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ANTON KOROŠEC

School: Gimnazija Vič

Class: 4th year

Learning unit: 19th and 20th centuries

Learning topic: Slovenes and the Yugoslav idea in the first half of the 20th century

Learnign objectives:

- Students will be able to describe the main characteristics of the political, social and national awakening in Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries,
- Students will explain the influence of Anton Korošec on the formation of Slovenian identity in the Kingdom of Slovenia, Croatia and Slovenia,
- Students will develop an understanding of the significance of the May Declaration and Korošec's efforts for autonomy.

Teaching methods:

Teacher's: explanation method, interview method, analysis of visual material (photographs, maps).

Student's: interview method, analysis of visual material (photographs, maps), teaching notes, making a recording.

Teaching forms:

Teacher's: frontal and individual form

Student's: group work, research, reporting

Key question: How did Anton Korošec influence the efforts for Slovenian national autonomy and the political situation in the Kingdom of SHS?

Timetable: 2 school hours (first hour for discussing the topic and analyzing sources, second hour for presenting the results).

Introduction or background:

Anton Korošec (1872–1940) was one of the key figures in Slovenian politics and the wider Yugoslav region in the first half of the 20th century. His life and political career were strongly connected to the ideas of Sloveneness, Catholicism and Yugoslavism. He was a priest, a political leader of the Slovenes and one of the important founders of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (later the Kingdom of Yugoslavia).

In the 19th century, unrest and uprisings against the old absolutist rule arose across Europe. The townspeople began to realize their worth and demanded their rights. This led to bourgeois revolutions, also known as the Spring of Nations, occurring across Europe. The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was led by Emperor Franz Joseph, who took the throne after the revolution of 1848, succeeding Ferdinand I. The young emperor thus took control of his empire, a country with more than thirty million inhabitants and twelve spoken languages. He performed his role conscientiously and persistently for 68 years. However, his reign was marked by a rather turbulent period. He began his reign with the outbreak of the revolution in Vienna in March 1848. The nations that were under the Austrian scepter tried to achieve their national demands. The Italian states and the Hungarians resisted in particular. The Austrian army was initially more successful against the rebels. The heir to the throne, Franz Joseph, also experienced his baptism of fire with a victory at Custoza. They were less successful in Vienna, where the rebellions did not subside. The imperial family therefore moved from Vienna for the second time. First they were forced to go to Innsbruck, and then they went to Olomouc in the Czech Republic. The National Assembly, which was sitting in Kroměříž, announced that the current emperor Ferdinand I. was handing over his power to Franz Joseph. With this act, on December 2, 1848, Franz Joseph became the new emperor of a huge, rebellious empire in a rather turbulent time. The people believed that now with the newly elected emperor they would get the rights they wanted to achieve during the revolutions, but this was not the case. The new emperor acted decisively. After Minister Bach, the period of Bach's absolutism began, which was characterized by political repression, i.e. control of public life, censorship. Political life died down, and there was also strong opposition to the nationalism of

individual nations. It lasted about a decade. But the ferment among the people did not completely calm down. The Kingdom of Piedmont Sardinia again incited rebellions against the Austrians and in 1859 they won the war and gained Lombardy. Constitutional life was revived and in 1861 a constitution was introduced, according to which the country was centrally organized. Such a constitution was opposed by non-German nations. Another foreign policy crisis followed, in 1866 the Austrians lost Venetia. With defeats in various areas, the Austrian Empire had to give in. In 1867, the Hungarians were granted a certain amount of independence and the empire was renamed the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which consisted of two equal parts, Cisleithania (the Austrian part) and Transylvania (the Hungarian part). Other nations in the empire also longed for greater independence, e.g. the Czechs and the South Slavs, who were not as lucky as the Hungarians. The South Slavs strove to be united into their own independent unit, like the Hungarians. Thus the idea of trianism developed.

