

SLOVENIA: POLITICAL INSIGHTS

Cirila Toplak and Miro Haček

Warszawa, 2012

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Publisher:

European School of Law and Administration

03-750 Warszawa, ul. Grodnienska 21/29

Tel. 022 619-25-90, w. 105; 619-27-90

www.ewspa.edu.pl

e-mail: skryba@ewspa.edu.pl

ISBN 978-83-930277-9-8

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Publishing of this book was supported by Slovenian Book Agency.

Reviewers: dr. Igor Lukšič and dr. Irena Bačlija

Title page: Dušan Virc

Warszawa, 2012

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Foreword

The new publication of the European School of Law and Administration – a university level college established in 1997 by the Association of Polish Lawyers - has two distinctive characteristics. First, it is a monograph devoted to the legal and political development of a selected country, and, second, two foreign authors – representatives of the younger generation of Slovenian political scientists, have written it.

The book is an excellent study of Slovenia's constitutional and political transformation. Its first chapter shows the development of Slovenian political thought with special reference to the formation of national consciousness. The growth of Slovenian national identity took place within multi-ethnic states: the Hapsburg Empire until 1918, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia between the first and the second world wars and the Yugoslav Socialist Federation in the years 1945-1991. From a sociological perspective it is highly interesting how the Slovenian nation developed its cultural and political identity in the long years when an independent Slovenian state did not exist.

Since 1991, Slovenia develops as an independent nation state. The book traces the process of state building and discusses the most important characteristics of Slovenian politics. It also addresses the issue of new international relations within which Slovenia, along with most of the other Central European states, develops in the 21st century as a member of the European Union and of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization – the biggest community of democratic states in history.

Slovenian political science has studied the process of nation building and of the consolidation of democratic state. There is an impressive body of scholarly literature on these issues, skilfully synthesized by the present authors. Since a large part of this literature is in Slovenian, the book constitutes a very use-

ful help for international readership. It is, however, more than a synthesis of previous studies. Professors Cirila Toplak and Miro Hacek, themselves, have contributed to the study of Slovenian politics and the book reflects their individual contributions, particularly in the fields of political thought and local politics.

In my small book on Slovenia's early process of democratic transformation, I concluded that Slovenia is an example of successful transformation, unlike some other states of Central and Eastern Europe. "Slovenia's success – I wrote – is due to the favourable conditions existing at the moment of the declaration of independence, but in the final count it is the success of the Slovenian people, the result of its will to build a modern, democratic fatherland, its moderation in formulating alternative programs and the ability of its political elite to lead the nation in a democratic way"¹. Thirteen years later I am even more convinced that this assessment was true. The present book presents an interesting and valuable analysis of this successful process.

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1 Jerzy J. Wiatr, *Slovenia: przykład udanej transformacji (Slovenia: an example of successful transformation – in Polish)*, Warsaw: Kelles-Krauz Foundation 1999: 35.

Chapter One

Ideological Framework of Slovenian Political History

Cirila Toplak

Semantics and Definitions

I shall begin my discussion of scholarly and political discourse on autonomist and unitary ideas and nationalism in Slovenian political history by clarifying semantic misunderstandings and briefly explaining specific “autochthonous” denominations of these ideas. (The reasons these idiosyncrasies would even exist are also addressed below.) Sociologist of culture Drago Rotar (2007) has called the interpretative process performed on these ideas “picking” (from the past), which here stands for

[contents] which must have passed a selection in order to have found a place in the society's retrospective narratives; this selection is never without purpose, which is to give meaning to narratives on the past and which renders these narratives suitable for ideological usage that ensures its mediators as well as its addressees a position in society and access to power (Rotar, 2007: 286).

Every selection, be it natural or artificial, is intentional. The intent of “picking” from the past is to invent a (common) history, this crucial instrument in the assertion of national identity for any modern “imagined community”, in Benedict Anderson’s terms (Anderson, 2007). Some Slovenian historians have become fully aware of this: to them, history is “the means of nation’s justification, emancipation, integration and delimitation [...] as a result, history of modern European nations is more constructed than reconstructed, more fictitious (mythical) than real” (Štih, 2005: 223). However, some here continue to seek (and find) historical Truth (see Griesser Pečar, 2004; Dežman, 2011).

In their discussions of autonomism and unitarism or Slovenian nationalism, Slovenian scholars and politicians have hardly ever used these particular terms. Instead, they have continuously utilised increasingly archaic, arcane, or “autochthonous” translations, such as the “Slovenian national question” or “common Slovenian cultural space,” the “Unified Slovenia” (program) or again, the “Slovenian national interest.” This referential confusion, according to Rotar (2007), is a manifestation of the intentional exclusion of Slovenian-speaking territories from European historical processes in the name of the thoroughly internalised Herderian uniqueness of Slovenianness. The latter, however, I would add, is not a purpose in itself, but an instrument of the conservative clerical autarkist agenda, more on which will follow. This “closing off” from the outside world has been put to practice also through the rejection of universal scientific terminology and a preference for insider, “homey” lexical denominations for phenomena and theoretical concepts:

Numerous local authorities in social sciences and humanities [...] do not use the conceptual apparatus of their disciplines common in other national environments and in the international exchange of knowledge [...] do not refer to concepts, scientific classifications and denominations [...] they even avoid [...] the very word science (Rotar, 2007: 246).

