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FORMING NEW POLITICAL IDENTITY:
SLOVENE WRITERS AND YUGOSLAV
IDEA AT THE BEGINNING
OF THE 20TH CENTURY¹

First Part

Slovene writers all through history linked their writer's identity with the formation of national identity: the dictate of national idea was crucial for them. The "creative paradigm" of Slovene writers in the 19th century – the formative period of Slovenes as nation – was connected with the idea of the Slovene nation. The idioms of Slovene culture and language were, from the very beginning, the main points of Slovene national identity also because of the history of the suppressed nation without a state. From the Romantic period, Slovene literary society was also entranced by the idea of the supranational model of pan-Slavism, which promised the union of all Slavic nations. At the end of the 19th century, additional supranational models came into force.

On the other hand, from the beginning of Slovene culture, there were attempts to neglect the language and culture or to fuse it with other South Slavic nations, especially the Croats. The first idea about the fusion of the Slovene with the Croat language appeared in the period of Protestantism², when Primož Trubar, the founder and the first superintendent of the Slovene Protestant Church, cooperated with Croats in writing and publishing books for all South Slavs.³ Trubar worked for some time together with the reformist Peter Pavel Vergerij,⁴

³ In period between 1561 and 1565 Trubar was the organiser and supervisor of the South Slavic Bible Institute in Urach, where the press for South Slavs was also established.

⁴ Peter Pavel Vergerij, Vergerius (Vergeryi, Vergerio) (1370–1444), Peter Pavel, junior (from 1522 with the nick name "minor" or "il giovane" to differ from P. P. V. senior) was a bishop from Koper and Protestant writer, born to an aristocratic family around 1498 in Koper and died in Tübingen on 4th October 1565. Trubar stayed with him on his death bed. They worked together in exile in Germany. Vergerij persuaded Trubar to translate parts of the *Bible* into Slovene (the *Gospel of Mathew*). On his advice, Trubar began to write in Latin prescription. They cooperated together on 4 manuscripts especially in the year 1555. Then they split because

the ideologist of the South Slavic movement. He rejected Vergerij's visionary ideas to write Protestant books in Croatian or in a kind of artificial Slavic "esperanto".⁵

At the time of Slovene Romanticism (1830–1850) the idea of pan-Slavism, which was mainly the idea of Jan Kollár, crystallised in the movement of Illyrism, founded by Kollár's followers in Croatia. The movement found its way into the minds of Slovene intellectuals. The idea was spread in the northern Slovene lands: Carinthia and Styria, but it was not successful in the main literary society in Ljubljana, in which France Prešeren and Matija Čop dominated. The talented Slovene poet Stanko Vraz from Styria, who studied in Graz, became one of the ideologists of the Illyrism among Styrian students. He changed his language from Styrian dialect to Illyrian, moved to Zagreb and became the right hand of the leader of the Illyrism movement Ljudevit Gaj. One of the reasons was that L. Gay offered him to publish in Zagreb. Yet his poetry was not accepted by the main literary group in Ljubljana.⁶

The key figures of Slovene Romanticism, Prešeren and Čop, rejected this idea. Contrary to Stanko Vraz, they didn't accept "Illyric language", invented by the Croat Ljudevit Gaj. France Prešeren proved with his writing that the Slovene language was equal to the other European languages.

Second Part

In the second part of the 19th century Slovenia was a part of Austrian-Hungarian Empire. At the time the voices of the different Slavic nations started being heard. Powerful Slovenian national patriotic movement emerged and merged with the ideas of pan-Slavism. In 1860s and 1870s, it spread as a result of the dissemination of South Slavic ideas largely among students and young intellectuals.⁷ The period

of the different cultural concepts and ideological reason. [online: <<http://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi774658/>>, cit. 2016-02-27].

⁵ Slodnjak, A., *Študije in eseji*, Maribor 1966, 75.

⁶ There were some reasons, why he changed the identity, but one of them was the rejection of his poems by Prešeren and Čop. Standard Slovene language was also not codified at that time and in Eastern Styria (the area which was geographically and culturally very close to Croatia), where he lived and worked, they used different type of language than standard one, which was closer to Croatian – *kaikau* dialect.