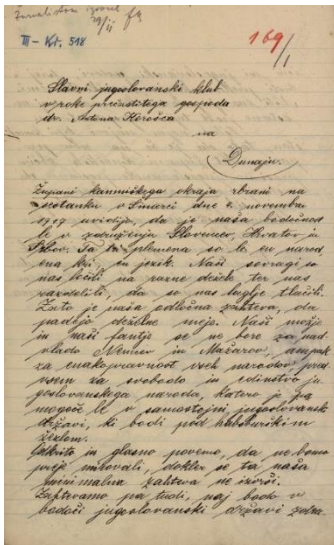
In the awakening of the Slovenian nation, the Slovenian statesman of the later Royal Yugoslavia, Anton Korošec, was also born. He was born on May 12, 1872 in Biserjane near Sv. Juriju ob Ščavnici. In his youth, he studied theology in Maribor, and then served as a chaplain. He enrolled in the university in Graz, where he also received his doctorate. His role model, who later also influenced his spiritual and political orientation, was Janez Evangelist Krek. The latter had a great influence on Korošec's articles with Catholic and social content in the newspapers Slovenec, Slovenski gospodar and Straža, which he himself founded in 1909. He tried to start his political career in 1902, when he ran for a deputy in the Styrian Provincial Assembly, but he failed at that time. Three years later, he succeeded, and thus began his active advocacy for Slovenes in Austria-Hungary. In the meantime, he founded the Slovenian Peasant Union, which he incorporated into the Slovenian People's Party. The Slovenian People's Party was one of the strongest parties in Slovenia. It was Catholic-oriented and had the largest number of voters. Political parties began to emerge at the end of the 19th century, but the beginnings of the Slovenian national movement date back to the 18th century, when national awakening activists wrote grammar books, the first circles were created... At that time, the foundations were being laid, and now the larger ideas about the reorganization of the common state and greater autonomy for individual nations within the monarchy. The political situation was becoming more tense all over Europe, and in the 20th century, political and military alliances began to be formed. The national awakening reached

its peak with the assassination of the Austrian Crown Prince Franz Ferdinand by Gavrilo Princip in Sarajevo. A month later, this event triggered the First World War, which significantly changed the situation in Europe. Austria-Hungary entered the war decisively, with the idea that the war would end in its favor by the end of the year. However, the course of events prolonged the war for four more years. With the beginning of the war, Austria-Hungary introduced military absolutism, banned all political parties, in short, political life died down, everything was subordinated to the war. In such conditions, the Yugoslav question, or trialism, remained unresolved, as war intervened in the meantime. Some Slovenian politicians went into exile and joined the South Slavs there, where they founded the Yugoslav Committee. Some Slovenian politicians, however, remained at home and joined the Yugoslav Club. In November 1916, Emperor Franz Joseph died, and his place was taken by Charles I, the last emperor. Parliamentary life was revived, and with it the growing demand for autonomy among the nations.

Work with students: Students are divided into groups, work with historical sources and answer questions.

1. Group: May Declaration

The May Declaration is a document that Anton Korošec read in the Vienna Parliament in May 1917. In it, together with members of the Yugoslav Club, he demanded the autonomy of the Yugoslav nations within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, which would mean the formation of an independent political unit for Slovenes, Croats and Serbs.



Slika 1: Majniška deklaracija; vir: <https://www.muzej-kamnik-on.net/razstave/majniška-deklaracija-1917-in-deklaracijsko-gibanje/>, 10. 9. 2024.

- What were the main demands of the May Declaration?

The main demands of the May Declaration, presented by Anton Korošec on behalf of the Yugoslav Club in the National Assembly, were:

- 1) The unification of all territories inhabited by Slovenes, Croats and Serbs into one political unit within the Habsburg Monarchy.
- 2) An independent political unit for the Yugoslav peoples under the scepter of the Habsburg dynasty, free from foreign national domination.
- 3) The establishment of a state based on democratic principles

- How did Anton Korošec justify the need for autonomy for the Yugoslav nations in the declaration?

He justified it with:

- 1) the right of nations to self-determination based on the national principle.
- 2) The unification of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs as a natural and historical necessity for the protection of the identity of these nations within the monarchy.
- 3) The autonomy of the Yugoslav nations would prevent foreign domination and ensure the equality of nations within the Habsburg Monarchy

- How did Slovenian and foreign politicians react to the declaration?

Slovenian politicians:

The declaration met with strong support from the Slovenian population, who saw it as an opportunity for national unity and autonomy. Women were key in collecting signatures, as many men were at the front. The church, especially Bishop Anton Bonaventura Jeglič, supported the efforts to gather support.

Foreign politicians:

The Austrian leadership, especially Emperor Charles I, initially reacted negatively, as they were not prepared for greater autonomy for the nations within the monarchy. Finally, when it was obvious that the monarchy was losing the war, the emperor issued the Charles Manifesto (October 1918), in which he indicated a willingness to reorganize the state, but in Korošec's words, it was "too late". External reactions were limited, as Europe was focused on ending World War I.

- What would be the possible consequences if the declaration were accepted?