Anthropologist Irena Šumi (2000) reached a similar conclusion with regard to the exclusivist “uniqueness” of the terminology used in Slovenian ethnic studies, which is particularly pertinent to this discussion:

Scholars of Slovenian ethnic studies have not adopted the dominant modern Western, particularly Anglophone sociological, historical, sociolinguistic and anthropological discourse on ethnicity and nationalism [...] What

they did do was assimilate its elements in the discourse on national minorities: in a manner that at places appears as a caricature of the Western discourse, analytical categories such as ethnic groups or even ethnos/ethnicity, ethnic boundaries and ethnic identity have been simply made synonymous and also employed synonymously with concepts of national minority, (un-)just state border and nationalism; thus nationalism and minority issues have become synonymous with ethnic studies (Šumi, 2000: 124).²

Methodologically, until recently, such exclusivist “domestication” has had two results. On the one hand, it has resulted in a relative absence of comparative studies that include other nations.³ On the other hand, the local production of meanings has reduced universal definitions of political ideas and concepts to a level of intelligibility that makes clarifications, like those that follow, really necessary to my view.

Here, then, with the term “autonomism,” I am referring to a specific temporal and spatial “Slovenian” application of collective or class autonomism. In global political thought autonomism stands for collective existence according to self-imposed rules within a given society and thus a theoretical foundation of neo-Marxist, poststructuralist, and anarchist movements. While in Slovenian social sciences a chronologically limited and localised understanding of autonomism prevails—in the sense of autonomist claims and movements among Slovenians prior to World War II, i.e., prior to the period when Slovenia actually gained autonomous status within Socialist Yugoslavia—the autonomism I propose to discuss here goes beyond this particular and local context.⁴

2 The most obvious illustration is the oldest Slovenian research institution, Slovenian Institute for Ethnic Studies, whose Slovenian name still translates literally as “Institute for Nationality Questions.”

3 This is true despite the fact that at least Estonia and Slovakia would represent valuable case studies for comparison in terms of size, homogeneity, political history, national emancipation processes, post-Communism phenomena, etc.

4 Officially, Slovenia and Yugoslavia were Socialist Republics between 1945 and 1991, while the Communist Party was the only party in power. Yugoslav-type Socialism had little in common with the French or Scandinavian Socialist Governments of that period, but it had even less in common with the hardcore Stalinism and Communism of the Soviet Bloc countries.

I intend, then, to analyse Slovenian autonomism between the mid-nineteenth century and the present as a continued claim for collective autonomy that was, due to certain Slovenian specificities which I aim to discuss below, focused primarily on linguistic autonomy in public life and included only self-limiting claims for political and economic autonomy. In various political discourses that have arisen in Slovenian-speaking territories from the mid-nineteenth century on, such modestly conceptualised cultural autonomy⁵ was at the core of the concept of the “Slovenian national question.”

Throughout the nineteenth century and up until World War I, various “national questions” were at stake in Europe, and this phrase was common and rather self-evident. For most, this terminology and its related conceptualisations faded with the passing of the war. The “Slovenian national question,” however, managed to survive in academic and political discourse until this day.⁶ It remained unresolved after Slovenia became an autonomous Socialist republic in federal Socialist Yugoslavia, and even after Slovenia became an independent sovereign nation-state in 1991. Indeed, after 1918, its meaning also came to be captured by the more explicitly political (and universally understood) concept of “national self-determination.” After Slovenia’s independence in 1991 it has been revived in the discourse that is centred on the more economy-oriented “Slovenian national interest.” Yet for nearly two centuries, the “Slovenian national question” continued to be used as a valid, albeit somewhat ex-temporal, “time warp” concept of its own, especially by conservative social scientists and politicians, and particularly in instances of political crisis.

5 Another semantic idiosyncrasy pertinent to this discussion revolves around “culture,” which here stands for professional and amateur artistic production, with the Slovenian language as the principal medium. Such a conceptualisation of “culture” betrays German influence, but is also derived from a historical absence of political life in Slovenian-speaking territories, followed by the subsequent politisation of “culture,” i.e., artistic production.

6 This is similar to the Croatian and Serb national questions. Brubaker (1996) refers to the national question in *Nationalism reframed: Nationalism and the national question in the new Europe* to demonstrate the continuities between past and contemporary Eastern European nationalisms. The contemporary use of this term of which I am aware outside Eastern Europe is limited to Quebec’s (“La question nationale au Québec”) or the Basque country’s autonomist claims.