⁷ See: Prijatelj, I., Slovensko, slovansko in južnoslovansko vprašanje pri Slovencih na prelomu šestdesetih in sedemdesetih let (Sloven, Slavic and South Slavic question between the Slovenes in the 1860s and 1870s), in: *Slovenska kulturnopolitična in slovstvena zgodovina: 1848–1895 (Zbrano delo, tretja knjiga)*, Ljubljana 1958, 147–228.

also saw the demise of the dualism of Austria and Hungary. On 1st December 1870, the first South Slavic congress was held in Ljubljana. Ivan Prijatelj wrote that the Yugoslav idea culminated then.⁸

The beginning of the 20th century brought major improvement in economic situation, electrification and industrialisation, along with major societal changes. By the end of the 19th century, industry developed considerably in Slovenia and the society was similarly differentiated as in the other developed European nations. The great railway connection from Villach to Trieste was completed in 1906: it connected Austrian lands with Adriatic Sea.

The rise of the new Illyrism (Slovene: *neoilirizem*) and the Yugoslav idea, that means the possibility of fusion of Slovenes with the other South Slavic nations to the one state, arose with the beginning of the First Balkan War in October 1912. The idea of the united South Slavic nations in one state became very real. Another attempt at fusion of two languages and cultures (Slovene and Croat) came in the time before collapse of the Habsburg Empire: when new Illyrism as the consequence of the new political situation became concrete and discussed all around Slovenia. The status of the Slovene language and culture was quite fragile: new Illyrism also brought Slovene language and culture into question. Plus, there was a powerful movement between Slovene intellectuals before the World War I to again renounce Slovene language and culture. The most radical voices came from young students in the group Progressionists (*Preporodovci*), who called for political and cultural union of all south Slavic nations. Other Slovene intellectuals shared the idea, such as Etbin Kristan (1867–1953).⁹ Distinguished Slovene writer and the most important dramatist after Ivan Cankar was also a celebrated politician during the late-Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy who believed in the Yugoslav idea. He co-founded the Yugoslav Social Democratic Party (SDS) and served as its Chairman until 1914. As a powerful figure in the party and society, he also persuaded others to follow the suit. He foresaw gradual absorption of Slovenes, their language and culture into the future Yugoslav nation. At the meeting of Social Democratic Party in Slovene Tivoli (November 1909) he reported on his opinion about the Yugoslav issue and defended the thesis that the Slovenes were an independent nation.¹⁰ He thus called for future unification as a fusion of all

⁸ The consequences of the Slovene and Croat connections and their co – work was the newspaper *Südslawische Zeitung*, established on 1871 in Croat Sisak. One of the editors was also the most known prose writer Josip Jurčič. (Ibidem, 228.)

⁹ Mahnič, J., *Obdobje moderne*, in: Legiša, L. (ed.), *Zgodovina slovenskega slovstva V*, Ljubljana 1964, 302–303.

¹⁰ Etbin Kristan disagreed with the friend I. Cankar in that point of view and split with him because of that.

Yugoslavs into one union within a single nation, language and culture (*The Resolution of Tivoli*).¹¹

Another leading Slovene intellectual to subscribe to the idea was Fran Ilešič, also Ilešić (1871–1942),¹² a Slovene literary historian, a professor and the main chef and editor of the national publishing house and also national heritage house Slovenska matica (1907–1914). For a time, he was also editor of the newspaper *Slovan* (1910–1913) and lecturer in Slovene language and literature at the University of Zagreb. In order to disseminate Croat culture in Slovenia, he established in Slovenska matica the edition Hrvatska knjižnica (Croat Library). He ardently published Croat authors without any selection criteria. He also underestimated East Styrian authors such as Stanko Vraz and on the other side in his writing he lessened the role of France Prešeren.¹³ He cooperated with other Slovenian writers as Etbin Kristan, Fran Miličinski and Rado Murnik.¹⁴

On the contrary, some Slovene intellectuals and writers rejected these ideas and refused the attempts: most significantly in public lectures of the writer Ivan Cankar, in some of his texts “a sharp critic of Slovene society”.¹⁵ The merger with the Croats was voiced by Slovenes who studied in Prague and later returned to Slovenia influenced by the idea of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. The best known was the group of Slovene national radicals, who tried to develop Slovene culture and language and insisted in the resistance of the Slovene identity.¹⁶