It is difficult to predict what would have happened, but the Habsburg monarchy might have been preserved in a reorganized form. The monarchy could have become more stable if the Yugoslavs had been given their own autonomous political unit. Conflicts between the nations within the monarchy might have been mitigated. This would have made the monarchy less likely to collapse. With autonomy, the Yugoslav nations would have been less motivated to completely secede and unite with the Kingdom of Serbia. The political development of the region would have been different. Without the collapse of Austria-Hungary, the development of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, Croats, and Slovenes or Yugoslavia would have been different. The Slovenes would probably have had more influence within the reorganized monarchy than in a centrally governed Yugoslavia.

2. *Group: Speech by Carinthia on the Proclamation of the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs (1918)*

In this speech, Korošec proclaimed the establishment of the State of SHS upon the collapse of Austria-Hungary, thereby indicating to Slovenian politicians and the nation that their future lay in an association with other South Slavic nations.

- How did Korošec describe the purpose and future of the State of SHS?

He described it as a temporary solution that was necessary for secession from Austria-Hungary and the unification of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs. He emphasized:

- 1) The unity of the South Slavic nations, who share a language, culture and historical connections.
- 2) The need for autonomy within a united state, where each nation would preserve its identity.
- 3) Efforts to have the new state recognized internationally, as the State of SHS initially lacked international recognition, an army and clear borders.

- What challenges did Korošec expect from the unification with the Croats and Serbs?

Korošec expected several important challenges:

- 1) Serbian domination:

Serbian politics, especially the regent Aleksander and Nikola Pašić, wanted a centralist system, which was contrary to the wishes of the Slovenes and Croats for autonomy.

- 2) Different interests of the nations:

Slovenes and Croats advocated a federal system, while the Serbs insisted on centralizing the state, which caused friction between the nations.

- 3) Unsettled borders:

He saw the unresolved border disputes in the north (Carinthia) and west (Littoral) as a key obstacle to the stability of the new state.

- 4) Different political traditions:

Slovenes and Croats had a different political culture than the Serbs, which made cooperation difficult.

- What did Korošec want to achieve with this speech? How did his words affect the public?

Korošec wanted to emphasize the right of the Yugoslav nations to self-determination and unification into an independent political unit. With his speech, he wanted to achieve national unity among Slovenes and motivate the public to support unification with other Yugoslav nations. The speech

aroused national pride among Slovenes and a feeling that the future of the nation was safer in a common state with Croats and Serbs.

Women played an important role in gathering support for the declaration and political ideas, as they were very active in the national awakening at that time.

- How were Korošec's words received internationally?

1) The reticence of the great powers:

The international community, especially the Entente, was not immediately enthusiastic about the idea of the State of SHS, as it had its own interests in the region, related to the alliances and the collapse of Austria-Hungary. The great powers expected stability in the region, but did not necessarily support reorganizations in favor of the new nation-states.

2) The distrust of neighboring countries:

Italy, which had territorial appetites for Slovenian and Croatian territory, reacted negatively to Korošec's ideas about the unification of the South Slavic nations, as this threatened its interests.

3) The significance of the Geneva negotiations:

In the Geneva negotiations, Korošec tried to achieve international recognition of the State of SHS, but had to agree to unification with the stronger Kingdom of Serbia, which reduced the influence of Slovenes and Croats in the new state.

3. Group: The establishment of the Kingdom of SHS and the Karlov Manifesto (October 1918)

When it became clear that Austria-Hungary was losing the war, Emperor Charles I issued a manifesto promising to reform the monarchy. Carinthia reacted with the famous words: "Your Majesty, it is too late! Fate has already decided!"



Slika 2: Objava nastanka Kraljevine SHS; vir: <https://zgodovinanadlani.si/1918-nastanek-kraljevine-shs/>.

- What did the Charles Manifesto promise the Yugoslav peoples?

The Charles Manifesto, published by Emperor Charles I on October 16, 1918, promised:

- 1) The reorganization of Austria-Hungary into a federation of equal national units.
- 2) Self-determination of nations within the monarchy, which would allow greater autonomy for individual nations, including the Yugoslav nations.
- 3) The preservation of the monarchy under the scepter of the Habsburg dynasty, but on the basis of a new political system that would take more account of national issues.

- How did Korošec react to the manifesto and why?

Korošec reacted to Karl's manifesto with the famous words: "Your Majesty, it's too late! Fate has already decided!"

Reasons for his reaction:

- 1) Recognition of the monarchy's failure:

After a long period of ignorance of the demands of the Yugoslav peoples, it was obvious that the manifesto was coming too late, as the peoples had already begun to look for solutions outside the monarchy.

The war and political defeats of Austria-Hungary weakened its influence and authority.

2) Growing support for unification with the Kingdom of Serbia:

By then, Korošec had already begun to cooperate with the Yugoslav Committee and the Kingdom of Serbia, which offered a more realistic possibility for the realization of Yugoslav unity.

