranj, 2020), accessed: August 29, 2024, https://www.obrazislovenskihpokrajin.si/oseba/ursic-andrej-slavko/.

demands for the creation of an autonomous Banovina of Slovenia, ideas of a special Banovina of Bosnia, or of uniting the rest of the country within the frame of the "Serbian lands" (whose borders towards the Banovina of Croatia were being disputed at the time). The never-concluded process of state re-organization was halted by war and the dismemberment of Yugoslavia by Axis forces in April 1941. Symbolically and practically, the Cvetković-Maček Agreement acted as the ultimate confirmation of the political death of unitary Yugoslavism.

Acknowledged as a measure necessary for preserving the Yugoslav state, the agreement was given formal approval both by JNS and its youth wing. While confirming the most basic acceptance of the Agreement from the side of his party, Uršič's text simultaneously offered words of caution concerning possible further implications and already developing facts on the ground. He objected to the various claims concerning the range of powers delegated to the newly-created Banovina of Croatia, particularly those that had been circulating in the Croatian press. Conversely, Uršič stressed that the ultimate legitimacy of the new arrangement rested solely on the extent to which it served the cause of Yugoslav national unity. The text thus recognized the agreement first and foremost as a "temporary sacrifice" necessary to overcome Croat discontent as the central "state problem" of Yugoslavia, while also being in line with the earlier JNS demands for administrative decentralization on the widest possible scale. In Uršič's view, although various paths may lead toward the goal, the goal itself remained only one: Yugoslav national unity. The compromise with the Croatian Peasant Party might thus also act as a detour on the way leading towards greater unity, Uršič argued, as the possible future triumph of Yugoslavism might eventually again arise from the "Croat part of our nation, as it did in the past, when Croat mother gave birth to its strongest creators: Gaj, Strossmayer, Rački…."

Uršič's text is a paradigmatic example of Slovenian liberals' continuous advocacy of unitary Yugoslavism. Uršič outlined all of the key reasons underpinning the Yugoslavist orientation: The first is their belief in the necessity of achieving spiritual unity through overcoming historically-conditioned differences. Second, their belief in the necessity of a common market, which they considered important particularly from the economic perspective of Slovenia. Third, and most notably, their belief that integration into one nation was necessary for consolidating a strong state that could resist irredentist pressures from neighboring countries, as well as act as a guardian for Yugoslav minorities abroad. This factor concerning minorities was especially important for the émigrés from Italian territory such as Uršič himself. However, the text stands out in comparison to earlier Yugoslavist discourses employed by Slovenian liberals. Its tone and argumentation is more down-to-earth, stressing the practical reasons for maintaining national unity and

a common national consciousness in the face of rising tendencies toward disintegration within and outside of Yugoslavia. It also notably stressed the special economic needs of Slovenia. Compared to the high-flying phrases and categorical invocations of indissoluble unity that had characterized some earlier proclamations, such as the Pohorje Declaration (1935), Uršič's text thus reveals a more pragmatic and less rigid type of the Yugoslavist discourse, stemming from the urgency of the moment.

At the same time, Uršič's text was characteristic of the younger generation of Yugoslav nationalists, whose Yugoslavism was however no less principled and determined than that of the older ones. It reflected the concerns, experiences and the horizons of expectation of a generation that had been brought up and politically formed in Yugoslavia and did not possess memories of the old Austria. In contrast to the generation of the "progressive" leader Albert Kramer (1882–1943), who became politically active at the beginning of the twentieth century, Yugoslavia was the sole political reality that the younger generation of nationalists knew and which they had fully internalized. At the same time, the younger generation had stepped forward as the main champions of Yugoslavism at a point in time when this ideology came to represent a minority position in politics. In other words—as Uršič observed in 1937—it was no longer a time when many politicians spoke "about the Yugoslav nation but about the nations of Yugoslavia, in the same manner as the Habsburgs spoke to their subject 'graceful nations,'" and a time when Yugoslav nationalists were "not treated much differently than during times when they had been the only bearers of the struggle for our liberation."[4] All of this was also reflected in the fact that, by arguing in favor of a unitary Yugoslav nation, the Yugoslavists of this younger generation thoroughly and consistently applied the vantage point of the national whole. This came in contrast to the Yugoslavist discourses of the older generations, which, especially when addressing the practical reasons for unitarism, more often than not revolved around distinctly Slovenian problems and topics, thus merely mirroring the particularism of their particularist opponents. In Uršič's text this is shown most clearly in the passage discussing the impossibility of drawing internal borders along ethno-confessional lines and pointing directly to the Bosnian Question as a case in point. Labelling it the "Gordian knot for the supporters of the theory of three nations," Uršič stated in an almost prophetic fashion that precisely "this religiously and tribally intertwined terrain" of Bosnia demonstrated "that the Yugoslav community is inseparable and cannot be divided without a brutal rupture and general loss."