“Unitarism” is considered here, in a similarly general yet applied sense, to be a persistent push for the unification of Slovenian-speaking territories into one political entity. It is, therefore, not limited to its usual meanings in local scholarship, which can be understood either as the southern Slavic unitarism, denoting the aim to unite all south Slavic ethnicities in the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy in one autonomous administrative province prior to World War I, or as the “Yugoslavism” found in the short-lived 1918 Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenians, and in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1918–1941).⁷

Up until Slovenia’s independence in the 1990s, and except for rare daring visionaries, the most desired (political and administrative) realisation of the unitarist idea was not a Slovenian nation-state, but an autonomous entity that would unite Slovenian (native) speakers in a separate multi-national state. This idea was thusly articulated in the first Slovenian political program in 1848, entitled “Unified Slovenia.” In 1945, Slovenia was unified as a republic of the People’s Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, with substantial minority populations remaining in Italy, Austria, Hungary, and another Yugoslav federal republic, Croatia. The existence of and the pressure from these minorities had, among other things, kept the agenda of “Unified Slovenia” alive until in the 1970s, when another term captured its meaning: “the common Slovenian cultural space.” This concept was not entirely invented by the Communist ideologues, nor was it progressive.⁸ Historian Janko Prunk (2000) has argued that “in early 1970s the idea was forwarded by Slovenian intelligentsia of the ‘common Slovenian cultural space’ reaching beyond state borders as some sort of substitute for ‘Unified Slovenia’ [...] Common Slovenian cultural space has become a rather popular nationalist formulation and agenda, supposed to encompass the cultural essence of Slovenian nation in its entire ethnic territory” (Prunk, 2000: 23). Note that Prunk referred to this as a “substitute,” not as an “evolution.” In contrast, another historian, Stane Granda (1999), emphasised the

7 The Kingdom of Yugoslavia was created in late 1918 as a result of a merger between the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenians (previously citizens of the defunct Austrian-Hungarian monarchy) and the Kingdom of Serbia.

8 Playwright and politician Etbin Kristan publicly demanded back in 1899 that “every nation in Austria, regardless of the territory populated by its nationals, represents an autonomous group in charge of its own national (linguistic and cultural) matters in an entirely independent way.” (Grdina, 2003: 119-120)

difference between the territorial facets of “Unified Slovenia” and the extraterritorial virtual “common Slovenian cultural space,” arguing that independent Slovenia’s authorities were attempting to

modernize and replace the idea of “Unified Slovenia” with the idea of a unified Slovenian cultural space, which was only the last in the series of rotten compromises [...] By creating the Ministry for Slovenians across the borders and overseas, the authorities have demonstrated a fundamental misunderstanding of the idea of “Unified Slovenia” (Granda, 1999: 14).

To an outside observer, such a ministry may appear an awkward curiosity, quite similar to the “common Slovenian cultural space.” After all, Christian Socialist Franc Jeza (1993), in exile in 1983, warned:

The Slovenian state will only be the result of what is politically feasible, i.e. independent Slovenia on the territory of the [Socialist] republic of Slovenia. Any identification of the state of Slovenia with “Unified Slovenia” is a dangerous and irresponsible demagoguery since it could upset and irritate the neighbouring countries and set them against the independent Slovenia (Jeza, 1993: 35).

If one might understand the Communist authorities’ indifference to the potential indignation of Western neighbours in the Cold War context, it may be more of a surprise that post-1991 independent Slovenia pursued and even exacerbated its concerns regarding the “common Slovenian cultural space.”⁹ I will propose some reasons for this later on; at this point, however, I wish only to emphasize its continuity with the unitarist idea.

“Unified Slovenia” and “common Slovenian cultural space” have thus encompassed the modern Slovenian claim for unification. Over nearly two centuries, the unitarist idea has hardly suffered any alteration due to the changes in the historical context or in the ideological foundations of the various Slovenian political regimes, and this is also very much the case with the autonomist

9 This is true to the extent that the Ministry for Slovenians across the borders and abroad survived even the radical 2012 government reorganisation due to the debt crisis that reduced the number of ministries from 16 to 11.

ideas. Moreover, the concepts of “autonomism” and “unitarism” are at present interpreted in some Slovenian scholarship as historical,¹⁰ with no apparent relation to their autochthonous synonyms, while the Slovenian national question firmly remains yet to be resolved, and Slovenia yet to be unified.