3) Distrust of the monarchy:

The long-term suppression of national movements within the monarchy undermined the trust of the Yugoslav peoples, including the Slovenes, in the sincerity of manifestos of a similar type.

- How would you assess the significance of Korošec's statement that it was too late? How did contemporaries understand it?

The significance of the statement:

Korošec's statement symbolizes the end of faith in the reforms of the Habsburg monarchy and confirms the transition of the Yugoslav peoples to the idea of a united Yugoslav state outside the monarchy.

It marks the moment when the Slovenes and other South Slavic peoples finally recognized that the future of national development was possible only outside the framework of Austria-Hungary.

Understanding of contemporaries:

Among Slovenes and Yugoslavs:

The statement was understood as courageous and decisive, as Korošec clearly rejected half-hearted solutions and thus strengthened national self-confidence.

Slovenes saw his statement as confirmation that the future of the nation lay in unification with Croats and Serbs.

In Austria-Hungary:

The Manifesto and Korošec's reaction were perceived as a sign of the collapse of the empire, which triggered additional political uncertainty.

International Community:

The declaration reflected a broader breakdown in confidence in the old European monarchies, which were losing influence after World War I. It sent a clear signal that the nations of the former empires were ready to form their own political entities.

4. Group: The Vidovdan Constitution (1921) and the reaction of the Slovenian People's Party

The Vidovdan Constitution was the first constitutional act of the Kingdom of SHS to establish centralized government. Korošec and the Slovenian People's Party were critical of the constitution, as it limited the autonomy of Slovenes and other nations.



Slika 3: Sprejetje Vidovdanske ustave; vir: <http://zgodovina.si/vidovdanska-ustava/>.

- What did the Vidovdan Constitution stipulate and what was its significance?

The Vidovdan Constitution, adopted on June 28, 1921, was the first constitutional act of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (SHS). It stipulated:

- 1) A centralist system of government, with all important powers concentrated in Belgrade.
- 2) A unitary state that did not recognize a special status for individual nations, such as Slovenes and Croats.
- 3) A parliamentary system with a powerful king who had the right to appoint and dismiss

governments.

4) The official language became Serbo-Croatian, which further limited the cultural autonomy of other nations.

The Vidovdan Constitution consolidated Serbian dominance in the country and caused strong dissatisfaction among Croats, Slovenes and other nations who demanded autonomy.

- How did Anton Korošec and the Slovenian People's Party (SLS) react to the constitution?

Anton Korošec and the Slovenian People's Party strongly opposed the Vidovdan Constitution, because:

1) It limited the autonomy of the Slovenes: the constitution did not allow for a federal system that would provide Slovenes with autonomy within the Kingdom of SHS.

2) The centralist system meant poorer representation of Slovene interests.

3) It affected cultural and political assimilation. Slovene identity was threatened by centralization and the official language. SLS warned that the constitution limited the development of the Slovene language, culture and politics.

4) SLS refused to participate in the creation of the constitution and joined the opposition together with the Croats, who also opposed centralism.

- What alternatives did the Slovenian People's Party propose?

The SLS advocated:

1) A federal structure of the state, where Slovenes, Croats and Serbs would have their own autonomous units.

2) Protection of national rights: preservation of the Slovenian language, culture and symbols.

3) Equality of nations: rejection of Serbian dominance and centralist policies.

Korošec tried to act as a mediator between Serbs and Croats, but he always advocated for greater autonomy for the Slovenian nation.

- What were the consequences of the Vidovdan Constitution for Slovenian politics?

- 1) Strengthening of the opposition: SLS, together with the Croatian Republican Peasant Party, opposed centralism and formed a political opposition.

- 2) Deterioration of relations between nations: The centralist system increased tensions between Slovenes, Croats and Serbs. Croats boycotted the National Assembly, which further destabilized the politics of the Kingdom of SHS.

- 3) Political marginalization of Slovenes: The Slovene voice in a centralized state was limited, which led to a feeling of political subordination.

- How would you assess Anton Korošec's position on the Vidovdan Constitution?

Korošec was critical but pragmatic. Although he opposed centralism, he avoided radical moves, as he wanted to maintain the stability of the state. His efforts reflected:

- 1) The fight for Slovenian autonomy, but within the framework of the Kingdom of SHS.

- 2) A willingness to compromise in order to prevent the disintegration of the state and serious political conflicts.

- 3) The Vidovdan Constitution was for him a symbol of failure in achieving national equality, but he nevertheless insisted on finding democratic solutions.