After the outbreak of World War I, the idea was implemented in politics: the politicians from the Slovene Liberal party in 1915 joined the Yugoslav coalition (Yugoslavski odbor) in Paris and tried to create the future union of South Slavs. They were initially also passionate about the idea that South-Slavic nations would

¹¹ Koblar, F. – Pirjevec, A., *Kristan, Etbin (1867–1953). Slovenska biografija. (Slovene biography)*, Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti, Znanstvenoraziskovalni center SAZU, 2013. [online: <<http://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi305141/#slovenski-biografski-leksikon>>, cit. 2016-01-01]. First publication in: Lukman, F. K. et al., *Slovenski biografski leksikon: 4. zv. Kocen – Lužar*, Ljubljana 1932.

¹² He was pro Illyrist also as an editor of the newspaper *Slovan* from 8 number: 1910–1913.

¹³ Writer Alojz Kreigher pictured him as Dr Janko Mraz in his novel *Kontrolor Škrobar* (1914): he ironized his figure and his Illyric passion.

¹⁴ See: Čeh, J., Cankarjev pogled na ilirizem in novoiliristične ideje Frana Ilešiča, in: Hladnik, M. (ed.), *Preseganje meje. Slovenski slovenistični kongres v Zagrebu leta 2006*, Ljubljana 2006, 158.

¹⁵ See also: Lončar, D., *Politični življenje Slovencev*, Ljubljana 1921; Tuma, H., *Iz mojege življenja. Spomini misli in izpovedi*, Ljubljana 1937; Mal, J., *Zgodovina slovenskega naroda*, zv. 16: *Naš čas (po letu 1890)*, Celje 1939; Sperans – Kardelj, E., *Razvoj slovenskega narodnega vprašanja*, Ljubljana 1939. (The second and revised edition in Ljubljana 1957); Gestrin, F. – Melik, V., *Slovenska zgodovina 1831–1914*, Ljubljana 1950; *Zgodovinski arhiv komunistič'ne partije Jugoslavije, t. V: Socialistično gibanje v Sloveniji 1869–1920*, Beograd 1951.

¹⁶ See: Hladký, L., *Slovensko, Stručná historie států*, Praha 2010, 64, 160–161. See also: Rychlík, J. et al., *Dějiny Slovinska*, Praha 2011, 136–137.

be part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Yet the Monarchy collapsed on 29th October 1918 and the new state of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs was declared (later named the Kingdom of Yugoslavia).¹⁷

Slovene modernism (1899–1918) was cosmopolitan literary movement of the group of writers from the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. James Gow writes that, as elsewhere in the Habsburg Monarchy, the three decades before the outbreak of World War I, the modernists were quite creative, while Vienna became the cultural Mecca for Slovenes.¹⁸ Slovene modernists introduced Slovene literature to Europe and invented new methods in literary writing. They were nomads, living in Ljubljana, Trieste, Vienna and Prague. As such they were also connected to other Central European movements. Initially they wrote largely poetry.¹⁹ Later, Ivan Cankar, the key figure in “Slovene Moderna”, introduced new models and patterns to drama and prose. As Irena Avsenik Nabergoj points out: “From his first contact with modern European literature in 1896 in Vienna, Cankar actively sought aesthetic models, stimuli and means of expression that would enable him to move beyond the atmosphere of stagnation and self-satisfaction that pervaded Slovenian culture at the time.”²⁰

They were inspired by, inter alia, the Belgian poet Maurice Maeterlinck, and by Russian authors, Northern playwrights such as Ibsen, and the cult French poet Paul Verlaine. They also accepted some philosophical ideas in their writing: they wrote under the influence of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Friedrich Nietzsche and Henri Bergson. On the other hand, Cankar was akin to Dostoevsky and Kierkegaard.²¹ Despite their cosmopolitan literary works, they faced great challenge in their reception within the Catholic atmosphere and culturally backward mentality of Slovene semi-urban society particularly in the early days.

They first called for pure literature and their aesthetic ideas. As in all European fin de siècle movements, they were inspired by the concepts of l’art pour l’art. They were highly critical of the national idea and of literature with ideological concepts, later the historical and political development of the Slovene lands before

¹⁷ Rychlík, J. et al., *Dějiny Slovinska*, Praha 2011, 149–153.