The hardest point to see is the one on which we stand. Nationalism, this “ambivalent component of social relations” (Vogrinc, in Anderson, 2007: 328), may be discussed in the Slovenian case in terms of how architects conceive the importance of the empty space around buildings; this space is so omnipotent and self-evident that it is generally not referred to explicitly. This is by no means a Slovenian specificity; as social scientist Veronika Bajt points out, “the principal dynamics of the existence of the nation-state is that nationalist logic permeates entire public discourse and appropriates all dimensions of social and political life, without its implicit presence even being noticed by most people, let alone questioned,” (Bajt, in Kogovšek Šalamon & Petković, 2010: 194). Indeed,

national identities are always aptly incorporated in living routines [and] incessantly remind us of the nation, yet this process mainly takes place “unseen” as in subconscious. References to “our” national identity are such a familiar part of social environment, are made so normal that they operate at subconscious level (Bajt in, Kogovšek Šalamon & Petković, 2010: 205).

Slovenians are exposed to a substantial amount of what Michael Billig called (1995) “banal nationalism”, which penetrates the subconscious through constant media references to “Slovenians” instead of “citizens of Slovenia,” while apprehended Slovenian criminals of other than Slovenian ethnic origin are described as “Slovenian citizens.” The public use of the politically incorrect terms “Slovenians abroad” and “Slovenians across the border” persists, instead of, for example, “Austrian citizens of Slovenian origin,” while Slovenian citizens of Roma origin are “only” Roma or, pejoratively, even “Tsigani.”¹¹ The pronoun “us” is self-evidently contrasted with “them,” the latter of which denotes the neighbours, the

10 See for example Zver, 1998: 18.

11 Some Slovenian scholars of ethnic studies use this denomination under pretext that this is how the Roma call themselves although the Dictionary of Slovenian language emphasizes numerous pejorative metaphoric meanings of the word (linked to dressing in rags, dirtiness, black skin, lying, stealing children etc.)

foreigners, the others. In the news, the author of the 1991 Slovenian constitution is referred to as “the father of the nation.” “Thinking Slovenia without ‘Slovenianness’ and Slovenian nationalism is impossible, yet owing to ‘invisibility’ of everyday ‘nationalising’ practices nationalism is only perceived in excessive xenophobic or chauvinist outcries” (Bajt, 2010: 202), such as the graffiti “Juden Raus,” which was painted on the Maribor synagogue during the Israeli operation in Gaza in December 2008 (with the Jewish community in Slovenia numbering fewer than 100), or in comments at the football match in July 2012 between a Slovenian and a Bosnian team, during which Slovenian fans screamed the infamous Serb war slogan: “Knife, wire, Srebrenica!”

Indeed, in the “official” consensual interpretation found in the *Encyclopaedia of Slovenia* (1993), Slovenian nationalism is “good” and thus does not even need to be called nationalism:

In Slovenian history Slovenian nationalism was interpreted primarily as a justified [...] movement for cultural, political and economic assertion of Slovenian nation [...] and its protection from the threatening foreign influences. [...] Slovenians in the past] experienced foreign nationalism as an injustice, a pressure, even violence by a stronger party. For that reason they differentiated between just and unjust nationalist movement. They did not want to be labelled nationalists since they were only claiming their rights (nationalists were those who withheld their rights) and their national politics was not nationalist (PleTERSki, 1993: 263).

Any average Slovenian would condemn nationalism, and if asked what it was, (s)he would probably associate it with the aggressive Serbian nationalism that destroyed Socialist Yugoslavia. Yet, if (s)he were asked if (s)he would mind having a Muslim, a Roma, or a Jew as a neighbour, the national public opinion scores would reveal one of the most intolerant societies in the EU (Mandelc, 2011: 125).¹²

12 According to the 1992 Slovenian Public Opinion poll 39.6 % of Slovenians would not have a migrant worker (from former Yugoslavia) as a neighbour, 37 % would not have a Muslim, 41.9 a Roma and 37.2 % a Jew. In 2002 the same source cites 22.7 %, 26.5 %, 43.1 % and 21.7 % respectively. A similar 2000 poll in 14 EU Member States places Slovenia 6th for undesirability of migrant workers as neighbours, 4th for Muslims, 8th for Roma and 3th for Jews (with the Jewish community in Slovenia counting less than a 100 members) (Hafner Fink, 2004: 66-67).

Lucid critics of such a self-indulgent conceptualisation of nationalism have always been silenced as being mistaken: “The conclusion made in 1913 by politician Ivan Regent that Italian nationalism [towards Slovenians] will not die until Slovenian nationalism lives is an example of deficient differentiation between the dominant and the subordinate nation” (Pleterski, 1993: 263). Even at present, with Slovenia freed from any apparent subordination in the twenty-first century, this is still the case:

regardless of formal chanting on a democratic and plural society based on symbiosis of various cultures, languages and identities, Slovenia promotes its national identity through the prism of Slovenian ethnic majority. Not the nation as the community of individuals linked by civic identity and belonging to the Republic of Slovenia, but the nation as imagined community of people, linked by invisible ties of common ancestors, history, collective memories, myths and symbols. [...] “Foreigners” can never ever be recognized as “true Slovenians” because the idea of Slovenianness remains archaically ethnic (Bajt, 2010: 203).