5. Group: Slovenian Declaration or Korošče's Punctuation (1932)

SLOVENSKA DEKLARACIJA

1. Temeljna zahteva nas Slovencev je, da se slovenski narod, razdeljen sedaj na 4 države (Jugoslavijo, Italijo, Avstrijo in Madjarsko) - zedini v eno samo politično celino, ker mu je le tako zajamčen njegov obstanek in vsestranski napredek.
2. Naloga največjega dela slovenskega naroda, živečega v Jugoslaviji, je, da ima njegova politika ta ideal vedno pred očmi, dokler ga ne doseže.
3. Zato si mora slovenski narod v jugoslovanski državi pridobiti tako samostojnost, da bo stalno privlačna sila za dele, živeče v drugih državah:
 - a) zajamčena mora biti njegova narodna individualnost, njegovo ime, njegova zastava, njegova etnična kompaktnost, njegovo razpolaganje z lastnimi finančnimi sredstvi, njegova kulturna in politična svoboda;
 - b) zavarovani morajo biti z brezobzirno socialno zakonodajo življenjski interesi in harmoničen razvoj vseh potrebnih in koristnih stanov, zlasti kmetijskega in delavskega.
4. V ta namen je treba, da si Slovenci, Hrvati in Srbi v svobodnem sporazumu in na podlagi demokracije uredimo jugoslovansko državo iz ravnopravnih edinic, katerih ena bodi Slovenija.
5. Tudi sklepi SDK in RS tako ureditev zahtevajo, odnosno je ne onemogočujejo. Slovenci se jim pridružujemo in želimo, da pri tem sodelujejo vse stranke in struje -- doma in v državi -- ki stremijo za isto ureditvijo države.

Liubliana. dne 1. januarja 1933.

Slika 4: Slovenska deklaracija oz. Koroščeve piktacije; vir:

- What were the main points of the Slovenian Declaration? What was its purpose?

The Slovenian Declaration, also known as the Korošče Punctuation, was issued on December 31, 1932.

Its main points included:

- 1) The unification of all Slovenes into one self-governing unit.
- 2) Greater autonomy for Slovenia within the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.
- 3) Social legislation that would improve the living conditions of the population.
- 4) The use of Slovenian symbols and the provision of cultural autonomy.
- 5) Greater political and cultural freedom, with an emphasis on democratic values.

Purpose of the declaration: The transformation of Yugoslavia into a federal state, where Slovenia would have an autonomous status and the protection of Slovenian national identity from the centralist policies of Belgrade.

- How did Korošec advocate for greater political autonomy for Slovenes?

Korošec advocated for the autonomy of Slovenes through various means:

1) Political activity in parliament:

As the leader of the Slovenian People's Party (SLS), he drew attention to the social and political problems of Slovenes and demanded the decentralization of the state.

2) Declarations and negotiations:

The Slovenian Declaration (1932) was the culmination of his efforts for the rights of Slovenes.

Negotiations with the government and regent Pavel Karađorđević, where he demanded the same status for Slovenes as the Croats had achieved with the establishment of the Banovina of Croatia.

3) Efforts for Slovene institutions:

Korošec supported the establishment of the University of Slovenia and the Academy of Sciences and Arts as symbols of Slovene cultural autonomy.

- How did the Slovenian public accept Korošec's declarations? What did this mean for his relationship with the royal authorities?

Reaction of the Slovenian public:

The declarations were widely supported among Slovenians, as they expressed their desire for autonomy and equality. Due to their strong support, the Slovenian People's Party gained additional influence in the Slovenian political space.

Reaction of the royal authorities:

King Alexander and the centralist authorities understood the declaration as a threat to the unity of Yugoslavia.

Korošec fell out of favor with the king and was punished with confinement (forced exile) in Serbia, Bosnia and Hvar.

Nevertheless, Korošec remained politically active through intermediaries and maintained contact with events in the country.

- How could Korošec's efforts for national independence be expressed today?

Korošec's efforts for national independence could be expressed today as:

1) Advocacy of federalism or decentralization:

Korošec already advocated the equal status of all nations within a multinational state, which is comparable today to modern federations such as Switzerland or Germany.

2) Emphasizing the importance of cultural and linguistic identity:

His efforts to protect the Slovenian language and symbols reflect today's efforts to strengthen national identities in a globalized world.

3) Democratic values and human rights:

His efforts for social legislation and political freedom are consistent with modern principles of human rights and democracy.

4) The European idea of unification while preserving identities:

Korošec would probably today support models that unite nations in common structures, similar to the European Union, but with a clear emphasis on preserving national specificities.

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