¹⁸ Gow, J. – Carmichael, C., *Slovenia and the Slovenes, A Small State and the New Europe*, London 2000, 76.

¹⁹ Other cosmopolites who showed the openness of the Slovene culture in that period (which was a phenomenon contrary to the rigid, conservative political situation) were painters and sculptors: Impressionists Ivan Grohar, Matej Strnen, Matija Jama, Rihard Jakopič and the sculptor Ivan Berneker. Slovene paintings became known in the world through the works of them from the first half of the 20th century.

²⁰ Avsenik Nabergoj, I., *Mirror of Reality and Dream. Stories and Confessions of Ivan Cankar*. Frankfurt am Main – Berlin – Bruxelles – New York – Oxford – Wien 2008, 23.

²¹ See: Pirjevec, D., *Ivan Cankar in evropska literatura*, Ljubljana 1964.

World War I changed their views. They felt that the small Slovene nation was in danger at the end of Habsburg era.

The formation of writer's identity later meant for them also the forming of the national identity. The Slovenian homeland was still the magical word for them, even though they proclaimed symbolic and impressionistic movements in literature. Theirs was quite a haphazard attitude to their homeland: they both loathed and loved it. Nevertheless, the homeland was their theme throughout their writing period. The main theme in the prose of Ivan Cankar was the issue of an artist not accepted by Slovene society. Yet later, in the context of political changes, the writers had to also define the supra-national issues and rethink those about the union of the South Slavs that acquired currency before World War I.

Third Part: "Let's Leave Austria in Its Own Shit" ²²

Ivan Cankar was, throughout his life, critical of Slovene society. In his literary works he showed stylistic mastery, along with great irony and sarcasm in his images of Slovene society. As Avsenik Nabergoj suggests: "The social and moral criticism that makes up most of Cankar's creative opus is marked by firm psychological keenness of intellect."²³ The writer, playwright, essayist, poet, and political activist was also a politician: he was member of the Social Democratic Party – dominated in Slovenia by workers. In 1907 he was also on the Party ballot (he ran as a candidate for the party in the largely working-class electoral district of Zagorje-Litija in Carniola), but lost to a candidate of the Slovene People's Party. Although he remained active Party member, he rejected its views on Yugoslav nation-building: in a resolution in 1909, the Party favoured gradual unification of Slovene culture and language with the Serbo-Croat in order to create common Yugoslav nation and culture. In an interview with Izidor Cankar in 1911, Ivan Cankar argued that Slovenian literature had to be independent in the future and Slovenian language would never become part of the Croat language.²⁴ He was upset because of the renegades – he specifically mentioned Fran Ilešič (1871–1942), the President

²² „Pustimo Avstrijo v lastnem dreku.“ This phrases Ivan Cankar proclaimed in the lecture *Slovinci in Jugoslovane (Slovenes and Yugoslavs)* in 12th April 1913.

²³ Avsenik Nabergoj, I., *Mirror of Reality and Dream. Stories and Confessions of Ivan Cankar*. Frankfurt am Main – Berlin – Bruxelles – New York – Oxford – Wien 2008, 29.

²⁴ Cankar, I., *Obiski. S poti*, Ljubljana 1960, 12; Interview of Izidor Cankar with Ivan Cankar: „Slovenska literatura bo ostala vedno samosvoja. Naš jezik – tudi literarni – ne bo nikdar prešel v hrvaškega.“ (“Slovene literature will always stay independent. Our language – also literary language – will never unite and fuse with the Croatian.”)

of Slovenska Matica, who tried to promote new Illyrism in the main Slovene national publishing house.

Upon return from Vienna to Slovenia in 1909, Cankar in his public lectures tried to formulate the problem of new Illyrism and its denial as a prerequisite of independent Slovene culture and language. He advanced his argument in lecture *Art and Society* (*Umetnost in ljudstvo*) in Trieste on 14th October 1910. He opposed new Illyrism and Ilešič, whom he referred to as “dictator and destructive element”,²⁵ because as editor he published Croatian authors in Slovenska Matica without any deliberation.