The historical evolution of ethnic, archaic, aggressive, but latent and subconscious Slovenian nationalism, and the construction of the real or imagined enemy, the Other, which enables the identification of Us in this respect in particular, was not only the master background of autonomist and unitarist ideas in the past, but it also represents one of the principal interpretative keys to understanding Slovenian politics today.¹³

13 I am embracing a constructivist approach to the understanding of nationalism here, i.e., nationalism as the ideology employed by political elites to make a community imagine itself as a nation, with the assistance of invented history, symbols, and archetypes in the sense of Hobsbawm’s “invented tradition” (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 2003). Let me offer but one quote among the many available to justify this perspective. Historical anthropologist Božidar Jezernik assessed the late-nineteenth-century political situation in Slovenian-speaking Austrian territories as follows: “That Slovenian political elites created a good impression with the [imperial] authorities, was only the minor part of work. More important and in many aspects more difficult part was to gain trust of the people so that they would follow and support their endeavours,” and quoted nationalist politician Josip Serbec (1844–1925) in asserting that political elites, in order to succeed, needed “primarily [to] understand their era and contemporary development and their people’s mentality” (Jezernik, 2008: 40). The more interesting element for a political scientist in this context is who the political elites were and what their agenda was beyond national emancipation.

According to psychologist Janek Musek (1994), Slovenians are a “border nation,” meaning that they have always been surrounded by numerically superior Others and have felt like “an island in the sea of Otherness” (Musek, 1994: 173). While members of large nations have their entire mental horizon filled with Us, Slovenians have been unpleasantly restricted by the closeness of Others who were not necessarily hostile, but whose proximity made Slovenians project their own defensive hostility onto them. Also, like European Jews, issues pertinent to Slovenians were always decided upon by remote, foreign centres of power, giving way to the feelings of helplessness, inferiority, and even paranoia that strongly informed the Slovenian self-perception and national stereotypes.¹⁴

Let me therefore examine deductively and in more detail the ideational archaisms that have constituted the grounds upon which Slovenian collective identity and, subsequently, political history and current politics have been built, with particular emphasis on the process of picking from the past, while—inevitably—picking from the past myself.¹⁵

14 With these irrational emotions, it was not only about reaction, but also interaction within Slovenian society: “Among [...] tools of segregation with violent and harmful consequences is, for example, the previously mentioned Urangst of the Slavs, only reinforced after both World Wars, which in its context are being interpreted as some sort of *self-fulfilling prophecy* that prevents from seeing a far less pompous, albeit also extremely brutal reality” (Rotar, 2007: 235).

15 From the available literature, I have picked (*sic!*) only texts that refer to autonomist and unitarist ideas explicitly in their titles, interpret other primary sources on these topics, and clarify the specifics of Slovenian nationalism along the way. The selection of authors includes a broad ideological spectrum in an attempt to include overlooked sources, yet it remains far from exhaustive.

Picking from the National(ist) Past: Language, Class, and the Catholic Church

According to the entry in *Encyclopaedia of Slovenia* (1993), an “official” interpretation so to speak identifies Slovenian national question as “a complex of cultural, territorial, economic and political issues that represent facts, obstacles or dilemmas of nation’s existence and development.” The national question’s content depends on the “nation’s interior development, while exterior circumstances may also have a (sometimes decisive) impact, in particular the attitude towards other, usually neighbourly nations (subordination, tolerance, symbiosis), the political system, civilizational influences, as well as international (interstate) relations.” (Prunk & Komac, 1993: 146) In this ample entry, many other elements are listed as pertinent to the national question, such as

the endeavours for liberation from social, economic, and cultural subordination; Slovenian national minorities; the immigration issue; the farmer issue; national autonomy within Slovenian ethnic borders; conservation of ethnic territory; cultural autonomy; conservation of Slovenian identity; existential threat to Slovenian nation by Fascism and Nazism; Resistance and collaboration during World War II; technological stagnation; unproductive agriculture; emigration of foreign workers; environmental pollution; civilizational suitability of Socialist federal Yugoslavia[, as well as] autonomous and independent management of developmental processes that concern the entire political community, majority status with regard to inhabitants of other nationalities in the territory of the state of Slovenia, patronage of Slovenian minorities in neighbouring countries and of Slovenian immigrants worldwide (Prunk & Komac, 1993: 147).

In line with the process of picking from the past, it would almost be less time-consuming to discuss what is *not* included in the entry on the national question, which reads like a series of national(ist) historical milestones. Typically, the ethnic community has clear priority over political community in this description, while Slovenian ethnic nationalism is not mentioned once. The principal concerns are “conservation” and various Others, while the only social class referred to is that of farmers. Before looking into this more closely, I would like first to similarly lay out the encyclopaedic definition of Slovenian unitarism, as embodied in the idea of “Unified Slovenia,” in order to be able

to address the intertwined nature of the autonomist and unitarist ideas in my discussion, as this is how they have always been reflected upon and enacted.