4 Andrej Uršič, "Naš čas, program Jugoslovenske nacionalne stranke in njena mladina," in *Omladina Jugoslovenske nacionalne stranke: Banovinska skupščina 12. septembra 1937 v Ljubljani* (Ljubljana, 1937), 9–15, 18.

ANDREJ URŠIČ
The Yugoslav Youth and the Cvetković-Maček Agreement

No one has embraced the policy of the Agreement with as much self-denial, sacrifice, and sincerity as the Yugoslav nationalists, guided—as always—by the highest national and state interests. Their decision was based on a realistic assessment of the international and domestic political situation. The fatal conflicts in Europe urgently demanded a timely settlement of the state's most pressing issue that had burdened our development, weakened our strength, and debilitated our international position throughout the twenty years of the state's independence. The Yugoslav nationalists have given their manly word. Given the present circumstances and the current mood of the Yugoslav people, especially its Croatian part, they will undoubtedly refrain from taking any action against a loyal implementation of the Agreement as of August 26 of this year. *However, this does not mean that this Agreement binds present Yugoslav generations in the free struggle for their ideas, and, of course, it is even more impossible that it should bind future generations who are not responsible for the development of the general circumstances during the first twenty years of our state's independence.* In principle, it is necessary to establish that the Yugoslav nationalists have not supported the policy of the fraternal Agreement at the price of their belief in the national unity of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. The future forms of state organization and the relations between the various parts of the Yugoslav nation will depend on the success of Yugoslav thought in the country, especially among the Croats themselves. The future does not exclude the possibility of Yugoslav thought emerging victorious again precisely from the Croatian part of our nation, as it did in the past through its greatest Croatian originators like Gaj, Strossmayer, Rački, etc. Each fall is followed by a rise, and every action by a reaction. We await the future with thorough optimism and are convinced of the imminent positive reactions to the Agreement and the positive development of the spiritual forces in the Croatian part of the nation itself, on which the upcoming forms of national coexistence will depend. All that is being done today may be an experiment, and perhaps the experience will—sooner than we could hope for—command the present centrifugal powers to return to the greatest possible political, cultural, social, and economic solidarity of all Yugoslavs. The organization of the state that is now being conceived may also prove beneficial

in many ways and could contribute to the spiritual fusion of the individual parts of the nation. This will depend on the spirit of the political decision-makers in the constituent parts of the state and on the success of the intervention of the superior central state authorities, whose task will be to watch over the supreme common state and national interests and coordinate them with the individual banovine.

Today, we demand loyalty from both sides in the implementation of the Agreement. We are against the attempts of the centralist hegemonic elements to sabotage the Agreement, as well as against the separatist tendencies that go beyond the words and spirit of the Agreement. Any manipulation of the Agreement from the left or the right could turn this document, which is supposed to represent the beginning of a new, more peaceful coexistence and organic development, into a reason for new conflicts. What sense can be made of the words introducing the Agreement ("considering that Yugoslavia is the best guarantee for the independence and progress of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes") if they are deprived of their substance by severing all ties, even in matters which both parties have recognized as vital for the national and state community? *It is a fatal error to believe that by dividing and weakening unity, success and benefits will be achieved for the individual parts of the nation and country. The division must stop where common interests begin because their obliteration could destroy the sense of mutual solidarity, its necessity, and its usefulness, thus exposing the country to danger when it should stand united against external threats.*

In this context, we will address some of the issues arising from the words and spirit of the Agreement, the Decree on the scope and competencies of the Banovina of Croatia and its implementation, as well as some questions which have been put on the agenda by the altered state organization and the subsequent final settlement of the relations between the various parts of our nation:

…

2. According to Article 2, point 11, of the Decree on the Banovina of Croatia, state authorities shall retain the right to determine the basic principles of educational policy because of its special importance for the general interests of the state. This provision is included in the Regulation without any reservations or restrictions. The central state authority has the exclusive right to determine the educational basis for the Yugoslav youth and thus prevent their spiritual divergence. This provision cannot have any other logical meaning. This was certainly well understood by the signatories to the Agreement and by all those who recognized the Decree as its integral part. *The youth*

from various parts of the country cannot receive their basic education in the spirit of the harmful differences and negative traditions of the past. Instead, educators must instill in young souls a sense of the crucial connection between Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes based on our heritage, linguistic unity or distinct similarity, and most profound common interests in life, while at the same time considering the positive particularities of the individual parts of the nation.