In his talk on 2nd February 1911 in Gradišče he suggested that writers and poets were the conscious and subconscious prophets of their period, its cultural magnitude, faults and misadventures, ideas and goals.²⁶ He was highly critical to the role of Stanko Vraz. As Jožica Čeh underlined, his critical remarks on Vraz’s Illyrism were not utterly objective. On the one hand, he also didn’t explain well the relations between Prešeren and Vraz.

Cankar’s best known lecture on Yugoslav idea is *Slovenes and Yugoslavs* (*Slovinci in Jugoslovane*) given in Ljubljana on 12th April 1913.²⁷ He highlighted the fact that the relationship between Slovenes and the possible future Yugoslav union were a genuine a true political issue. Cankar subscribed to the idea of the political unification of all South Slavs but rejected cultural merger of South Slavs. He believed that the future state as the politically equal union of South Slavic nations, Slovenes, Croats and Serbs, was possible also because of political ineptitude and inefficiency of the Habsburg monarchy. He called the Monarchy “a dying state” without efficient political diplomacy and real solutions (the belief is best illustrated by his statement: “Let’s leave Austria in its own shit”, what was later erased from the printed version of the speech). On the other hand, he was quite bitter and cynical about and sharply criticized the situation in Slovene society, as he could clearly see that all the Slovene public bodies – newspapers and revues, uncritically accepted the idea of new Illyrism: “Our overly enthusiastic members of the Illyrian movement forgot not only about Slovene culture and about Slovene writers: Trubar, Prešeren and Levstik,²⁸ but they also forgot about themselves,

²⁵ The lecture is not preserved, but we can reconstruct the meaning from references in press.

²⁶ „Pisatelji in pesniki so zavedni in nezavedni glasniki svoje dobe, njene kulturne višine, njenih grehov in zmot, njenih idej in ciljev.“ (Cankar, I., *Zapuščina*, Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica (NUK), Ms 513, št. 4, CDZ 25, 210.)

²⁷ Cankar, I., *Slovinci in Jugoslovani*, 12. 4. 1913, the manuscript: NUK, Ms 512, nb. 2 – the lecture was later published in the Slovene newspaper *Zarja* in 1913, 15 (4. 4. 1913); Cankar, I., *Zbrani spisi*, zv. 12, Ljubljana 1931, 12–23; Cankar, I., *Izbrana dela*, zv. 10, Ljubljana 1959, 391–402.

²⁸ Ivan Cankar in his speech exposed three key figures of Slovene literature: Primož Trubar (1508–1586), the founder of Slovene Protestantism; France Prešeren (1800–1849), the main

their names and homeland.”²⁹ He underlined the fact that the main foci of Slovene national identity were language and culture. He was stunned that some members of the new Illyrian movement wanted to sacrifice Slovene language on behalf of some generalised “Yugoslav language”. He interpreted that as a lack of self-consciousness and national dignity.³⁰ He believed that this tendency was even worse than that of the never ending the process of Germanisation for Slovenes in Austrian-Hungarian Empire.

Responses to the lecture in society were not positive: the Slovene newspapers criticised his ideas. Ivan Cankar showed a mirror to the society: he depicted its dark side for all to see. The act had also political consequences. He was arrested for defamation of Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and sentenced to one week in jail. Hence, in 1913 Cankar foresaw the creation of Yugoslav state which would preserve cultural differences and in that Slovene identity.³¹ Because of this proclamation of Slovene identity, he and his work was later not accepted in the new Yugoslav state. During the dictatorship of King Alexander (1929–1934), Cankar’s works were removed from school curricula. He was considered to be a dangerous follower of Slovene particularism and nationalism.

Similarly to Cankar’s ideas before the World War I the leading Slovene poet Oton Župančič (1878–1946) responded to the foundation of Yugoslavia in 1918. In his article *Draft of The Declaration of Slovene Cultural Autonomy (Osnutek izjave za slovensko kulturno avtonomijo)* he suggested that the new state had to develop all three cultures: he stressed that Slovene language had his history. It was a special language, so it was impossible to fuse Slovene with the Serbo-Croat language.³²

figure of Slovene romanticism and Fran Levstik (1831–1887) the main figure in Slovene literary society in the second half of the 19th century: a poet, a prose writer, a politician; also a great public organiser of Slovene culture.