The “official” interpretation of “Unified Slovenia,” this program “of administratively and politically united Slovenian ethnic territory” and the “fundamental idea of most Slovenian political programs” (Granda, 2001), reads, similar to the entry on the Slovenian national question, like a condensed codified review of modern Slovenian political history:

The Program of “Unified Slovenia” [...] after 1848 remained a lasting political claim; Slovenians were particularly receptive to it in later key historical events (such as abolition of neo-absolutism and beginning of constitutional politics, introduction of dualism, political crises and new political concepts in all subsequent political systems). Since its many fundamental deficiencies (such as absence of historical and legal arguments and small numbers of Slovenians) could not be improved, some attempted to adapt it to inner Austrian, new Illyrian, trialist, and Yugoslav conceptions. For several decades the idea did not encompass an independent state; it did, however, include a claim for national parliament and therefore emphasised certain elements of Slovenian statehood; it referred above all to linguistic, cultural, political, and administrative autonomy (Granda, 2001: 147).

As “a prequel” to “Unified Slovenia,” this entry dates the earliest public use of the term “Slovenian” to a 1816 poem by Valentin Vodnik, entitled “Salvation of Illyria.”¹⁶ Deemed similarly early is influential Slovenian bishop Anton Martin Slomšek’s (1800–1862) contemporary declaration that “in the language of Slovenianness be one house, one family, one Slovenianness, one language” (Granda, 2001: 146). Picking from the past was at work here: Protestant priest and author Primož Trubar’s claim for a “Slovenian church” from the mid-sixteenth century (Kardelj, 1980: 189) was completely overlooked. Yet, by explicitly addressing “every Slovenian, be it from Carniola, Low Styria,

16 An Illyrian movement in the early nineteenth century, as part of a larger pan-Slavic movement, claimed that all South Slavs in the Balkans were descendants of autochthonous Illyrian inhabitants and argued for a unified South Slavic language, which Slovenians rejected.

Carinthia, Carst, Istria, Dolenjska region or Bezjak” (Trubar, 1557 in Kardelj, 1980: 190), Trubar recognised Slovenian-speaking lands as a linguistic entity, and in 1555, he mentioned the “Slovenian land” as the place where he had given sermons. Although some additional regions were at the time populated by speakers of various dialects of Slovenian (Luthar et al., 2008: 205), Trubar’s reference to Slovenianness was, remarkably, earlier. However, Granda (1999: 18) in his study on “Unified Slovenia” entitled *First decision of Slovenians for Slovenia*, mentioned Trubar in only one sentence, and he did not even refer to the Protestant author in the encyclopaedic entry on the same topic that he wrote either at the same time or later.

Beyond merely denoting his omission from later discussions, it is also worth offering some interpretation of Trubar’s work. Primož Trubar (1508–1586) wrote the first books in the Slovenian language, considered quite consensually the principal cohesive element of this ethnic community. Bajt has argued that “language was the fundamental identifier of the Slovenian nation since Slovenian customs and cultural characteristics do not differ from neighbouring nations sufficiently for Slovenians to identify themselves on those grounds” (Bajt, 2010: 208). This explanation of the importance of the language sounds convincing enough. Yet already in Trubar’s case a certain inconsistency between this representation of Slovenian language and historical data cannot be ignored.

As the author of first books in Slovenian, Trubar should have been put on the national historiographical pedestal, yet most modern historians would not attribute him nearly his due. His was, indeed, the first Slovenian *Abece*, but the books he wrote were mainly religious texts, such as a translation of the Bible, a Catechism, and *The Church Rules*. Twentieth-century leftist historians underplayed Trubar in their interpretations of Slovenian ethnogenesis because they refused to emphasise the historical political impact of religion in general. Instead, Communist author Edvard Kardelj (1980: 213) identified the first clearly articulated Slovenian political program in the peasant rebellions in late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, although these were ethnically undifferentiated, joint Croatian and Slovenian class claims.

Conservative Slovenian historians have therefore argued rather justifiably that these rebels did not identify with Slovenianness or speak only Slovenian, but there was another reason why to them late-medieval Slovenian-speaking peasants have been an inconvenient ethnogenesis item: peasant rebellions

could not have been easily picked from the past because the peasants rebelled against the divinely established feudal order.

The class perspective, promoted by the other camp, was certainly relevant considering that

Prior to the year 1848 Slovenian nation was almost uniformly composed of subordinate masses of farmers, farm workers, craftsmen and workers. Intelligentsia that lived in towns in provinces populated by Slovenians, was also of Slovenian origin, but of German culture with few exceptions. Even ethnically conscious Slovenians used German to communicate in society and to correspond (Grafenauer, 1987: 158).