…

In the common interest, the economic solidarity of the Yugoslav community cannot and must not be broken up in such a manner that the industrial areas of the country in particular, whose development was conditioned by natural preconditions and adapted to the consumption capacity of the entire country, are forced to restrict their production to the consumption capacity of their own Banovina alone and to the reciprocal exchange of economic goods between the Banovine. The atomization of our internal market could lead to the most severe economic and social perturbations. Such economic isolation would turn what are nowadays highly active parts of the country into profoundly passive ones. This represents a danger for Slovenia in particular. It is an issue that deserves our utmost attention in relation to the final organization of the entire state and the settlement of the relations between the individual Banovine. *The existence of Yugoslavia is justified not only by the national arguments but also by its economic viability as a whole, which, however, depends on the maximum degree of Yugoslav economic internal solidarity and our united economic performance in the international economic life.* On November 1, the newspaper *Hrvatski dnevnik* stated: "Pursuant to the Decree on the Banovina of Croatia, we are entitled to financial and economic independence and are only obliged to contribute to the community for common matters and needs; and such matters and needs do not include the specific economic needs of Slovenia." If this sentence is interpreted as a subversion of the state's solidarity as an economic union, then it is contrary to the words and spirit of the Decree. Slovenes do not ask for any charity. *We only wish to be considered in every aspect as an integral part of the Yugoslav economic community and request that the economic relations between the individual Banovine are not regulated in the same manner as between different states.*

…

6. In the south of the country—more so than in our parts—a lively debate is taking place regarding the number of future Banovine and their delimitation. These discussions focus primarily on Bosnia and Herzegovina. The issue is highly controversial. Not even the parties represented in the current

government or the supporters of the same parties are in agreement. In this domestic political alliance, the slogan "We will not claim what is not ours and will not surrender what belongs to us!" is being used when it would be much more appropriate for it to represent our firm position in current international events. Some are in favor of the status quo, some support a fourth autonomous Banovina of Herzegovina and Bosnia, some the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina to Serbia, and some want them divided between the Banovine of Serbia and Croatia. Typically, the justification for all four of these theses is based on the same supreme state interests. *This issue definitely represents a Gordian knot for the supporters of the theory of three nations because this religiously and tribally intertwined terrain will make them realize that the Yugoslav community is inseparable and cannot be divided without a brutal rupture and general loss.* We want this issue to be solved in terms of genuine national and state interests rather than local religious and partisan considerations so as to benefit the Yugoslav community, of which this diverse territory is a true example.

We have touched upon some pressing questions and answered them with Yugoslav thought, which is the only one that can give us a positive answer. We are deeply convinced that these questions, which are of vital importance for our entire nation, will be solved in its spirit. All those who wish well for themselves and the community must recognize themselves as Yugoslavs.

We reaffirm our faith in the triumph of Yugoslav thought that has created this country, given it substance, justified its existence, and guaranteed its future. We are not discouraged by the current failures because we believe that, ultimately, everyone will realize that the people rather than the thought should be blamed for our mistakes and problems. Today, we are putting borders between us. *The Yugoslav genius that has led us through the issues of the Cyrillic and Latin script, the religious, cultural, regional, and tribal differences, the inhuman suffering, and the ruins of mighty empires to finally unite us in a free country will transcend these borders. We have overcome others, and we will overcome ourselves.*

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Marko Zajc is a historian of politics, borders, and the public sphere in Slovenia and East Central Europe from the nineteenth century to late socialist Yugoslavia. He is Research Associate and Head of the Political History research programme at the Institute of Contemporary History (Ljubljana) and Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Humanities, University of Primorska (Koper). He earned his PhD in 2005 (University of Ljubljana) with a dissertation on Slovenian–Croatian relations and the border, 1830–1918. Zajc has led ARIS-funded projects on administrative borders, border rivers, and border commissions and currently supervises the MSCA project "Red feminists: communist women activists and reproductive rights struggles in post-1968 Italy and Slovenia (RedFem)." He has won fellowships from the OeAD (Vienna, 2005–06; 2008–09), DAAD (Berlin, 2013), and Imre Kertész Kolleg (Jena, 2014). He serves on advisory and editorial bodies and has published widely on borders, nationalism, the public sphere, memory politics, and Slovenian–Croatian relations.

From a review by Maria Falina

The strengths of the publication are many. The reader introduces important texts to the reading public and makes them accessible not only through translation, but also by placing them in historical context and by providing short intellectual biography sketches of the authors.

The selection of texts reflects the diversity of Slovenian political thought, as well as the diversity of up-to-date research done in the field. Most of the contributors are up-and-coming scholars who bring new analytical perspectives to what is otherwise not a very dynamic field.

The editors' introduction provides important insights into Slovenian historiography and offers an original and very convincing framing of how 'national' political thought can be conceptualised. The significance of the introductory chapter goes far beyond the simple explanation of the volume.

Individual contributions offer a perfect starting point for those who want to go deeper into specific aspects of political thought (democracy, nationalism, socialism, agrarianism, feminism) but also can (and I am sure, will) be used for teaching a variety of classes on the history of Slovenia, Yugoslavia and Europe as well as courses on the history of political thought.

I welcome the idea that what qualifies as 'political thought' can be meaningfully expanded to include texts on themes such as body and mind, or in less common formats, such as artistic texts or radio broadcasts. All in all, this collection has value also as a model of how sources for political thought can be approached and analysed.

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