²⁹ „Naši do omedlevice navdušeni Ilirci pa niso pozabili samo na slovensko kulturo... ne samo na Trubarja, Prešerna in Levstika, temveč pozabili so navsezadnje kar samo nase, na svoje ime in na svojo domovino.“ (Cankar, I., *Zbrano delo, Petindvajseta knjiga (Politični članki in satire / Govori in predavanja)*). Eds. D. Volgar – D. Moravec, Ljubljana 1976, 236.)

³⁰ „Najbolj gnusni, res – gnusni! pa se mi zdé tisti ljudjé, ki čisto brez vzroka in brez povoda v zvezo s političnim jugoslovanskim vprašanjem še slovenski jezik.“ (“The most disgusting, really disgusting! for me are the people, who without any reason and any explanation put into connection political question of the Yugoslav idea and the problem of Slovene language”). (Cankar, I., *Zbrano delo, Petindvajseta knjiga (Politični članki in satire / Govori in predavanja)*). Eds. D. Voglar – D. Moravec, Ljubljana 1976, 238).

³¹ Gow, J. – Carmichael, C., *Slovenia and the Slovenes, A Small State and the New Europe*, London 2000, 22. See also: Vodopivec, P., *The Slovenes and Yugoslavia, East European Politics and society*, 1992, vol. 6, no. 3, 220–41.

³² „Ugotavljamo, da je dala historija Slovencem v toku stoletij svojo lastno smer, v kateri se je izoblikovala slovenska duševnost vsebinsko in oblikovno samostojno [...] Kulturna politika bo morala vsekakor upoštevati dejstvo, da se je slovenska veja jugoslovanskega naroda razvila jezikovno samostojno, tako da je slovenski književni jezik, dasi najbližji sorodnik srbohrvaščini,

At the time of monarchical dictatorship during the period of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the question of Slovenian language became quite exposed also because the Slovenes as a nation, weren't granted their rights under the Serbian control. Yugoslav authorities sponsored official use of Serbo-Croat in Slovene lands. Even the name Slovenia was officially banned. The situation completely changed, and the intellectuals were one suddenly highly conscious of and sensitive about the question of Slovene language and culture. In 1932, Oton Župančič published an article in the journal *Ljubljanski zvon*, entitled *Louis Adamič and Slovene Identity (Lojze Adamič in slovenska zavest)*. In his study of Adamič's work³³, he suggests that Slovenes can preserve their cultural identity in different parts of the world (such as in America), even if they don't use Slovene language – as it was the case of the writer Lojze Adamič. He pointed out that Slovenes have to look after their language in the territory of Slovenia above all, for it is the territory that was highly exposed to other cultures.³⁴ The article by the open minded intellectual caused quite some upheaval and its reception proved controversial. Editorial board of the main Slovene journal *Ljubljanski zvon* split because of that.

Additional other Slovene writers and intellectuals behaved very differently after the collapse of the Monarchy and in the new circumstances of the forming the State of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, which was in 1929, renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Some of them accepted the Yugoslav idea in response to the denial of the Slovene cultural identity. For example, the Slovene-Croat writer and journalist

vendar organizem zase in da je v območju slovenskega jezika za zdaj možno uspešno kulturno delo edinole v tem jeziku.“ (“We can declare that the history of Slovenes during the centuries is very specific – with the orientation in which Slovene spirit is seen in content and form [...] In the future, cultural politics must, at any case, take into the consideration the fact that the Slovenes and Slovene language are independent within the context of Yugoslav nation. That means that the Slovene language – even though it is very near to Serbo-Croatian – is a specific phenomenon. Hence, we can write Slovene literature in Slovenian only.”) (Župančič, O., *Zbrano delo. Deveta knjiga*, Ljubljana 1984, 176).

³³ Alojz Adamič or Louis Adamic (also Adamic) (1898–1951) is a famous Slovene-American writer, translator and politician. He was an emigrant from Slovenia, settled in America. He wrote in English. He got his reputation from the book *Dynamite: The Story of Class Violence in Amerika* (1931). In this article O. Župančič put into consideration his book *Laughing in the Jungle: The autobiography of an Immigrant in America* from 1932.