In itself, the overlapping of ethnicity and class was nothing unusual in Eastern Europe. According to Ernest Gellner, “The existential foundation for many ethnic groups was not the territory, but their social structure. They were more connected by their social and economic role than by the land they inhabited” (Gellner, 1993: 191). This complexity in Slovenian case did interfere with the conventional ethnogenesis by superposing class identity with all its particularities (piousness, conservatism, egalitarianism) over common language, tradition and territory. Slovenian historians certainly attempted to squeeze Slovenianness into the conventional ethnogenesis model, but it did not quite fit, because both conservative and “leftist” interpretations were less concerned with objectivity than with indoctrination.

To return to Primož Trubar, for conservative ethnogenesis he was no better pick than the peasant rebels: while he was instrumental to the institutionalisation of the Slovenian language, he was also a Protestant priest and unacceptable to the Catholic Church, which had been the dominant cultural and political force in Slovenian-speaking lands since Christianization in the eighth century. Given that the majority of the Slovenian-speaking inhabitants of the Austrian empire were peasants, the Catholic Church represented about the only possibility for social ascent for those among them who possessed above-average intelligence, skills, and ambition. Subsequently, the clergy was the elite that the Slovenian people recognized as such, and they were willing to follow and listen to them in political matters as well. With the Reformation, the first-ever “alternative” appeared: the clergy itself, to some extent, offered a view of the Church as holding less than absolute authority in earthly (political) matters.

Yet the Reformists—clerical and secular—were too few to affect the status quo, and the Slovenian peasantry was too uneducated and superstitious to question the all-encompassing grip of the Church.

After Trubar's death in exile, the Catholic Church led a merciless Counter-Reformation in this part of Austria throughout the seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth centuries under the auspices of Austrian absolutism. The very few Enlightened thinkers of the time gathered around historian of noble descent Janez Vajkard Valvasor in the late seventeenth century and then around playwright and historian Anton Tomaž Linhart in the late eighteenth century. Retrospectively, their work evoked no less of an interpretative issue, even though the Enlightenment era produced an important literary opus in the Slovenian language. For some historians, the problem was in authors' aristocratic cosmopolitan origins, for others it was their liberal views. Despite apparent general consensus on the Slovenian language as the principal cohesive element and on Slovenianness as initially a linguistic community—which is what one would find in any Slovenian schoolbook—other criteria have clearly interfered with “picking” from the past. Literary production in Slovenian in and of itself was not enough for an author to figure in the ethnogenesis narrative, let alone to become its milestone.¹⁷ Conservative interpreters even sacrificed the national pride that could rely on Slovenian language becoming a printed language so soon after invention of print to promote much later, yet ideologically more correct authors; but then, pride was a controversial value in a peasant community led by the Catholic clergy.

Although Slovenian historians appear to have reached a consensus that 1848, the “Spring of Nations,” was the year “of birth of Slovenian nation into the political life” and one of the “crucial milestones in Slovenian history” (Prunk, 2002a: 72)—since “Unified Slovenia,” the first Slovenian political program, was proclaimed at that time—it was actually prior to that, in the early nineteenth century, that the *path dependence* (in the sense of Pierson's (2000) historical conditionality) of Slovenian politics had begun to be set. The early 1820s

17 Reality “on the ground” also strongly counters nationalist inventiveness here: even at present, Slovenian dialects differ to the extent that inhabitants of the North-Eastern-most Prekmurje region and inhabitants of the Southwestern littoral region cannot easily understand each other.

coincided with a historical increase in literacy among the average Slovenian population after the introduction of compulsory primary education by the Austrian Empress Marie Therese in the 1770s. Indeed, Slovenian peasants had been taught in the Slovenian language, yet this had covered only the most basic education and that which was offered in the Sunday schools maintained by clerics. The early 1820s were also the period following Napoleon's rule of the so-called Illyrian provinces, which not only included the Slovenian-speaking Austrian lands, but also had the largest town in these lands, Laibach/Ljubljana, as their capital. The French modernised the administration, abolished feudalism, and introduced the civil code. Their rule, albeit short-lived, incomplete, and inefficient, left behind enough of a liberal (and nationalist) spirit that Austrian absolutism could not be unquestionably restored after 1813. The Catholic Church in Slovenia could no longer ignore these modernizing tendencies, and in view of the growing popularity of nationalist ideas, it started to promote a version of nationalist claims that was meant to pacify Slovenians and keep them under its wing. The Church began to "stimulate the use of Slovenian language," claiming, however, that "before God all nations are equal" and that Slovenians were to remain faithful to their Emperor above all (Prunk, 2002a: 62). For Bishop Anton Martin Slomšek, religion had clear priority over nation; he wrote several popular schoolbooks and songs in Slovenian, but considered the education of peasants beyond elementary school to be bad and harmful (Rotar, 2007: 215).