³⁴ „Toda naš jezik živi na tem in tem tesnem in raskavem materialnem prostoru, na oglišču in terišču treh, štirih raznih kultur, in tu trpimo kot opeštniki. Tu poglej, tu pomisli, tu navri! Tam pa, kjer se ni bati, se ne boj. In ne omejuj možnosti, ne oviraj bodočnosti. Kako radi to slovenstvo utesnjujemo...“ (“But our language lives at this and only at this narrow and rough area, which is in reality territory of tree, four culture, and here we suffer as a buffer. Here you must be cautious, here you think of it, ‘here you boil!’ There, where you don't need to be afraid of it, don't be afraid. Don't narrow possibilities, don't obstruct the future. Too often it happens that we narrow our ‘Slovene identity’...”) (Župančič, O., *Adamič in Slovenstvo, Ljubljanski zvon*, 1932, 52, 8, 529)

Zofka Kveder (1879–1926) was, after World War I, outspoken defender of the Yugoslav idea.³⁵ Her political leaning influenced her writing and artistic aspect of patriotic plays with ideological concepts – written in Croat – in the 20th century.³⁶ Her newspaper for women was named *Yugoslav Woman* (*Jugoslovenska žena*). Additionally, the Slovene professor Matija Murko (1861–1952), based in Prague, was the follower of the idea of the union of South-Slavic nations (he wanted there also the Bulgarians). In the 1930s he pointed out that Slovenes could neglect the language in order to achieve that goal.³⁷

Conclusion

One of the main influential ideas between Slovene and South Slavic intellectuals before, during and after World War I was the idea of the reunion of three states within Yugoslavia. The idea was widespread in the Balkans, especially among Croats. The followers of the new Illyrism in Slovenia interpreted the idea as gradual unification of Slovene culture and language with the Croat one in order to create a common Yugoslav nation and culture. In that period, it was a common conviction among Slovene intellectuals. On the contrary, the leading Slovene modernist Ivan Cankar, in his public lectures and interviews, opposed the notion and warned that it would mean the end of Slovene language, culture and the death of Slovene writers. As a critic and foremost thinker and visionary, he foresaw the danger of reunification of the three different cultures and languages. His fears materialised in the context of Yugoslavia. He significantly influenced Slovene public and the awareness of the importance of Slovene culture and language. He reacted as a critic of the naive behaviour of some Slovene intellectuals at the time, keen to abandon the Slovene cultural identity and language for the sake of temporary political goals and ideas.

³⁵ She lived in Zagreb and was influenced by the politics of her husband. Juraj Demetrović was in that time the member of the Yugoslav government and lived more or less in Belgrade.

³⁶ For the understanding of her turn to ideological works see: Jensterle-Doležal, A., Avtor, tekst, kontekst, komunikacija. Poglavlja iz slovenske moderne, *Slavia Centrais*, 2014, 8, 2, 141–143.

³⁷ See: Jensterle-Doležal, A., Mit slovanske vzajemnosti pri Matiju Murku, in: *Matija Murko v mislenkovém kontextu evropské slavistiky*. Eds. I. Pospíšil – M. Zelenka, Brno 2005, 136–148.

ABSTRACT

**Forming New Political Identity: Slovene Writers and Yugoslav Idea
at the Beginning of the 20th Century**

Alenka Jensterle-Doležalová

Slovene writers – writers of the small Central European Slavic nation – connected their writer's identity with the formation of the national identity in times of national awakening. The rise of the new Illyrism and the Yugoslav idea which enabled fusion of Slovenes with the other South Slavic nations to the one state is dated to the beginning of the 20th century. The position of the Slovene language and culture was very fragile: new Illyrism also brought Slovene language and culture into question. The main Slovene modernist Ivan Cankar (1876–1918), the key figure of “Slovene Moderna”, was railing against such a notion in his public lectures and interviews. He clearly proclaimed this would be the end of Slovene language, culture, and also the end of the Slovene writer. As a critic and great thinker with visionary concepts he had foreseen a danger of reunification of three different cultures and languages in one which had the real threat in the new Yugoslavia. His activities were crucial, he convinced the Slovene public to support the uniqueness of Slovene culture and language.

Key words: Slovene Writers, Slovene Literature, Ivan Cankar, Yugoslav Idea and Slovene Identity, Literature and Politics.

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