According to Rotar, ethnic nationalism in Slovenian-speaking territories had been generated by a conscious "substitution of the Enlightenment (civic) idea by the nationalist and origin-based idea [Aufklärung as opposed to Lumières] and by modification of the content of [Enlightenment] political concepts (the people, freedom, individuality etc.)," as well as by the "misinterpretation of culture, of functionality and purpose of education, of control and direction, prolongation and reification of provincialism as a universal model of social life that, not without some previous hints, started in the 1820s and is still going on" (Rotar, 2007: 13). If the idea of Aufklärung was behind ethnic, conservative nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe in general as opposed to Enlightened civic, liberal nationalism in Western Europe (this division has been questioned by contemporary nationalist scholars, such as Stefan Auer),¹⁸

18 See S. Auer (2004): *Liberal Nationalism in Central Europe*. Routledge Curzon, London, New York.

the Catholic Church in Slovenia also had another agenda, in which the conservative conceptualisation of national emancipation was but an instrument. It sought to counter any hint of secularisation and to remain largely in ideological control of the Slovenian-speaking population as the ultimate earthly authority by pursuing the abovementioned “isolation of [Slovenian-speaking peasants] from influences of the outside world and also from German speaking progressive compatriots” (Perpar, 2011: 151). Moreover, political scientist Jurij Perpar argues that “clerics put the social agenda of peasant subaltern population to practice in a struggle against modernisation, capitalist industrialisation, and related proletarianisation that was infecting Slovenia from Western Europe and more developed parts of the monarchy” (Perpar, 2011: 151), whereas, in Slavoj Žižek’s words, “the intertwining of peasant subaltern and nationalist project for the clerics was to ‘conserve pre-bourgeois rootedness’ i.e. to end in religious and national autarchy” (Žižek, 1987: 28). There was a paradox in this anti-modernist stand, since “autarchy of a ‘pre-bourgeois organic society’ would have, in the short run at least, indeed kept the nation/society at bay from influences of various modernisation processes; in the long run however, such a backward society would have become an even easier prey to foreign powers” (Perpar, 2011: 151-152). This paradox was only apparent to nationalists, for whom national emancipation was indeed the final goal; for the Catholic Church, however, any regime was acceptable, from democracy to tyranny, as long as its own interests were not threatened (Hribar, 2007: 62). This priority over national emancipation or even national unity became increasingly evident in the second half of the nineteenth century and culminated in the 1880s with the introduction by the radical cleric Anton Mahnič of the so-called “culture struggle” between the fervent Catholics, who continued to see the opponents of the Church as opponents of God Himself, and the progressive Catholics, misleadingly called liberals,¹⁹ who wanted to see the Church separated from the State. A particularity of the Slovenian “imagined community” ensued, and this particularity has never ceased to dominate the national political arena and to direct political action: the “enemy within.”

19 Slovenian Catholic liberals were in favour of a strong state (of law) more than anything properly liberal (Vodopivec, 2007: 24). Historian Peter Vodopivec has noted, for example, that the liberals opposed universal male suffrage in the early twentieth century because they feared the subsequent domination of conservatives, for whom the majority of the Slovenian population was prone to vote for under the dictate of the Catholic Church (Vodopivec, 2007: 28-29).

Until this inner ideological split, the construction of the Other for Slovenians was obvious enough, surrounded as they were in the same empire by linguistic Others, i.e., the German-speaking Austrians, as well as Italians and Hungarians, and less so by Slavic Croats (the South, where the Croats lived, was, however, another source of collective anxiety; for centuries, Turkish attacks had been feared from the South). When the Catholic Church imposed divine law as the foundation of national emancipation and, therefore, loyalty to the Church (and the monarch) before national unity and autonomy, the ethnogenesis comparable to those of other European nations became even more complicated. From then on, the Other was not only surrounding, but also within the community, and the community lost its inner unity, despite its class cohesion and despite increasing linguistic cohesion following the efforts of early eighteenth-century liberal circles that surrounded the greatest Slovenian poet, France Prešeren. In the poem “A Toast,” at present the national anthem of independent Slovenia, Prešeren, in his day labelled dangerously liberal, acknowledged the existence of the foreign Other in verses that epitomise nationalist claims yet prudently rely on God:

*God's blessing on all nations,
Who long and work for that bright day,
When o'er earth's habitations
No war, no strife shall hold its sway;
Who long to see
That all men free
No more shall foes,²⁰ but neighbours be (official translation by J. Lavrin).*

However, in his fundamental epic “The Baptism on the Savica,” written in the early 1830s, describing the Christianisation of pagan Slavs in the Slovenian Alpine region in the eighth century, Prešeren also identified the enemy in converted fellow Slavs who mercilessly imposed, by “fire and sword,” the dominance of the Christian God over ancient Slavic divinities. These were but the first hints of the ideological division that gushed from Mahnič's radical quill some decades later.

20 Untranslatable, “foe” literally conveys here “the devil.”